

Ring in Spring: Habits for a Healthy Life

Are bad habits wreaking havoc on your health? Whether it's too much sun, not enough sleep, skipping important medical exams or choosing the couch over the treadmill, we're all guilty of making some bad choices. But it's never too late to change your habits. With the right support, a variety of classes, and some great advice, it is possible to achieve your goals and be a healthier person.

Learn ways to get active, eat better, protect your joints, manage menopause and cope with cancer. Also, learn about the services and classes that Methodist Medical Center in Oak Ridge offers in our community to help you make good health a priority for yourself and your family. To download a free class catalog, go to mmcoakridge.com/community or call (865) 835-4662.

Eat a healthy diet

A diet high in saturated fat and trans fat can increase your risk for heart disease and certain cancers. The American Heart Association and other health organizations recommend limiting your total fat intake to no more than 30 percent of your daily calories. Diets that are high in fat and sugar also promote obesity, which not only affects your appearance, but also is a risk factor for many diseases. Strike a healthy balance by eating meals rich in whole grains, vegetables, and fruits, with small servings of chicken, fish, and lean meat. Be sure to drink plenty of water every day because good hydration helps keep the skin taut and elastic, and reduces bloating.



Exercise regularly. Regular exercise improves muscle tone, so you stand taller, walk with more confident strides, and look

people straight in the eye. Good cardiovascular conditioning also improves blood flow to muscles and skin, so your skin tone is more likely to have a healthy glow. The American Academy of Family Physicians suggests some kind of moderate physical activity for 30 to 60 minutes most days of the week. According to the 2008 Physical Guidelines for Americans, 30 to 60 minutes of exercise each day not only will help maintain and improve health, but will also help prevent weight gain. Include

anaerobic strength training and aerobic activities, such as walking, running, swimming, or cycling. Daily stretches will help maintain flexibility. Be sure to check with your healthcare provider before beginning any exercise program.

Get a good night's sleep

Give your body the rest it needs to restore itself. You'll feel refreshed, you'll look better, you'll have more spring in your step and your day will be filled with vitality. Getting too little sleep

creates a "sleep debt" that eventually must be repaid. Operating on a sleep deficit affects your judgment and reaction time. Contact the Methodist Sleep Diagnostic Center at (865) 835-3810 if your sleep routine leaves you less than rested.

Avoid toxins

Harmful substances take their toll on your appearance and your health. Smokers, for instance, are more likely to have dry, wrinkled skin than nonsmokers, says the American Cancer Society.

Overuse of alcohol can also dry the skin. Too much sun causes damage, too. Guard against skin cancer and premature wrinkling by using sunscreen and wearing a hat and protective clothing when you spend time outdoors.

Don't forget your emotional health

According to the American Academy of Family Physicians, people with good emotional health are aware of their thoughts, feelings, and behaviors. They have learned healthy ways to cope with the stress and problems that are a normal part of life. Poor emotional health can weaken your body's immune system, making you more likely to get colds and other infections during emotionally difficult times. One way to nurture your emotional health is to calm your mind and body through relaxation and meditation. If you are positive about yourself and others, you will automatically present a more attractive face to the world.

So if you want to look healthier and improve the quality of your physical and emotional health, start by taking care of yourself. Remember that one small, positive change a day can result in major benefits over time!

Check. Detect. Correct. Protect.

One important component of a long and healthy life is getting preventive health screenings for serious diseases. If your doctor finds a disease early, the problem is often easier to treat and may cause less damage. In addition to celebrating milestone birthdays, consider them reminders for certain important health checks.

Screening means testing for a condition before there are signs or symptoms of disease. If you already have symptoms of any of the conditions listed below, be sure to see your doctor right away.

Here's a timeline for health screenings through the decades:

Breast cancer. Mammograms use X-rays to look for breast cancers when they are still small. The American Cancer Society (ACS) recommends annual mammograms for women starting at age 40. Talk with your doctor about frequency, as well as other possible imaging tests if you have a family history of breast cancer. Mammograms are the best way to detect early cancer, but all women should

also know how their breasts feel normally and report any changes to their doctor. Clinical breast exams should be done yearly in women after age 40.

Prostate cancer. The ACS suggests that men talk with their doctor at age 50 about whether they should be tested for prostate cancer. This screening involves a blood test measuring a substance called PSA. It may also include a rectal exam of the prostate. African-American men and men with a father or brother who had prostate cancer before age 65 should have this talk at age 45.

Osteoporosis. The U.S. Preventive Services Task Force (USPSTF) suggests that women be screened for osteoporosis starting at age 65. Your doctor might advise you to start at a younger age if you are at high risk for bone loss or a broken bone.

Colorectal cancer. The ACS suggests that both men and women be screened for colorectal cancer starting at age 50. The gold standard diagnostic test is the colonoscopy. If no precancerous



polyps are found, you may not need to have it the test repeated more than once every 10 years. If you have a family history of colon or rectal cancer, you may need to be tested earlier.

Diabetes. The National Institutes of Health suggests that everyone age 45 or older think about being tested for diabetes. Consider starting at a younger age if you're overweight and have other factors

that put you at higher risk for diabetes, such as an elevated blood glucose level, high cholesterol, high blood pressure, or family history of diabetes.

Cholesterol. The USPSTF suggests that men have cholesterol screenings starting at age 35. Women should begin at 45 if they're at high risk for heart disease. Both men and women should consider getting this blood test at an earlier age if their risk for

heart disease is particularly high.

Blood pressure. All adults should be screened for high blood pressure once a year. If the blood pressure is in the low normal range, screening can be extended to every two years.

Abdominal aneurysm. Men should have a one-time screening for abdominal aortic aneurysm between ages 65 and 75 if they have ever

smoked, the USPSTF suggests. This ultrasound test looks for a weak, bulging spot in a major blood vessel in the abdomen. The USPSTF doesn't recommend the screening in older men who haven't smoked or in women.

Cervical cancer. Women should be screened at least every three years. After age 65 or after a hysterectomy for benign disease, women may stop having Pap smears as long as their previous Pap smears were normal and they are not otherwise at high risk for cervical cancer.

Screenings are just one step you can take to prevent disease later in life. Other crucial steps include:

- Avoiding tobacco
- Maintaining a healthy weight
- Eating a healthy diet rich in fruits, vegetables, whole grains, and fat-free or low-fat dairy
- Getting at least 30 minutes of moderate physical activity on most days of the week
- Drinking alcohol only in moderation, if you drink at all.

Physicians at Your Fingertips

Call, click and connect to find the right choice for you.

For personalized physician referral service, please call (865) 835-4662.

Online services are also available at mmcoakridge.com/physicians.

