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Discovering Better Health

The Health Education Network



The Health Education Network is a Program of the Minority Organ Donation Education Program, Inc.

Better Health and You

A balanced diet and regular physical activity are the building blocks of good health. Poor eating habits and too little physical activity can lead to overweight and related health problems. By eating right and being active, you can stay at or reach a healthy weight. Do it for yourself and your family!

Tips for Healthy Eating

- **Eat breakfast every day.** People who eat breakfast are less likely to overeat later in the day. Breakfast also gives you energy and helps you think and learn.
- **Choose whole grains more often.** Try whole wheat breads and pastas, oatmeal, brown rice, or bulgur.
- **Select a mix of colorful vegetables each day.** Different colored vegetables provide different nutrients. Choose dark, leafy greens such as kale, collards, and mustard greens, and reds and oranges such as carrots, sweet potatoes, red peppers, and tomatoes.
- **Choose fresh or canned fruit more often than fruit juice.** Fruit juice has little or no fiber.
- **Use fats and oils sparingly.** Olive, canola, and peanut oils, avocados, nuts and nut butters, olives, and fish provide heart-healthy fat as well as vitamins and minerals.
- **Eat sweets sparingly.** Limit foods and beverages that are high in added sugars.
- **Eat three meals every day** instead of skipping meals or eating a snack instead of a meal.
- **Have low-fat, low-sugar snacks on hand** at home, at work, or on the go, to combat hunger and prevent overeating.

Extra weight can put you at higher risk for:

- Type 2 diabetes (high blood sugar)
- High blood pressure
- Heart disease and stroke
- Some types of cancer
- Sleep apnea (when breathing stops for short periods during sleep)
- Osteoarthritis (wearing away of the joints)
- Gallbladder disease
- Irregular periods
- Problems with pregnancy such as high blood pressure or increased risk for cesarean section (c-section)

If you need to lose weight:

Losing as little as 5 to 15 percent of your body weight over 6 months or longer can do much to improve your health. For example, if you weigh 200 pounds, losing 5 percent of your body weight means losing 10 pounds. Losing 15 percent of your body weight means losing 30 pounds. A safe rate of weight loss is 1/2 to 2 pounds per week.



Getting Active

You do not have to be an athlete to benefit from regular physical activity. Even modest amounts of physical activity can improve your health. Start with small, specific goals such as walking 10 minutes a day, 3 days a

week and slowly build up from there. Keep an activity log to track your progress.

Are you ready to be even more active?

As you become more fit, slowly increase your pace, the length of time you are active, and how often you are active. Before starting a vigorous physical activity program, check with your health care provider if you are a man and over age 40 or a woman and over age 50, or have chronic health problems.

For a well-rounded workout plan, combine aerobic activity, muscle strengthening exercises, and stretching. Do at least 30 minutes a day of moderate physical activity on most or all days of the week. Add muscle-strengthening activities to your aerobic workout two to three times a week.

To reduce the risk of injury, do a slow aerobic warm-up, and then stretch before aerobic or strengthening activities. Follow your workout with a few more minutes of stretching.

Aerobic activity is any activity that speeds up your heart and breathing while moving your body at a regular pace. If you have been inactive for a while, you may want to start with easier activities such as walking at a gentle pace. This lets you build up to more intense activity without hurting your body.

See your doctor before starting any exercise program.