

# MAKING HEALTHY LIFESTYLE CHOICES

Preserving or improving your health is among the most important things you will ever do for yourself. The status of your health will greatly affect how long and how well you live. It may even be the deciding factor in whether you play actively with your grandchildren or watch from the sidelines.

Your local public health department encourages you to take an active role in improving your health. By making everyday healthy choices in the areas of nutrition, physical activity, stress reduction and personal care you can improve your chances of living a longer, happier, healthier life.

## **Nutrition**

- Eat five or more fruits and vegetables each day. Choose at least one serving per meal and have them readily available for a quick morning snack or late afternoon energy burst.
- Eat lean meats like chicken, turkey and fish. Try using ground poultry in your favorite recipes and see if you can tell a difference. If you choose red meat, choose lean cuts and trim visible fat before cooking.
- Limit sweets and fats. Make dessert a special occasion instead of an everyday occurrence.
- Stay well-hydrated. Instead of caffeinated beverages that actually decrease your hydration, drink more water. Add lemon, lime or orange slices for flavoring.

## **Physical Activity**

- Make the effort to get at least 30 minutes of physical activity most days of the week. If you don't have a specific activity you enjoy, consider walking your dog, playing with your kids or shopping.
- Choose stairs instead of the elevator whenever possible.
- Pass up the prime parking spot and choose one further from the door. The extra steps are good for your heart.

## **Stress Reduction**

- Take regular breaks during work hours or when dealing with stressful situations.
- Practice stretching, deep breathing or meditation.
- Make time for yourself – read a book, visit with a friend or family member, listen to music or participate in your favorite hobby.
- Build a support system – friends, family, co-workers or your faith-based community.
- Ask for help when you need it.
- Know your personal stress signals and act quickly to reduce their effects.

## **Personal Care**

- Wash your hands frequently with soap and water, especially after using the bathroom, before eating and drinking, and after touching common surfaces like shopping cart handles, telephones, computer keyboards, faucets, light switches and door knobs.
- Stay current on your checkups, vaccinations and preventive screenings. If a health problem is identified, follow your health care provider's instructions, and always take medication as prescribed.
- Limit or avoid alcoholic beverages and tobacco products.
- Get adequate sleep. The average adult requires seven to nine hours per night.

Follow these suggestions to establish a healthy lifestyle that will boost your immune system and help protect you from viruses and diseases.