



Prevention

newsletter

...for the health and well-being
of you and your family.

These days, you may feel overwhelmed with all the health information available to you. However, there are really only a few basic tips to keep in mind for your optimal health.

Follow these simple suggestions and you should be well on your way to living a happy and healthy life!

NATIONAL  INSURANCE
SERVICES

Everyday Health and Wellness

Eat Healthy

Your body needs the right vitamins, minerals and other nutrients to stay in good shape. A healthy diet means you are eating fruits, vegetables, whole grains, low-fat milk products, fish, poultry, lean meats, eggs, beans and nuts. Stay away from cholesterol-laden items, excessive sodium and added sugars. It is also important to avoid trans and saturated fats.

A healthy diet can protect you from heart disease, bone loss, Type 2 diabetes, high blood pressure and some cancers, such as colorectal cancer. Making small changes in your eating habits can make a big difference in your life. Here are some tips and tools to get you started:

- *Keep a food diary.* Knowing what you eat will help you to make changes. Starting today, write down when you eat, as well as what, how much, where and how you feel when you eat (for instance: 3:30 p.m., two cookies, at work, feeling stressed). Identifying your eating habits can help you make changes.
- *Plan ahead.* If you plan your meals for the week, you can save time and money.
- *Shop smart at the grocery store.* The next time you need to go shopping, eat a snack beforehand. Always use a shopping list and choose 100 percent whole wheat or whole grain bread and crackers. Buy a variety of colorful fruits and vegetables.
- *Read the nutrition facts label.* Look at the serving size, and try to keep saturated fat, trans fat, cholesterol and sodium at 5 percent of your recommended daily value (DV) or less. Select foods that have 20 percent or more DV of fiber, iron, calcium, potassium, and vitamins A and C.
- *Eat healthy away from home.* Choose fat-free or low-fat milk, water or diet drinks. Opt for steamed, broiled or grilled dishes, and ask for your dressing or sauce to be “on the side.”
- *Cook at home.* This will save you a lot of money – and calories!

Get Moving

Build physical activity into your life. Start at a comfortable level, and once you get the hang of it, add a little more activity each time you exercise. You should include aerobic activity as well as strengthening exercises (sit-ups, push-ups and weightlifting). Physical activity increases your chances of living longer; helps control your blood pressure, blood sugar and weight; raises your “good” cholesterol; and can prevent heart disease, colorectal cancer and Type 2 diabetes.

Aim for 2 hours and 30 minutes of activity each week. If you don't have time for 30 minutes of exercise at one time, get moving for shorter 10-minute periods throughout the day.

Watch Your Weight

To stay at a healthy weight, you need to balance the calories you eat with the calories you burn. To lose weight, you need to burn more calories than you eat. A healthy diet and physical activity can help you reach your goal. It is also important to eat smaller portions, which can be accomplished with the following:

- Eat small, healthy snacks throughout the day, such as baby carrots or a handful of unsalted almonds. This will keep you from overeating at mealtimes.
- Serve food on smaller plates.
- If you are at a restaurant, consume only half your meal and take the rest home.
- Eat slowly – this will give you more time to feel full.
- Don't eat in front of the TV. It's harder to keep track of how much you are eating.

If you're overweight, the first step in getting healthy is to make a promise to yourself to eat better, move more, and get support from family and friends. Try losing 1 to 2 pounds per week. Don't know if you're overweight? Calculate your body mass index, or BMI, at <http://www.nhlbi.nih.gov/guidelines/obesity/BMI/bmicalc.htm>.

Get Enough Calcium

One out of every two women and one in four men over the age of 50 will break a bone in their lifetime because of osteoporosis. Calcium helps to keep your bones strong and less likely to break. Adults ages 19 to 50 need at least 1,000 mg of calcium daily. To get more calcium into your diet, try the following:

- Eat foods with calcium, such as fat-free or low-fat milk and yogurt, spinach and greens, tofu made with calcium, and orange juice with added calcium.
- Take a calcium pill daily (talk to your doctor before choosing this option).
- Check the label on the foods you buy: the best choices are items that have at least 20 percent DV of calcium.
- Make sure you're getting vitamin D, which aids in calcium absorption. You can get vitamin D in salmon, milk, some yogurts, and vitamin D pills.

There are no signs or symptoms of osteoporosis; in fact, you may not know you have it until you break a bone. This is why getting enough calcium is so important. If you are 65 or older, you should get a test to find out your bone strength (called a bone density test).

You may be at a higher risk for osteoporosis if you:

- Have a small, thin body size
- Have an eating disorder (or are recovering from one)
- Have a family history of the disease
- Do not exercise regularly
- Have low estrogen levels (women) or low testosterone levels (men)

Manage Stress

Many things can cause stress, but the most common include unexpected changes such as having an argument or getting lost; issues such as divorce, discrimination, illness or money problems; or even good changes such as a promotion at work. When people are under stress, they may feel worried, irritable, depressed and unable to focus. Other signs of stress include headaches, trouble sleeping, weight gain or loss and back pain. It is important to manage stress in order to sleep better, improve concentration, get along better with family and friends, lessen neck and back pain, and have an overall feeling of calmness. Follow these tips in order to better prevent and manage stress:

- Plan your time. Think ahead about your day and write a to-do list. Decide which tasks are most important and complete them in that order.
- Prepare yourself. Be ready ahead of time for stressful events like a job interview or presentation.

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- Try deep breathing or meditation. Yoga can also help relax tense muscles.
- Get active. Exercise has been proven to lift depression and stress.
- Eat healthy. Give your body plenty of energy by eating fruits, vegetables and protein.
- Talk to friends and family. Many times having a discussion about what is troubling you can help you feel better.
- Get help if you need it. A therapist or mental health professional is trained to help you deal with stress. You can also take advantage of your Employee Assistance Program (EAP) if it is offered at work.

Women's Health

All women should be especially conscious of the following:

Get Enough Folic Acid

Folic acid is especially crucial for pregnant women, or women who may become pregnant. This vitamin can prevent birth defects and is needed within the first few weeks of pregnancy. That is why it is important to incorporate folic acid in your daily regimen, as most women do not even know they are pregnant until after several weeks have passed. The two best ways to get folic acid are to eat fortified breakfast cereals or to take a daily vitamin. You can also eat foods with folate (a type of folic acid), such as asparagus, spinach, orange juice and beans.

Women of childbearing age (typically ages 11 to 49) need 400 mcg of folic acid every day.

Get Tested for Breast Cancer

Get a mammogram every 1 to 2 years, starting at age 40. Mammograms can help detect breast cancer early; you have a better chance of surviving breast cancer if it is found in its early stages. If breast or ovarian cancer runs in your family, you should start getting mammograms before age 40.

A mammogram is an X-ray of the breast. It uses a very low level of radiation and is safe. When you get a mammogram, the nurse will place your breasts, one at a time, between two plastic plates and take pictures of each one. Mammograms do not hurt and take less than 15 minutes.

You should also be performing monthly breast self-exams (BSEs). The best time to do so is a few days after your period ends. To learn how to perform a BSE and find out what to look for, visit <http://ww5.komen.org/BreastCancer/BreastSelfExam.html>. If you find a change, make an appointment with your doctor as soon as possible.

Get Tested for Cervical Cancer

The best way to prevent cervical cancer is to get regular Pap tests, which is a screening test for this kind of cancer. You need a Pap test if you are 21 or older, or under 21 and have been sexually active for 3 years or more. Most deaths from cervical cancer could have been avoided by having regular Pap tests. This test can find unusual cells before they turn into cancer. It is recommended you have a Pap test every 1 to 3 years from ages 21 to 64.

A Pap test lasts only 3 to 5 minutes. It may be uncomfortable, but does not hurt. You will lie on an exam table and a doctor or nurse will insert a tool called a speculum into your vagina, opening it to see the cervix. A special brush collects cells from the cervix, which are sent to a lab for testing.

Doctors also recommend that women age 26 and younger get the HPV (human papilloma virus) vaccine. It protects against the types of HPV that cause cervical cancer and some sexually transmitted diseases (STDs).

Men's Health

Unfortunately, many men are neglectful of their health. Are you one of them? According to the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, men are more likely than women to smoke, drink, make unhealthy or risky decisions, and put off regular checkups and medical care.

Pay Attention to Your Prostate

Men age 50 and older are most at risk for prostate cancer. It is the most common non-skin cancer in America, affecting one in six men. The American Cancer Society recommends that you receive either a digital rectal exam (DRE) or prostate-specific antigen (PSA) blood test every year starting at age 50. However, you should begin discussing prostate screening with your doctor as early as age 40, especially if there is a family history of prostate cancer.

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During a DRE, the doctor inserts a finger into your rectum and examines the prostate for any irregularities. A PSA blood test involves an amount of blood drawn from the arm, and the level of PSA is tested. Both tests can easily be performed within the doctor's office and only take a few minutes.

Get Tested for Colorectal Cancer

All men over 50 should be tested for colorectal cancer – or earlier if you have a family history of it. There are many ways to get your colon checked. Some tests are done every 1 to 2 years; others are done every 5 to 10 years. How often you get checked will depend on your risk. There are some tests you can do at home, such as a fecal occult blood test. Others, like a colonoscopy, must be done in a clinic or hospital. For these tests, you may need to drink only liquids the day before your test and use laxatives to clean out your colon.

A colonoscopy is a procedure used to see inside the colon and rectum. It can detect inflamed tissue, ulcers, and abnormal growths. Before the process, you will be lightly sedated. Then, the doctor will insert a long, flexible tube into your anus and guide it through the rectum and colon. This usually takes 30 to 60 minutes and full recovery is expected by the next day.

If you act early, you have a good chance of preventing colorectal cancer, or finding it in its early stages.

Perform Regular Testicular Self-Exams

Although the incidence of testicular cancer has risen in recent years, more than 95 percent of cases can be cured. Most times, the cancer is detected unintentionally or by self-examination. Routine testicular self-examination increases your chances of finding a tumor, which often feels like a pea-sized, painless lump.

Testicular cancer most often affects men between the ages of 20 and 39. For more information on how to do a proper self-exam, visit the Testicular Cancer Resource Center at <http://tcr.acor.org/tcexam.html>.