

Lifestyle Changes That Will Keep You Alive

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Americans spend billions every year on a dizzying array of health schemes. But some of the best approaches to health care are cheap and within your grasp, if only you can find the will to make some lifestyle changes.

1. Experience the benefits of sex

Sex has many apparent health benefits. Studies suggest sex can boost your immune system and reduce stress.

2. Keep your teeth clean

Diabetes, low birth weight babies and heart disease have all been linked to gum and bone disease in your mouth. Even heart attacks have been linked to bad dental hygiene.

3. Use the sun

A little sunshine is good for your mood and allows your body to produce necessary vitamin D, which is lacking in some 70 percent of American kids these days.

4. Drink less

After years of hearing that moderate drinking is good for your health, a study in November, 2009 found that having a drink or two each day might be something that healthy people do, rather than the drinks being the cause of their good health. And if you're having more than a couple drinks a day, then you're at higher risk for liver damage and diabetes.

5. Wash your hands

Hand washing remains the best prevention against the flu and many other diseases.

6. Get some rest

Serious lack of sleep -- less than six or seven hours a night -- has been associated with increased risks of high blood pressure, hypertension, obesity, diabetes and cancer. Lack of sleep can also contribute to auto accidents and on-the-job injuries.

7. Stop smoking

About half of all smokers die from smoking, and of these, about half die around age 50 or sooner.

8. Don't stress

Stress kills. It causes deterioration in everything from your gums to your heart and can make you more susceptible to a range of ills, from colds to cancer.

9. Exercise

Over and over, studies find a host of exercise benefits, not just for your body: It can raise kids' academic performance and stimulate adult brains. Exercise makes bones stronger and alleviates many types of chronic pain. Regular exercise has even been associated with a lower risk of cancer.

10. Eat better

Choose real food instead of sugar laced with traces of real food. Cook at home rather than eating fast food, and use spices, rather than gobs and gobs of oil or sugar, to spice up your meals.

Sources:

» [Live Science December 30, 2009](#)

Dr. Mercola's Comments:

This is an excellent, empowering list for the New Year, one you can use to improve your health by leaps and bounds. The reality is that more than any pill or medical “treatment,” your lifestyle is what will determine your level of health now and in the years to come.

It was the ancient Roman poet Martial, wise beyond his time, who first said:

“Life’s not just being alive, but being well.”

This is still true today, many centuries later. Your health is a gift that cannot be bought, and once it’s lost it may be impossible to get back.

So I urge you to do some serious contemplating on what really matters in your life, and then make a commitment to doing all you can to support and nourish your health. Whether you realize it yet or not, you have at your disposal numerous methods to influence your physical and mental well-being, and ultimately take control of your health.

You are Not a Victim to Your Genes

Before I delve into more detail about exactly *how* you can change your lifestyle for the better, I first want to dispel the [myth that you are a captive to your genes](#).

For some of you reading this, this may be a weight lifted off your shoulders. If your mother suffered from breast cancer, or you have a family history of diabetes or obesity, for instance, it does not mean that you are destined to have that same fate.

As proven through the massive genetic study, the Genome Project, each one of your genes can create up to 30,000 proteins, any and all of which can create a different outcome. So the fact that you may have a genetic “predisposition” for a certain illness does not mean that you are doomed to develop it.

Rather, there is something that either activates or suppresses your genes, and that “something” is usually lifestyle-related. If you are constantly stressed you will likely have a different genetic expression than if you [focus your thoughts in a positive direction](#).

Likewise, if you eat [healthy, fresh, whole foods](#) you will have a different genetic expression than if you [rely on sugar](#) and fast foods.

Ultimately, this is great news, as it means you can make the choice to help your genes express themselves in a positive, disease-fighting way.

Which Diseases Can Your Lifestyle Help Prevent?

A far more appropriate question would be, “What can’t it?” -- because the choices you make on a daily basis truly influence just about every disease known to man, and probably more than handful of those yet to be discovered!

Here is just a short list of some of the major diseases your decision to eat well, exercise, reduce stress, and so on will help to ward off:

- [Cancer](#)
- [Heart disease](#)
- [Diabetes](#)
- [Alzheimer’s](#) and [Parkinson’s](#) diseases
- [High blood pressure](#)
- [Hormonal imbalances](#)

Again, this is by no means an exhaustive list. If you name a disease or illness, there’s a good chance your lifestyle can help prevent it or influence it in a positive way.

My Top Lifestyle Recommendations for a Healthy 2010

The start of a new year is always a good time to evaluate your past mistakes and make a fresh start. So if you haven’t been leading the type of lifestyle you’d like to be, I give you permission to wipe the slate clean right now.

Today is a new day, and today can be the day you start leading a lifestyle of health and wellness. With that in mind, here are my top recommendations to make 2010 your healthiest year yet.

1. Learn How to Effectively Cope With Stress

In my past experience treating patients with serious chronic illnesses, the vast majority have previous emotional stress that contributed to their problem. And for most of the serious illnesses, the trauma stems back to their childhood.

But according to at least [one recent study](#), it doesn’t take serious trauma to cause these changes. Even normal “everyday” emotional experiences can have a detrimental impact on your future health.

Meditation, prayer, physical activity and exercise are all viable options that can help you maintain emotional and mental equilibrium. I also strongly believe in using tools such as the [Meridian Tapping Technique \(MTT\)](#) to address deeper, oftentimes hidden emotional problems.

2. Get **Optimal Exposure to Sunlight**

Vitamin D, often referred to as “the sunshine vitamin,” is different from other vitamins in that it influences your entire body. Vitamin D receptors have been found in almost every type of human cell, from your brain to your bones, so its power to optimize your health is truly great.

Please remember that vitamin D will optimize over 2,000-3,000 genes in your body or 10 percent of your total genes!

Studies have shown you can [decrease your risk of cancer by MORE THAN HALF](#) and lower your risk of many other common diseases simply by optimizing your vitamin D levels with sun exposure.

3. Eat a Healthy Diet That’s Right for Your **Nutritional Type**

My [nutrition plan](#), based on natural whole foods, is your first step toward increasing your chances of living a longer, healthier life. The heart of my program is the elimination, or at the very least, drastic reduction of grains and sugar in your diet, while focusing on the foods that are [right for your unique biochemistry](#).

4. Eat Plenty of Raw Food

One of the most important aspects of a healthy diet that is most frequently overlooked is the issue of eating your food uncooked, in its natural raw state.

Unfortunately, as you may be aware, over 90 percent of the food purchased by Americans is processed. And when you’re consuming these kinds of denatured and chemically altered foods, it’s no surprise we have an epidemic of chronic and degenerative diseases.

Ideally you’ll want to eat as many foods as possible in their unprocessed state; typically organic, biodynamic foods that have been grown locally, and are therefore in season.

But even when you choose the best foods available you can destroy most of the nutrition if you cook them. I believe it’s really wise to strive to get as much raw food in your diet as possible. I personally try to eat about 80 percent of my food raw, including [raw eggs](#) and [meats](#).

5. Optimize Your Insulin and Leptin Levels

Eating sugar and grains will increase your insulin level, which is one of the fastest ways to premature aging. [Leptin](#) is another heavyweight hormone associated with the aging process.

Like your insulin levels, if your leptin levels become elevated, your body systems will develop a resistance to this hormone, which will wreak havoc in your body.

Ron Rosedale, MD, who is one of the leading experts on leptin, does an excellent job of explaining the links between insulin, leptin, your weight and your overall health, and has done so in [numerous articles posted on my site](#).

Your diet, as discussed in steps three and four above, is the key to maintaining the balance of these two hormones.

6. Exercise

The benefits of exercise are staggering, and if you think you can achieve or maintain optimal health without it, you're deceiving yourself. For example, it helps you to:

- Sleep better
- Lose weight, gain weight or maintain weight, depending on your needs
- Improve your resistance to fight infections
- Lower your risk of cancer, heart disease and diabetes
- Help your brain work better, making you smarter

If you've fallen off the exercise wagon, watch my [Primary Principles of Exercise video](#) to get back on track.

7. Consume Healthy Fat

The science is loud and clear on this point: [omega-3 fats are essential for optimal health](#).

The omega-3 found naturally in fish and seafood is high in two fatty acids crucial to human health, DHA and EPA. These two fatty acids are pivotal in preventing heart disease, cancer, and many other diseases. Your brain is also highly dependent on DHA -- low DHA levels have been linked to depression, schizophrenia, memory loss, and a higher risk of developing Alzheimer's.

Unfortunately most fish commercially available today (even wild-caught varieties) are polluted with mercury, PCBs and other toxic substances, which is why I recommend you take a supplement like krill oil instead of getting it from your food.

8. Limit Your Exposure to Toxins

The number of toxic chemicals and their sources is so large, addressing them all could easily require an entire library, but I believe you can help you keep your toxic load as low as possible by becoming an informed and vigilant consumer.

This includes tossing out your toxic household cleaners, soaps, personal hygiene products, air fresheners, bug sprays, lawn pesticides, and insecticides, just to name a few, and replacing them with non-toxic alternatives.

For a review of some of the most common sources of household dangers, I suggest you [review this previous article](#), or search my site for any number of different toxins by name.

9. Make Pure Water Your Primary Beverage

Every day your body loses water through urine and sweat, and needs to be replenished. You can actually survive without food for months, but without water you'd die after a few days, so needless to say, water is absolutely essential to life.

You can easily tell what your water requirement is by using your thirst and the color of your urine as guides. Your urine should be a very light-colored yellow. If it is a deep, dark yellow then you are likely not drinking enough water.

Further, if you are healthy, then drinking whenever you feel thirsty should be an adequate guide of how much water you need. You can confirm that you are drinking enough water by looking at the color of your urine, as mentioned above.

As for obtaining clean, pure water, installing a water filter in your home is your best bet. For the latest recommendations on the methods that work best to remove impurities and toxic byproducts caused by water chlorination from your tap water, please review this previous article, [Tap Water Toxins—Discover Your Three Best Solutions, Straight From the Experts](#).

10. Get Plenty of Quality Sleep

Scientists have discovered that your circadian rhythms regulate the energy levels in your cells. In addition, the proteins involved with your circadian rhythm and metabolism are intrinsically linked and dependent upon each other.

Therefore, when your circadian rhythm is disrupted, it can have a profound influence on your physical health. For example, research has also linked disrupted sleep cycles to serious health problems like depression, coronary heart diseases, and even cancer.

If you have any kind of sleep problem, whether you're having trouble falling asleep or staying asleep, my article [33 Secrets to a Good Night's Sleep](#) is packed with great tips to help you finally get some good rest.

Related Links:

- » [Will YOU Look as Good as Jack LaLanne at Age 93?](#)
- » [Great Tips to Add Years to Your Life](#)
- » [Flip-Flop Science: Does Anyone Really Know What Makes You Healthy?](#)

Reference website: <http://articles.mercola.com/sites/articles/archive/2010/01/23/Lifestyle-Changes-That-Will-Keep-You-Alive.aspx>