LiVe Well 20 Habits for Everyday Health

MAKE GOOD HEALTH A HABIT

The science is clear about which regular habits will make the biggest difference for your health. The 20 habits on this handout are a mix of proven ideas to help you:

- **Have more energy, strength, and vitality every day**
- **Reach and maintain a healthy weight**

Looking for a place to start? Pick the one that you feel most ready, willing, and able to take on **today**.

Move more — and sit less

1. **Aim for 150 minutes a week of moderate-intensity aerobic exercise — like a brisk walk.** That's about 30 minutes on most days. Schedule time in your daily routine, and when you get busy, make this the last thing to go.
2. **Sit less.** If you have to sit for long periods at work or school, try to stand up and move around for 2 to 3 minutes every 20 to 30 minutes.
3. **Mix it up.** Add some strength training and stretching to your regular aerobic activity at least 2 days a week.
4. **Build up gradually.** Add a few minutes to your daily exercise every week.
5. **Be active all day long.** Every step counts! Use a pedometer to count your steps, and try to build up to 10,000 steps a day.

Eat well

6. **Eat a healthy breakfast every day.** A healthy breakfast includes whole grains, fruit, and protein.
7. **Eat more** foods that have plenty of nutrients and fiber, like fruits, vegetables, and whole grains. Choose healthy snacks between meals to stave off hunger.
8. **Eat fewer** foods with added fat, sugar, and salt. A good place to start is to limit sweetened drinks — drink water, instead.
9. **Enjoy what you eat — just eat less of it.** Keep track of what you eat and watch your portion sizes. Eat from a small plate, not out of the bag.
10. **Eat meals with your family** as often as you can. Studies show that shared meals promote health for everyone.

LIFELONG HABITS, ONE STEP AT A TIME

The key better health is to make small changes you can gradually build into your daily routine — and stick with them.

You don't need to make all these changes at once. First, look at the ideas listed here, and give yourself a gold star for everything you're already doing. **Then choose just one or two healthy changes you're ready to make right now.** When they become habits, you'll be ready to add in another one.

Quit tobacco, sleep well, and stress less

11 **Quit tobacco.** Gain better health by losing your cigarettes or chew. It's less difficult if you have a support group to help.

12 **Sleep 7 to 9 hours every night.** Not sleeping enough increases your risk of weight gain, depression, high blood pressure, and other chronic diseases. If you're having trouble sleeping, discuss treatment options with a doctor.

13 **Get to know what causes you stress** and be aware of how you cope with it. Understanding your stress will help you plan actions to reduce it.

14 **Find a friend or family member** to support you in your new habits, and your everyday life.

15 **Reward yourself for small changes.** Pay attention to what you've already achieved. You'll know that you can make another change.

Reach and maintain a healthy weight

The habits on this handout are proven to help maintain a healthy weight. If you're trying to ***lose*** weight, start adding in these habits as well:

16 **Increase your exercise to 250 to 300 minutes per week** — about 60 minutes most days. The people who lose weight and keep it off are the ones who keep up a high dose of exercise.

17 **Make changes to your diet *and* your activity level.** The only way to keep the weight off is to do both.

18 **Keep a food and activity journal.** Write down what you eat and how you exercise. It'll help you understand your patterns, what's working, and what behaviors you want to change.

19 **Plan to lose weight slowly** — about 1 to 2 pounds per week.

20 **Don't give up when you get off track.** Everybody slips up — it's part of life. Stay focused on why you want to lose weight, and start over as many times as you need to.

Remember that physical activity and good nutrition will pay off right away, even if the weight loss is slow.

SMALL LOSSES, BIG REWARDS

Research shows that if you're overweight, even a modest weight loss can yield big health rewards. For example, losing just 5% to 7% of your body weight (that's just 10 to 14 pounds for a 200-pound person) can lower your risk for health problems like diabetes and heart disease. What's more, you'll probably have more energy and a brighter outlook.

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