

STEPS TO WELLNESS – LESSON 1

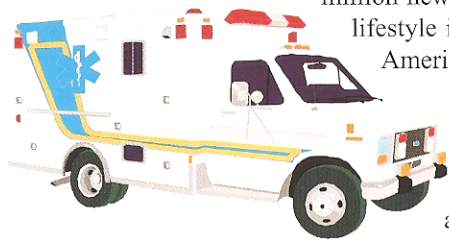
A Healthy Beginning

One evening a health lecture on exercise was being given to a group of people. During the lecture an older gentleman with a cane entered the room. As he made his way to a chair, he had a very difficult time sitting down and staying comfortable. By the end of the lecture it became apparent that he had great difficulty talking; his words were no louder than a very faint whisper. When the inquiry was made concerning what had happened, it was learned that this man had throat cancer and his condition was serious. It was also learned that he was very wealthy. He lived near the beach where he owned a big house designed by a prominent architect, but with his deteriorating health he could not enjoy his dream house nor could he enjoy his rare-sports-car collection. Without his health, all his wealth was of little use to him.

There are many things in life that we respect and value, but one of the most important aspects of our life that is often taken for granted is our health. Most people are so busy in today's society, that staying healthy is not as high on the priority list as it should be. As a result more people are suffering from lifestyle-related diseases that could have been prevented if better lifestyle practices had been adopted.

WE DON'T HAVE TO BECOME A STATISTIC

Today cancer is the number two killer in the United States. In fact in 1995 there were 547,000 deaths in the United States alone from cancer, and an estimated 1.3 million new cases.¹ Heart disease, which is another lifestyle illness, is the leading cause of death for Americans. Approximately 1.5 million heart attacks occur each year in the United States with over one-half of a million deaths.² Heart disease and cancer are two lifestyle related diseases that afflict many people who do not even realize it until it is too late. They are not the only two either. A study reported in the Journal of American Medical Association indicates that 45% of Americans have chronic illness such as diabetes and heart disease which are preventable. Chronic diseases alone are costing us \$659 billion dollars a year.³ This is just the beginning of the big picture. In 1995, Americans spent 14% of their gross national product, or one trillion dollars, on health care.⁴ The fact is that most people are suffering from many other problems such as stress, diabetes, obesity, and depression. These lessons are designed to teach a variety of simple measures that will enable us to enjoy a much better quality of life.



LAWS IN THE BODY

In order to address these problems it is important to know how the body functions. In the natural world there are laws that govern almost everything. For instance, when one throws a ball up, it always comes down as a result of gravity. Every day the sun comes up at the exact time that it is supposed to, without delay. So, in our bodies, there are laws that govern our being and when we work in accordance with these laws we enjoy the best health. When one fails to get adequate sleep at night, the body will not operate at peak performance. If one continues depriving himself of sleep, eventually his body will become fatigued and the immune system will become suppressed enough that disease may follow.

NEW START

Optimum health may be secured and maintained by following the eight simple laws that govern our being. We can find these laws in the acronym "NEW START."

NUTRITION
EXERCISE
WATER
SUNLIGHT
TEMPERANCE
AIR
REST
TRUST

Nutrition



Quality health depends on every cell of our body getting the proper nutrients to perform its task. The old saying "you are what you eat" is true. The food we eat can be broken down into certain categories known as nutrients, which include carbohydrates, protein, fat, fiber, vitamins, and minerals – substances our bodies use in a variety of ways.

Carbohydrates are our best source of energy. Carbohydrates give our bodies the needed blood sugar (or fuel) to perform. When we eat carbohydrates our bodies break them down into blood sugar, or glucose, which is a usable source of energy for the cells. There are two types of carbohydrates. One is simple carbohydrates (commonly called "sugar") which require very little digestion before they can be used by the body. Simple carbohydrates break down quickly and give a quick lift, but only short-lasting. This is the case in a "sugar high" that results from eating a candy bar or drinking a soft drink. The second type of carbohydrates is complex carbohydrates (known as "starches"). They give a sustained energy release over longer periods of time. Examples of these would be whole grains, legumes, vegetables and fruits. These complex carbohydrates should make up the majority of our diet. Their importance is illustrated by being included in the first two larger layers in the new U.S. Food Guide Pyramid.

Protein is made up of amino acids which are essential for growth and the rebuilding of body cells. Proteins are found in most foods that we eat, and a good cholesterol-free, low-saturated-fat source is found in beans, legumes, and nuts.

Fat is another source of energy, but not a good one. Only ten percent of fat

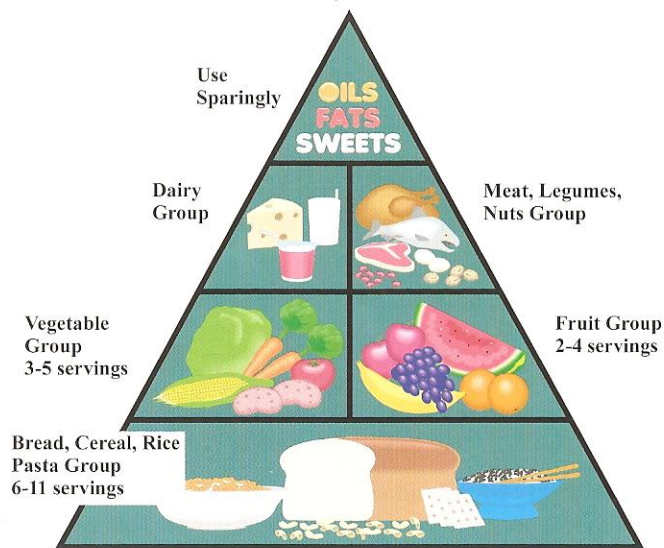
can be converted to blood sugar and used for energy.⁵ Unfortunately fat stores easily in the body. Most of us know about the role of fat in the diet and its effect on obesity. High-fat diets also lead to heart disease, stroke, high blood pressure and some cancers. Fat should make up a smaller percent of our dietary intake. The U.S. government recommends that not more than 30% of our calories should come from fat. Many other nutritionists recognize that 15-20% of our calories from fat would be even better to avoid heart disease, cancer, and obesity.

Fiber is an essential component of body metabolism, It is commonly thought of as the “bulky part” of food, or the “roughage.” Fiber helps maintain normal bowel function and assists with the elimination of waste products from the body. It also helps lower cholesterol levels. Fiber can be found in whole grains, fruits, vegetables, and nuts. The average American consumes only 17 grams of fiber daily but should be consuming 25-45 grams. There is no fiber found in animal products, so it is essential that we eat a variety of grains, vegetables and fruit.

Vitamins and minerals are also essential for body metabolism. A diet consisting of a wide variety of foods, especially fruits, grains, and vegetables, provides more than enough vitamins and minerals for our daily well-being.

Putting it all together, a healthful lifestyle is supported by a wide variety of natural foods, in sufficient quantity to maintain ideal body weight.

THE FOOD GUIDE PYRAMID A Guide to Daily Food Choices



Source: U.S. Dept. of Agriculture. U.S. Dept. of Health and Human Services.

Exercise



In today's society we are becoming more and more sedentary. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention calls this situation “an epidemic of inactivity.” Exercise is another very important law of the human body that is commonly neglected today. It is vital to our mental and physical health that we take time almost every day to have some physical activity. Some of the many benefits to expect are:

1. increased energy, endurance, muscle strength and flexibility
2. reduced stress
3. reduced risk of cancer
4. lower cholesterol and blood pressure
5. Improved sleep and mood
6. assistance in weight control.

Water



The body is between 50-65% water. Water plays an important role in our body. Our body is constantly filtering out toxins and poisons through our kidneys. Water is also important in our seeing, speaking, hearing, and digestion. Our bodies need approximately 7-8 glasses of water each day, and even more than that in hot weather or during physical activity. Unfortunately, thirst is a poor indicator of when to drink. It's a good practice to have a supply of water nearby where you work so you can easily get the needed amount. Water is one of the best liquids to drink because it is easily absorbed, whereas our body has to separate the additives in other drinks before it can use the water.

Sunlight



Sunlight is another necessity of our body. We need to spend a minimum of five minutes a day in indirect sunlight to obtain adequate Vitamin D. Sunlight also helps our body have healthier skin, it improves the immune system, and helps relax the nerves. On the other hand, too much sunlight can be dangerous. It takes the average person only 12 minutes to burn when exposed to ultraviolet rays. With the depletion of the ozone layer it is important to keep well protected from too much sun. This may be done by wearing sunscreen, proper clothing, and a hat.

Temperance

Temperance is a word commonly misunderstood, which actually means to avoid the use of (or becoming involved with) those things that are harmful, and using in moderation those things which are good. Even good things like sunlight and healthful food can become harmful when in excess. Some like to say that they use

everything in moderation. But using products that are harmful to the body even in so-called moderation, like drugs and alcohol, can be dangerous. Their use may result in accidents, disease, dependencies, and even death. It is therefore important to know when to say "no" or "enough." Temperance in all things is a vital aspect of becoming and staying healthy.

Air



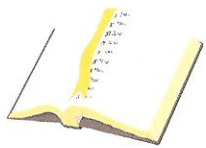
Air is one of the constant needs of the body. Of the 100 trillion cells in the body, every one needs oxygen. Good posture and breathing habits help us obtain good exchanges of fresh oxygen. Aerobic exercise such as brisk walking, jogging, or swimming will improve our lung function and capacity. We often take breathing for granted until a respiratory problem occurs such as asthma or bronchitis, or a more serious problem such as emphysema or lung cancer. Most environmentally aware people look at the problem of airborne pollutants and aim for controls that will give us cleaner air. As far as the lungs are concerned, smoking is probably one of the most severe forms of pollution.

Rest



Relaxation, recreation and sleep are other necessities for a healthful lifestyle. While life today is getting faster and faster it's good to make sure that we have time each day for relaxation, so the tension of the day can find a time to be released. Time to take a walk or rest will help us to cope better. Sleep is a basic necessity we all realize we need. The average adult requires 7-8 hours of good quality sleep each day. Some causes for lack of sleep may result from our environment or stimulation from coffee, tea, cola, or other stimulating drugs. Also, eating a meal right before going to bed can cause the sleep to be disturbed.

Trust



A sense of purpose and a sense of belonging is important to life. Trust in a power outside of oneself, like God, and also trusting in those around us are vital to our emotional and physical health. Whether or not we always like to admit it we are social beings, so when we do interact with others we are helping our body. The golden rule of "loving our neighbor as ourselves" is basic to a sense of our self-esteem and self-worth.



By living in accordance with these eight simple laws we will be able to enjoy life to the fullest. Our minds and bodies will be in the best condition and will give us peak performance. With the realization of how important it is to give more priority to our health, why not try giving yourself a NEW START?

References

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- 5 Harvard Health Letter July 1995, p2
- 6 Health News Dec. 31, 1996, p8; Am. Cancer Institute for Cancer Research, Wash. D.C "Dietary Fiber to Lower Cancer Risk," AICR Information Series, #E5B-DF
- 7 Pate, R.R., JAMA, Feb. 1 273(5):403, 402-404; Consumer Reports on Health, July 1993, p.69; Feb. 1993, p.12,13; Shephard, R.J., Shek, P.N, 1995. Cancer, Immune Function, and Physical Activity, Can J Appl Physiol Mar; 20(1):1- 25; Tufts Univ. Diet and Nutr. Let.; July 1995, p.4,5.

REVIEW QUESTIONS

T F (True or False)

- ___ ___ 1. The leading cause of death in the United States is vehicle accidents
- ___ ___ 2. Foods rich in complex carbohydrates are the best energy foods and should make up the majority of our diet
- ___ ___ 3. Animal products are a good source of protein
- ___ ___ 4. Most Americans are getting adequate exercise from their normal daily activities

Multiple Choice Questions

Indicate your answer by checking the letter you think is most correct

5. We should drink:
- ___ A. Mostly fruit juice that does not have sugar added
- ___ B. Only when we feel thirsty
- ___ C. 7-8 glasses of water every day
- ___ D. All of the above
6. The word "temperance" really means:
- ___ A. Not using drugs
- ___ B. Avoiding things that are harmful and using in moderation, things that are good
- ___ C. Doing everything in moderation
7. In order to cope with the pressures of daily life, we need:
- ___ A. 7-8 hours of quality sleep
- ___ B. Adequate relaxation periods to release tensions
- ___ C. Recreation
- ___ D. All of the above

Comments _____
