

Patient Education

UW National Center of Excellence in Women's Health



Leading a Healthy Life:

Six Steps to Living Long and Staying Healthy

Here are some quick tips on health habits and Web links to tell you even more:

Step 1: Give your body the energy it needs.

Your body needs some foods to stay strong and healthy. Other foods, if eaten too often, contribute to many illnesses. Here are some guidelines:

- Eat 6-11 servings a day of breads or grains, like rice, pasta, tortillas, or cereal.
- Eat 3-5 servings a day of vegetables, like carrots, cabbage, tomatoes, broccoli, or peas.
- Eat 2-4 servings a day of fruits, like apples, peaches, mangos, bananas, or fruit juice.
- Eat 2-3 servings a day of meat, fish, beans, eggs or nuts, for protein.
- Eat 2-3 servings a day of dairy products like yogurt, cheese, or milk.
- Cut down on alcohol, fatty foods such as butter, grease, or oil, and "junk food" like chips or candy.

For more information about healthy eating, try these Web sites:

American Dietetic Association

<http://www.eatright.org>

Department of Agriculture, Food Guide Pyramid

<http://www.nal.usda.gov:8001/py/pmap.htm>



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Step 2: Stay physically active.

Regular physical activity helps people:

- Live longer and feel better throughout their lives
- Be stronger and more flexible
- Build strong bones and fight osteoporosis
- Prevent depression
- Strengthen ability to fight off illness
- Maintain a healthy body weight.

It is best to get at least one half hour of exercise three times a week, but any amount of exercise is better than none at all! If you do not want to go jogging or swimming, try going for a brisk walk with a friend, working vigorously in the yard, or riding your bike to work.

For more information about physical fitness, try these Web sites:

American Heart Association

<http://women.americanheart.org/wellness/index.html>

Shape Up America

<http://www.shapeup.org>

Step 3: A healthy mind is part of a healthy body.

When you are in a good state of mind, you make good decisions for yourself about your job, your lifestyle, and your health. Here are some things you can do to keep your mind healthy:

- Reduce stress in your life. For ideas on reducing stress, try this Web site: <http://familydoctor.org/healthfacts/167/>
- Make some time in your life for things that are fun. Make a list of activities you like and be sure to take a little time each day for doing something you enjoy.
- Get enough sleep. Most Americans get too little sleep. Being sleepy reduces your concentration, increases mood swings, and causes many car accidents. Health Beat has more information at http://healthlinks.washington.edu/index_archive/9901.html
- Get help if you feel depressed or anxious for more than several days at a time. Talk with a friend or your health care provider for some help.

Step 4: Keep your mind and body free of harmful drugs and alcohol.

- Tobacco causes more health problems than any other drug and is the most addictive, most widely used. Cutting down or stopping the use of cigarettes, cigars, or chewing tobacco can save your health and save your money.
- Too much alcohol is definitely dangerous, causing liver damage, fetal alcohol syndrome, and accidents. The tricky question is how much is too much?

Your health care practitioner can help you decide, and these Web sites also offer information:

- Facts about alcohol, abuse and dependency and women
http://depts.washington.edu/uwcoe/w_healthtopics/alcohol/index.html
- National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism,
<http://www.niaaa.nih.gov>
- Street drugs like marijuana, cocaine, methamphetamine, heroin, or pain pills not prescribed for you are dangerous to your health. Street drugs can be diluted with substances that are harmful for you. People often put themselves in dangerous situations to get street drugs. If you are using street drugs and would like to stop but are having difficulty, talk to your health care provider.

For more information about street drugs, their effects, and where to find help, try this Web site:

Alcohol and Drug Helpline
<http://www.adhl.org>

Step 5: Practice safe living habits.**Did you know?...**

- Accidents and injuries are the fifth leading cause of death in the United States; among children, they are the second leading cause of death.
- Women under 35 are more likely to die in motor vehicle accidents than from any other cause.
- Accidents in the home cause thousands of permanent injuries every year.

Here are some steps you can take to stay safe:

The most common accidents are fires, falls, and drownings. Help yourself and your family to stay safe by:

- Installing smoke detectors on each floor of your home
- Having your vision checked every two years
- Learning to swim

For more information, see the CDC National Center for Injury Prevention and Control Web site at: www.cdc.gov/ncipc/ncipchm.htm

Stay safe on the road.

- Wearing a seatbelt dramatically reduces your chances of death in an accident.
- A new law, effective July 1, 2002, requires that children:
 - one year or under, or 20 pounds or under, be secured in a rear-facing infant seat;
 - one to four years and from 20 to 40 pounds be secured in a forward-facing child safety seat;
 - four to six years and between 40 and 60 pounds be secured in a booster seat; and
 - six years and older or over 60 pounds be secured with safety belts or a booster seat.
- Do not ride with someone who has been drinking or drugging.
- Wear a helmet when riding a bicycle or motorcycle.

Find more information about highway safety at National Highway Traffic Safety Administration at:

<http://www.nhtsa.dot.gov/people/>

Other tips for staying safe:

Find protection from people who are violent or threatening in your life. See the UW National Center of Excellence Web site for information at:

http://depts.washington.edu/uwcoe/w_healthtopics/dv/index.html

Protect yourself from germs by washing your hands often:

- After changing a diaper
- After going to the bathroom
- Before and during cooking

Step 6: Get regular health care.

- Many people think they only need to see a doctor when they are sick or injured. But health care providers are experts at preventing illnesses. They can find and treat problems before you ever feel sick.
- Find a health care provider who works with you.
- Know what diseases you are at risk for. Attend regular screenings for them.
- Get yourself and the children in your family immunized against life-threatening illnesses. Find more information about immunizations at the Center for Disease Control web site at:
<http://www.cdc.gov/nip/http://www.cdc.gov/nip/>

These are illnesses most common to women. Check out these Web sites to find out more.

Breast Cancer

<http://www.cancer.gov/CancerInformation/CancerType/breast>

Osteoporosis

http://depts.washington.edu/uwcoe/w_healthtopics/osteo/index.html

<http://www.nof.org/>

Questions ?

Your questions are important. Call your doctor or health care provider if you have questions or concerns. UWMC Clinic staff are also available to help at any time.

Call 1-800-4UW-DOCS to find a UW Physician near you.



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