

# 6 WAYS TO TAKE CONTROL OF YOUR HEALTH

Lifestyle medicine is a medical specialty that uses therapeutic lifestyle interventions as a primary modality to treat chronic conditions including, but not limited to, cardiovascular diseases, type 2 diabetes, and obesity. Lifestyle medicine certified clinicians are trained to apply evidence-based, whole-person, prescriptive lifestyle change to treat and, when used intensively, often reverse such conditions. Applying the six pillars of lifestyle medicine—a whole-food, plant-predominant eating pattern, physical activity, restorative sleep, stress management, avoidance of risky substances and positive social connections—also provides effective prevention for these conditions.

## 1

### WHOLE FOOD, PLANT-BASED NUTRITION

Extensive scientific evidence supports the use of a whole-food, predominantly plant-based diet as an important strategy in prevention of chronic disease, treatment of chronic conditions and, in intensive therapeutic doses, reversal of chronic illness. Such a diet is rich in fiber, antioxidants, and nutrient dense. Choose a variety of minimally processed vegetables, fruits, whole grains, legumes, nuts and seeds.

## 2

### PHYSICAL ACTIVITY

Regular and consistent physical activity combats the negative effects of sedentary behavior. It is important that adults engage in both general physical activity as well as purposeful exercise weekly as part of overall health and resiliency.

## 3

### STRESS MANAGEMENT

Stress can lead to improved health and productivity - or it can lead to anxiety, depression, obesity, immune dysfunction and more. Helping patients recognize negative stress responses, identify coping mechanisms and reduction techniques leads to improved wellbeing.

## 4

### AVOIDANCE OF RISKY SUBSTANCES

Use of tobacco and excessive alcohol consumption have been shown to increase the risk of chronic diseases and death. Treatments often take time, different approaches and many attempts. Patience and support are an important part of breaking risky substance habits.

## 5

### RESTORATIVE SLEEP

Sleep delays/interruptions have been shown to cause sluggishness, low attention span, decreased sociability, depressed mood, decreased deep sleep, decreased caloric burn during the day, increased hunger and decreased feeling of fullness, insulin resistance and decreased performance. Strive for 7 or more hours per night for optimal health

## 6

### SOCIAL CONNECTION

Positive social connections and relationships affect our physical, mental and emotional health. Leveraging the power of relationships and social networks can help reinforce healthy behaviors.



# Lifestyle Activity

## Moderate Activity

- Brisk walking
- Heavy cleaning (washing windows, vacuuming, mopping)
- Mowing lawn (power mower)
- Light bicycling
- Recreational badminton
- Tennis doubles

## Vigorous Activity

- Hiking
- Jogging
- Shoveling
- Carrying heavy loads
- Bicycling fast
- Basketball game
- Soccer game
- Tennis singles

*\*A limitation of labeling activities this way is that it does not consider the fact that some people have a higher level of fitness than others. It is important to tailor your activity to your own fitness level.*

## Guidelines

The recommendation for adults 18-64 years old is to do at least 150-300 minutes of moderate intensity or 75-150 minutes of vigorous intensity activity weekly along with two or more days weekly of strength training. Additional recommendations are available for older adults, pregnant women as well as for those diagnosed with chronic diseases. The more physical activity, the more benefit, but any amount of exercise is better than none. Working with a certified exercise specialist such as a kinesiologist, exercise physiologist, physical therapist, or certified personal trainer is the safest and most reliable way to begin an exercise program.

## Activity Types

**Aerobic or endurance activities** include running, swimming, biking, hiking, playing sports, dancing and brisk walking.

**Strength or resistance activities** include weight lifting, pushing a wheelchair/stroller, kettlebells and body weight exercises such as squats, lunges, pushups, sit-ups etc.

**Flexibility activities** include stretching and some forms of yoga.

**Balance activities** include tai chi, qi gong and some forms of yoga.

*Warning/Disclaimer: always talk to your doctor before starting a new activity*

## Activity Goals

Setting a goal is a great way to get started with physical activity. It's easier to achieve positive goals. An example of a positive activity goal is, "I will walk with a friend or family member for at least 20 minutes after dinner, every weekday for the next two months."

**Specific** - What specific activity would you like to add/change?

**Measurable** - How much activity, how many sessions?

**Achievable** - Do you have what it takes to follow through?

**Realistic** - What can you actually do? (know your limits, start small, build)

**Time-Bound** - How frequent or how long will you do the activity?



## Helpful resources:

**Walk With a Doc:**  
[walkwithadoc.org](http://walkwithadoc.org)

**CDC:**  
[cdc.gov/physicalactivity](http://cdc.gov/physicalactivity)

**Find a Trainer Near You:** [usreps.org](http://usreps.org)

**2019 Physical Activity Guidelines:**  
[health.gov/paguidelines/second-edition/pdf/Physical\\_Activity\\_Guidelines\\_2nd\\_edition.pdf](http://health.gov/paguidelines/second-edition/pdf/Physical_Activity_Guidelines_2nd_edition.pdf)

**ACE Exercise Library:**  
[acefitness.org](http://acefitness.org)

**ACSM Resource Library:**  
[www.acsm.org/education-resources/trending-topics-resources/resource-library](http://www.acsm.org/education-resources/trending-topics-resources/resource-library)



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# Lifestyle Nutrition

For the treatment, reversal and prevention of lifestyle-related chronic disease, the American College of Lifestyle Medicine recommends an eating plan based predominantly on a variety of minimally processed vegetables, fruits, whole grains, legumes, nuts and seeds.

## Eat Plenty

- Vegetables
- Mushrooms
- Fruits
- Legumes
- Whole Grains
- Nuts
- Seeds
- Herbs
- Spices
- Water

## Eat Less/Avoid

- Sugary drinks like soda, juice cocktails, sweetened coffee and energy drinks
- Processed meats like sausage, bacon, salami, bologna, deli meat
- Processed snacks like crackers, chips, pretzels
- Cakes, pastries, sweets
- Dairy (especially high-fat types with added salt and/or sugar)
- Red meats
- Poultry
- Eggs

## Food for Thought

### Eating Inspiration:

**Vegetables:** Leafy vegetables (kale, spinach, romaine, swiss chard, collard greens, cabbage), garlic, onions, peppers (all kinds), leeks, parsnips, potatoes (all kinds), radishes, turnips, squash, green beans, tomatoes, carrots, corn, peas, cauliflower, broccoli, cucumbers, eggplant.

**Mushrooms:** white button, cremini, portabella, shiitake, oyster, beech, chanterelle, porcini

**Fruits:** Bananas, apples, kiwi, oranges, blackberries, strawberries, raspberries, blueberries, mango, cantaloupe, watermelon, honeydew, plums, pineapple

**Legumes:** Black beans, kidney beans, pinto beans, garbanzo beans, cannellini beans, lentils, lima beans, broad beans, soybeans

**Whole Grains:** Quinoa, brown rice, oats, barley, wild rice, black rice, whole grain tortillas/pasta/breads, couscous, teff, wheat germ

**Nuts:** Almonds, peanuts, pistachios, cashews, brazil nuts, soy nuts, hazelnuts, walnuts

**Seeds:** Chia seed, flax seed, hemp seed, pumpkin seed, sunflower seed

## Nutrition Goals

Setting goals to improve your eating habits is a great way to eat healthier. An example of a positive nutrition goal is, "I will add 1 cup of berries to breakfast and a small apple or orange as an afternoon snack at least five days this week."

**Specific** - What specific food would you like to add/change?

**Measurable** - How much or how many will you add or change?

**Achievable** - Do you have what it takes to follow through?

**Realistic** - What can you do? (improvement over perfection)

**Time-bound** - How often or for how long will you make this change?



### Helpful resources:

Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics:  
[eatright.org](http://eatright.org)

American Heart Association:  
[heart.org](http://heart.org)

American Diabetes Association:  
[diabetes.org](http://diabetes.org)

American Institute for Cancer Research:  
[aicr.org/reduce-your-cancer-risk/diet/](http://aicr.org/reduce-your-cancer-risk/diet/)

Full Plate Living from Ardmore Institute of Health: [fullplateliving.org](http://fullplateliving.org)

USDA Food Assistance Programs:  
[nutrition.gov/topics/food-security-and-access/food-assistance-programs](http://nutrition.gov/topics/food-security-and-access/food-assistance-programs)

Food Is Medicine Coalition:  
[fimcoalition.org](http://fimcoalition.org)

AAFP's Neighborhood Navigator:  
[aafp.org/family-physician/patient-care/the-everyone-project/neighborhood-navigator.html](http://aafp.org/family-physician/patient-care/the-everyone-project/neighborhood-navigator.html)



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# Avoidance of Risky Substances

It is well known that tobacco use and drinking too much alcohol increases the risk of many chronic diseases and death, which is why avoiding risky substances is so important. People who are ready can and do quit smoking; there are more former smokers in the world now than there are current smokers. Some treatments work for alcohol abuse, but treatments often take time, different approaches and many attempts. Giving yourself patience as well as getting support from others is an important part of reaching your goals.

## Effective Treatment Models

- Counseling
  - Individual, group, telephone
  - Many quick visits
  - Longer more intense visits
- Medications (anti-relapse)
- Counseling plus medication is more effective

*Slips and relapses are normal and considered part of the change process. Goal setting, support and persistence is key!*

## Goals for Avoiding Risky Substances

SMART goals guide goal setting to help plan and achieve goals. Setting goals around substance use ( tobacco, alcohol, or other drugs) is a great way to start making changes. An example of a goal is, "I will swap my morning cigarette with chewing gum at least 5 days this week for the next four weeks. I will ask my partner to help keep me on track and use the free texting service for more support."

**Specific** - What are you going to do to decrease your substance use?

**Measurable** - How much will you reduce it by?

**Achievable** - Do you have what it takes to follow through?

**Realistic** - What can you actually do? (improvement over perfection)

**Time-Bound** - How frequent? How long will you commit?

## Helpful Resources:

National Quit Link: 1-800-Quit-Now  
SmokeFree.gov <https://smokefree.gov/>  
nami.org

NIAAA Alcohol Treatment Navigator  
[alcoholtreatment.niaaa.nih.gov](http://alcoholtreatment.niaaa.nih.gov)

NAADAC Substance Abuse Professionals  
[www.naadac.org](http://www.naadac.org)

National Association of Social Workers  
[www.helpstartshere.org](http://www.helpstartshere.org)

Substance Abuse Treatment Locator  
[www.findtreatment.samhsa.gov](http://www.findtreatment.samhsa.gov)

Alcoholics Anonymous (AA)  
[www.aa.org](http://www.aa.org)

Moderation Management  
[www.moderation.org](http://www.moderation.org)

Secular Organizations for Sobriety  
[www.sossobriety.org](http://www.sossobriety.org)

SMART Recovery  
[www.smartrecovery.org](http://www.smartrecovery.org)

Women for Sobriety  
[www.womenforsobriety.org](http://www.womenforsobriety.org)

Al-Anon Family Groups  
[www.al-anon.alateen.org](http://www.al-anon.alateen.org)

Adult Children of Alcoholics  
[www.adultchildren.org](http://www.adultchildren.org)

[www.psychologytoday.com/us](http://www.psychologytoday.com/us)



The 2020-2025 Dietary Guidelines for Americans recommends that adults of legal drinking age can choose not to drink, or to drink in moderation by limiting intake to 2 drinks or less in a day for men or 1 drink or less in a day for women, on days when alcohol is consumed.

## Measurements:

**One standard alcoholic drink in US:**

12 oz beer

5 oz table wine

1.5 oz of 80-proof spirits

**Typical Containers:**

750 mL wine = 5 drinks

750 mL spirits = 18 drinks

1 L spirits = 24 drinks



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# Lifestyle Sleep Health

Sleep is an extremely important part of human health. Negative effects of sleep delays or interruptions include sluggishness, low attention span, decreased sociability, depressed mood, decreased deep sleep, decreased caloric burn during the day, increased hunger and decreased feeling of fullness, insulin resistance and decreased performance. If you are struggling to sleep, ask your healthcare team whether a sleep study or Cognitive Behavioral Therapy for insomnia (CBTi) might be needed.

## Sleep Disrupters

- Too much food or drink close to sleep time
- Blue light from phone/computer/television screen
- Caffeine and alcohol use
- Stress/anxiety/worry
- Certain noises/sounds
- Temperature (too hot or too cold)
- Lack of daytime sunlight exposure
- Medications and medical conditions
- Bed partner and/or pets

## Tips for Better Sleep

- Use bed for sleep only
- Establish regular sleep schedule (same sleep and wake times)
- Minimize/eliminate bedroom noise and lights
- Increase daytime exposure to sunlight
- Move at least every hour during the day
- Eliminate nighttime caffeine and limit daytime caffeine
- Avoid alcohol within 3 hours of bedtime
- Avoid high-sodium foods close to bedtime
- Eliminate/limit after-dinner and late-night snacking
- Maintain a healthy BMI
- Stay hydrated during the day
- Use Cognitive behavioral therapy for treatment of insomnia
- Increase exercise to 150 minutes of moderate intensity per week
- Include more whole food plant-based dietary choices
- Increase medication techniques

## Sleep Management Goals

Setting goals around sleep health is a great way to increase your sleep quality. It's often easier to achieve positive goals. An example of a positive sleep goal is, "I will begin a new bedtime routine of shutting off the television and instead, reading a book for at least 30 minutes before bed, four nights this week."

**Specific** - What are you going to do to improve your sleep quality/quantity?

**Measurable** - How much time, how many sessions?

**Achievable** - Do you have what it takes to follow through?

**Realistic** - What can you actually do? (improvement over perfection)

**Time-bound** - How frequent? How long will you commit?



## Helpful resources:

[Sleepeducation.org](https://www.sleepeducation.org)

[American Society of Sleep Medicine](https://www.sleepmedicine.org)

## Recommendations for Optimal Sleep

**Infants 4 months to 12 months:**  
12 to 16 hours per 24 hours

**Children 1 to 2 years of age:**  
11 to 14 hours per 24 hours  
(including naps)

**Children 3 to 5 years of age:**  
10 to 13 hours per 24 hours  
(including naps)

**Children 6 to 12 years of age:**  
9 to 12 hours per 24 hours

**Teenagers 13 to 18 years of age:**  
8 to 10 hours per 24 hours

**Adults:**  
7-9 hours of sleep per 24 hours



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# Lifestyle Social Connections

Social connections and relationships affect our physical, mental and emotional health. Research shows that the single most important predictor of human happiness and long life is having strong social connections. Health-related measures like blood pressure and heart rate improve even with short positive social interactions. Below are some tips that may help you create and keep important connections in your life.

## Forming New Social Connections

- Volunteer; helping others improves health, increases happiness and allows you to meet new people
  - Connect with a community resource center to find local options
  - Find online or community groups of those who share the same interests– meetup.com or Facebook groups are a great place to look
- Join a religious or spiritual group
- Help at a local animal shelter or adopt a pet to connect with other animal lovers
- Go to a local sports event, music performance, lecture or art display
- Help organize community events by joining a steering committee or board
- Attend community celebrations like parades or walks
- Take a course at your local library or community college
- Ask your employer for ways to increase social connections at work

**TIP:** Look for social opportunities that improve other areas of health such as activity groups or healthy cooking classes.

## Strengthen Social Connections

- Take more care to quickly connect with people you see a lot during the week
- When possible, stay positive while connecting with others
- Share new experiences
- Make and spend time with others
- Be there for those who need you
- Be flexible, supportive and excited about what others are doing in their lives

## Social Connection Goals

Setting goals is a great way to increase your sense of connection. It's often easier to achieve positive goals. An example of a positive social connection goal is, "I will increase my feeling of social connectedness by joining a group fitness class that meets for an hour, three nights of the week."

**Specific** - What are you going to do to improve feelings of connectedness?

**Measurable** - How much time, how many sessions?

**Achievable** - Do you have what it takes to follow through?

**Realistic** - What can you actually do? (improvement over perfection)

**Time-bound** - How frequent? How long will you commit?



## Helpful resources:

[meetup.com](https://www.meetup.com)

[purposebuiltfamilies.com](https://www.purposebuiltfamilies.com)

## Social Media and Depression

While technology can improve social connectedness in some cases, research finds that those who use social media the most are at a higher risk for depression. Be mindful of how you use technology to support social connections in your life.



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# Lifestyle Stress Reduction

Stress is unavoidable. How we think about it and how we react to it makes the difference in how it impacts our self-care and our health. While some medicine may help to manage stress, there are many things that you can do to help you manage stress and improve overall health. Partnering with your health care team can help you determine a plan of action for stress reduction. Ask your healthcare team about Mindfulness Based Stress Reduction (MBSR).

## Self-Management Tips

- Connect with others
- Get involved in activities
- Try different healthy ways to relax (music, exercise, dance, meditation or yoga)
- Take time for fun, creative activities or hobbies
- Keep a gratitude journal or write about stressful events
- Take care of spiritual needs
- Make time to laugh (comedy, joke books etc)
- Avoid caffeine and alcohol
- Try deep breathing techniques
- Get a massage

## Good Stress/Bad Stress

Not all stress is bad for us; in fact some stress can be helpful for completing important projects, studying for an exam, speaking in public, or accomplishing challenging goals. On the other hand, distress or negative stress is the type of stress that can cause short- or long-term anxiety, decreased performance and lead to poor mental and physical health. Distress can be caused by many factors that differ for everyone. It is important to recognize the things in your life that cause distress, so you can come up with a plan to manage or cope with or view situations differently.

## See Stress Differently

*Look at events or triggers from a different angle. Consider “Is there another way to look at this situation?” and remember it’s not helpful to focus on what cannot be changed. Try to improve your mood by looking at what is going well in life. Focus on your accomplishments or what you have overcome.*

## Stress Reduction Goals

Setting goals around stress management is a great way to decrease any negative impact stress may have on your health. It’s often easier to achieve positive goals. An example of a positive stress management goal is, “I will write about what I am thankful for at least 10 minutes three times per week.”

**Specific** - What are you going to do to manage your stress?

**Measurable** - How much time, how many sessions?

**Achievable** - Do you have what it takes to follow through?

**Realistic** - What can you actually do? (improvement over perfection)

**Time-Bound** - How frequent? How long will you commit?



## Helpful resources:

The American Institute of Stress

[www.stress.org](http://www.stress.org)

National Institute of Mental Health:

[nimh.nih.gov/health/publications/stress](http://nimh.nih.gov/health/publications/stress)

American Psychological Association:

[apa.org/topics/stress](http://apa.org/topics/stress)

[Mentalhealth.gov](http://Mentalhealth.gov)

Headspace (App Store)



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