

Hope & Healing

Prevention: The Best Way

A heart at peace gives life to the body — Proverbs 14:30

Introduction

If it's not one thing, it's another. Hurt knees, sore throats, backaches, bee stings — minor injuries and health problems are a part of modern life. Then as you get older, it's high blood pressure, diabetes, arthritis, heart trouble, stroke, and other chronic diseases. In fact, 90% of all bad health and death is caused by chronic illnesses and trauma. It is estimated that 75% of bad health and early death is preventable.

Most chronic disease comes from heart disease, stroke, and cancer. Here are four facts:

1. It is possible that each of us will develop heart disease or cancer or have a stroke if we live long enough.
2. The underlying problem begins years before the disease appears.
3. The disease will appear earlier rather than later in persons who smoke, drink heavily, are overweight, and don't exercise.
4. Early death and chronic illness can be prevented through the development of a health plan.

The Health Plan

A health plan will do three things:

1. Help prevent diseases that cause early death.
2. Help prevent chronic diseases that cause pain and create life interruptions but don't cause death.
3. Help anticipate and prevent the problems of aging.

Avoiding Early Death

Atherosclerosis (the build up of fatty deposits within the arteries that carry blood to our hearts, brains, and other organs) is the major cause of early death and illness in the U.S. The narrowed and irregular artery slows the flow of blood, making it susceptible to a sudden blood clot. A blood clot in a heart artery causes a heart attack. In the brain it causes a stroke. If the heart attack or stroke doesn't cause death, it will cause pain and a loss of the strength and energy needed to carry out the ordinary tasks of life. Your plan to prevent atherosclerosis should include:

- A low-fat, high complex carbohydrate diet.
- An exercise program performed three to six days a week.
- No smoking.
- Alcohol in moderation or not at all.
- Weight control.
- High blood pressure control.
- Control of stress.

Cancer causes about 20 percent of deaths in the U.S. Death is usually caused by hemorrhage into an organ or by the cancer becoming so large that it shuts down the organ. Weight loss, weakness, loss of appetite, and pain are usually a part of the picture. Treatments with radiation, surgery, or chemotherapy add to the burden of illness. About two-thirds of cancer can be prevented by using current knowledge:

- Lung cancer can be prevented by not smoking or by quitting smoking in about 90% of the cases. If you quit now, your risk of developing lung cancer will be the same as that of a non-smoker after 10 years.
- Breast cancer prevention is not so certain as are the steps to early

detection. It is believed that maintaining a normal weight and eating a low-fat diet are beneficial. Early detection techniques include: monthly breast self-examinations, yearly physical breast exams, and mammograms yearly after age 50.

- Cancer of the mouth, tongue, and esophagus can be prevented 90% of the time by avoiding cigarettes and alcohol.
- Cancer of the colon is influenced partly by too little fiber in the diet. To prevent this cancer, increase your eating of fruits, vegetables, and grains. And, ask your doctor about the use of aspirin. Recent studies suggest that it may help prevent colon cancer.
- Cancer of the cervix is less common than it used to be because of improved hygiene and through the use of pap smears. Pap smears should be taken yearly after sexual activity begins or after age 18. Most cases of cervical cancer come from the sexually transmitted disease Human papillomavirus (HPV) which causes genital warts in men, but, can be asymptomatic in women. There is now an immunization (Gardasil) that can help to prevent the transmission of the virus. It should be given to women between ages 9-26 before sexual activity is started.
- Skin cancer is common and is usually successfully treated if detected early. It is prevented through the use of sunscreen lotions and protective clothing. Prevention should begin with children since the damage accumulates throughout life.

- Cancer of the liver is strongly related to heavy alcohol drinking.
- Other cancers. No definite risk factors have been identified with cancer of the stomach, pancreas, prostate, or brain. Lymphomas (cancer of the lymph system) and leukemia (cancers of the blood) may result from radiation exposure or from chemotherapy given for other cancers.

Other fatal diseases:

- Emphysema is caused by cigarette smoking in over 90% of the cases.
- Cirrhosis of the liver is directly related to heavy alcohol drinking and related malnutrition in about 75% of the cases.
- Certain types of diabetes are largely reversible through a change in diet and through an exercise program that will promote weight loss.
- Trauma is not a disease, but it causes a large number of deaths. Using a seat belt and avoiding the use of alcohol and other drugs while driving an automobile are the most important habits to develop.

Avoiding Non-fatal Diseases _____

More health problems come from non-fatal diseases than from fatal ones. Prevention of these problems to the extent possible will add to your ability to live well and as long as possible. Here is a list of common specific problems with guidelines you can use to either prevent or to ease the impact of non-fatal diseases:

- Osteoarthritis is the most common form of arthritis. To prevent arthritis: stay fit through regular exercise, maintain proper weight and protect your joints from overuse in your work and other activities.
- Back problems can be prevented and treated through exercises. Second, control your weight. Third, ask your doctor about calcium and Vitamin D supplements.

- Some hernias may be prevented through exercises that strengthen the abdominal wall directly, as well as by walking, bicycling and swimming. Second, don't allow your weight to become excessive. Third, don't smoke. Coughing weakens the abdominal wall.
- Hemorrhoids can be prevented through keeping bowel movements fluffy. This avoids straining. Second, lead an active life. Third, avoid prolonged sitting.
- Some ulcers may be prevented by learning to deal with stress through relaxation and other techniques. Second, avoid tobacco and heavy alcohol use (more than two drinks daily). Third, if at risk for an ulcer, avoid aspirin and other drugs that cause ulcers.

Avoiding the Problems of Aging _

Several remarkable studies have shown that many problems of aging can be prevented through weight training. This builds muscle and improves many body functions by increasing the body's metabolic rate and preventing infirmity.

Summary _____

An ounce of prevention is better than a pound of cure. There are six areas on which to work: Exercise (including weight training), diet, stress reduction, smoking cessation, alcohol moderation and weight control. Most of us need to be concerned about fewer than six, however, since we will not be all at the same level. Make your own list of needs. Develop your own plan. Then, get started. And, stay with it for 100 days, until it becomes a habit.

Awaken the Miracles Within You

The Miracle of Concentration

Concentration is the ability to wrestle with an unknown or little known subject until it becomes yours. The slow, steady process of study will bring victory to you as one hour tells another, one day pushes another, one week certifies another, and one year declares another. Control of the mind is accomplished with concentration.

Little by little we acquire the habit of concentration by getting alone for one hour at a time, away from the hustle, bustle, hurry, and tensions of every day work.

Most education is self-education. Learning counts just as does teaching. Teaching guides. Learning teaches you to think. Thinking is knowing enough to ask the right questions. Knowledge is useless unless used. Use the knowledge you acquire by the habit of concentration to help someone else. Then, you will see the miracle.

The recommendations and information in this handout are appropriate in most cases. However, for specific information concerning your personal medical condition, please, consult your doctor.