NEW FEATURE

Patient Handout

NOTES

Your doctor or therapist has given you this patient education handout to further explain or remind you about an issue related to your health. This handout is a general guide only. If you have specific questions, discuss them with your doctor or therapist.

advance FOR DIRECTORS IN Rehabilitation

Keeping Fit and Staying Well

SO, YOUR DOCTOR SAYS YOU NEED TO exercise and eat right. Good idea, but let's think…The last time you exercised was about two years ago at a picnic when your half-empty bag of chips blew across the grass. And jelly donuts during the morning commute don't exactly qualify as the breakfast of champions.

To stay healthy, you need to eat right, exercise and get wellness screenings. But how and where do you start? Here are some nutritional and exercise tips, as well as screening suggestions, for a healthy lifestyle.

Exercise

Before you begin any exercise program, clear it with your doctor—especially if you're over 40, or have health problems, such as high blood pressure or cholesterol, diabetes, a family history of heart disease, or smoke. When deciding on a program, remember:

• A complete program includes aerobic exercise, muscle strength, endurance conditioning and stretching. Aerobic activity is good for your cardiovascular system, while muscle strengthening lowers the risk for low back injury and is important to manage weight. Stretching reduces the risk of injury and muscle soreness.

• Aerobic exercise doesn't mean running for miles; it can be as simple as walking. If you want a no-impact activity, try bicycling, stationary cycling and swimming. Any activity that uses large muscle groups in continuous movement for a prolonged period of time is considered aerobic. Start gradually and work up to 20 to 30 minutes a day, three days a week.

• Keep the pace comfortable. If you can have a conversation while you're exercising, you're at a good pace. Also, measure your heart rate to check the intensity of your exercise. At the end of exercise, count your pulse for 10 seconds, then multiply by six to get your 60-second heart rate. Exercising within a range of 55 to 80 percent of an estimated maximum heart rate (220 minus your age) is ideal. For example, if you're 40 years old, exercise between a heart rate of 99 and 144.

• Find an activity you enjoy. The more you enjoy the activity, the more likely you'll stick to it.

Nutrition

Proper nutrition is key to staying healthy. Eating various whole grains, fruits, vegetables, dairy and meat, poultry or fish provides you with essential nutrients. Here are some other tips:

• Eat moderate proportions. Keeping portion sizes reasonable means you can eat the foods you enjoy. For example, the recommended serving of cooked meat is 3 ounces, similar to the size of the palm of your hand.

• Eat regular meals. Skipping meals leads to overeating from excessive hunger. Make sure your snacks don't become entire meals.

• Reduce—don't eliminate—certain foods. If your favorite foods are high in fat, salt or sugar, modify the amount and frequency of eating these foods. For example, if you like drinking milk and high-fat beef, try drinking skim milk and lean cuts of meat, like flank steak. If you love fried food, eat it less often, or if you're eating at restaurant, share with a friend or ask for a smaller portion. You want to eat healthy, without sacrificing the pleasure of eating what you enjoy.

• Balance your food choices. If you eat food high in fat, sugar or salt, eat other foods that day that are low in those ingredients. Also, try to eat the same amount of carbohydrates and proteins. Your fat intake should be one-third of the amount of carbohydrates and proteins.

• Make changes gradually. If you make too many changes too fast, you're more likely to give up. Modest changes can add up to positive, lifelong eating habits.

• No food is "bad" or "good." Choose what you eat based on your total eating patterns, not if a food is "good" or "bad." If you love apple pie, potato chips or candy, don't feel guilty about eating them. Just be sure to eat in moderation, and choose other foods that provide balance to your diet.

Screenings

Staying healthy also means knowing your body. These screenings will help: blood pressure, osteoporosis, diabetes, blood chemistry, hearing and vision tests, and body composition analysis (body fat). Talk to your doctor about where to get screened.

The keys to living long and being healthy are exercising and eating properly.

Information adapted from 10 Tips to Healthy Eating *from the American Dietetic Association and* Fit Facts™ *from the American Counsel on Exercise.*