Stand Up for Your Health

Too much sitting getting you down? Do you notice more backache, stiffness and fatigue than usual? Or maybe your waistline is spreading?

When your body sits for long periods, your bodily functions slow down. The potential effects are widespread and chronic: 

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Start With SMART Goals

Learn the SMART way – make your goals:

Specific – Clearly identify each goal. Not just, I will get more organized, but I will take a time management course in the next 3 months.

Measurable – Select and track small tasks within each goal, especially for long-term, major objectives. For example, I will save more this year by cutting spending 10%, starting with entertainment.

Attainable – Set goals that are challenging, even difficult at times, but within your reach.

Relevant – Decide what’s most important to you in your life and work. What qualities or changes do you most desire?

Timed – Every goal needs a timeline to keep you on track and progressing toward success.

Homework: Identify your primary goals for work, relationships, health, financial and other personal needs. Prioritize those; then select sub-goals, or action steps, within each primary goal. When your goals are clear, you’re more focused and motivated to achieve them.

Setting your goals can be as valuable as achieving them.

Rx for Medication Safety

By Diane McReynolds, Personal Best Healthlines Founder

From antibiotics to lifesaving drugs for hundreds of conditions, drugs help us live longer, healthier lives – provided we take them seriously. Medication misuse leads to thousands of hospitalizations and deaths each year in the U.S. By staying aware and involved in your health care, you can lower your risks and get the most from your medicine. Learn these 6 steps to safe medication:

1. Maintain a list of ALL your medicines. Include prescription and over-the-counter (OTC) medicines and vitamin, mineral and herbal supplements. Always bring your list to health care visits or for hospital stays.

2. Learn why you need specific drugs. You’re more likely to use them correctly, know what to expect and report any problems to your provider.

3. Ask about possible side effects. Some drug side effects may bother you at first but soon ease up. Call your provider if you have serious, persistent or recurrent reactions; you may need a different medicine or dosage.

“The groundwork for all happiness is health.”
– Leigh Hunt

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Avoid These Calorie Traps

By Cara Rosenbloom, RD

If you’ve resolved to shed a few pounds this year, pay attention to foods that can derail your weight-loss plan. You know the ones – the innocent-looking muffin or fruity trail mix with shockingly high calorie counts.

Imagine this: You order a salad and a 16-ounce bottle of apple juice for lunch. It sounds like a light, vegetable- and fruit-packed meal with approximately 200 calories. Look closer: The salad has 60 calories, but the 4 tablespoons of salad dressing add 200 more. The juice is 242 calories, bringing your lunch total to 502 calories. For a salad? You could have easily enjoyed a filling, nutritious meal of chicken, brown rice and salad for the same amount of calories.

It’s easy to pack on calories with foods that are high in fat and sugar. For example, mayonnaise and oil can contain healthy fats, but eat them sparingly – no more than 2 tablespoons each day.

Sugary foods such as regular soft drinks, candy and pastries are easy to over-consume because they taste good, but the calories add up quickly. Always watch your portion sizes of the highest-calorie foods and drinks.

Small changes can help: When eating salad, for example, have the standard serving size of dressing (2 tablespoons), use less oil and more vinegar, or dip vegetables in dressing instead of pouring it over the salad.

Other traps: While it’s obvious pastries, chips and chocolate are calorie bombs, it’s often less clear for good-for-you foods. Granola, cheese, smoothies and nuts can be healthy, but keep portions small to save calories. Always fill plates with vegetables, which are nature’s lowest-calorie foods.

How Stress Affects Your Back

Your emotional health can produce negative physical effects. Continuous stress can cause a cycle of fatigue and muscle tension, further stressing your mind and body. A primary target is your back.

Chronic stress and depression have been linked to back strain that leads to chronic pain and disability. Some research suggests that many cases of chronic back and neck pain may result from nervous tension, which temporarily constricts blood vessels, reducing oxygen to the cells.

Best solutions for reducing stress-related back pain:

- Be aware of when you feel especially stressed. Find relief before your emotional tension affects your back – change activities, exercise or meditate.
- Fit in daily physical activity. In particular, aerobic workouts can reduce depression, relieve stress and strengthen your back muscles.
- Modify your repetitive tasks. If your work is sedentary, do as many tasks as possible standing up to break up muscle tension; take stretching and walking breaks.
- Watch your posture. Avoid slouching and hunching forward.

You don’t have to live with back or neck pain. Examine your lifestyle and work environment to find ways to reverse situations that can produce stress and hurt your back.

Stand Up for Your Health

Cardiovascular – unhealthy cholesterol and blood sugar levels.
Spinal – disk damage and neck, shoulder and back pain.
Muscles – weakened core, back and hip muscles.
Legs – reduced circulation and soft bones.
Obesity – sitting promotes weight gain.

Starting now, get up and move more:

✓ Stand up, stretch and walk a few steps.
✓ Stand up while talking on the phone.
✓ Get off the couch while watching TV.
✓ Schedule 10-minute activity breaks a few times a day.
✓ Get up and do some chores.
✓ Combine meetings with walking.
✓ Set a timer as a reminder.

The idea is to break the chronic constricted posture of sitting that prevents your body from functioning well. Stand up – for your health.

Rx for Medication Safety

4–Ask about possible interactions when using multiple drugs. If you use alcohol or tobacco, ask about any impact from these substances while taking medicines or supplements.

5–Learn how to use each medicine. Ask your provider when to take it and for how long. Whether it’s a prescription or an OTC medicine, read the label and always use as directed.

6–Try to have all your prescriptions filled at the same pharmacy. It will track all your drugs and alert you or your provider if a new drug might cause problems. Your pharmacist is a vital member of your health care team, ready to assist and answer your questions.

Check out the FDA’s online national campaign BeSafeRx to learn about finding safe and legal online pharmacies. Go to www.fda.gov and enter BeSafeRx in the search engine.