

My Life: Healthy Lifestyle Choices

Why Healthy Life Choices?

There are many reasons to and ways you can maintain a healthy lifestyle. Taking an active role in your own healthcare, including making healthy lifestyle choices, can give you many benefits. These benefits can include increased energy, improved general well-being, and potentially a longer life. You probably know that diabetes and high blood pressure are two of the main risk factors for chronic kidney disease, but did you know that these two risk factors are also linked to heart disease.

What Can You Do?

Eat a healthy diet, exercise regularly, maintain a healthy weight, get immunized, do not smoke, limit alcohol use, get an annual physical exam, and get enough hours of sleep.

Healthy Diet – Small Portions, Less Fat, Less Sugar

A healthy diet is one that helps maintain or improve general health. A healthy diet involves eating the correct amounts of all important nutrients. You can get nutrients from many different foods and a healthy diet needs to have a balance of fats, proteins, carbohydrates, and calories to support energy needs. Your dietitian can help with the specific diet recommendations for people on dialysis. Some suggestions for a healthy diet are listed below:

- Eat more fiber by eating more whole-grain foods.
- Eat a variety of fruits and vegetables every day.
- Choose fresh, frozen, canned, or dried fruit and 100% fruit juices most of the time.
- Use less salt in cooking and at the table.
- Eat fewer foods that are high in salt, such as canned and packaged soups, canned vegetables, pickles, and processed meats.



Eat Healthy



Healthy Weight



Exercise Regularly



Enough Sleep



Limit Smoking and Alcohol



Annual Physical and Vaccinations

Limit foods that are high in saturated fats or trans fat:

- Fried foods, cakes, candy, cookies, crackers, pies, lard, shortening, stick margarine, and non-dairy creamers
- Fatty cuts of meat
- Whole milk and dairy products made from whole milk
- Salad dressings

Limit or avoid foods high in sugar, such as:

- Fruit-flavored drinks and sodas
- Tea or coffee sweetened with sugar

Exercise Regularly

Regular physical activity is one of the most important things you can do for your health. Read more about being active in the “My Life: Being Active” page included in the MY KIDNEY KIT.

Smoking and Alcohol

One of the most important things you can do for your health is to stop smoking! This habit is the single most preventable cause of disease and premature death in the United States. It leads to heart disease, cancer, emphysema, stroke, pneumonia, and other health problems. If you do smoke, ask your healthcare provider for assistance in stopping. There are many smoking cessation programs available, as well as medications and nicotine replacement therapies to help with the effects of withdrawal. Consider this as one of the most important things you can do to stay healthy. Not drinking or limiting the amount of alcohol you drink can also help your health. Studies have shown that alcohol consumption of more than four drinks daily is associated with an increased risk of cirrhosis, liver cancer, and premature death. It is not known how much is too much for any one person. For this reason, it is best not to drink at all.

Disease Prevention – Annual Physical Exam and Vaccines

A complete annual physical exam is one of the best ways to detect problems you may not be aware of so that treatment can be started early if needed. It is also important to undergo screening tests that are recommended based on your age and gender, such as a Pap smear, mammogram, yearly breast exam, prostate exam and blood test for prostate cancer. Everyone should have a cholesterol profile, colon cancer screening, screening for risk of heart disease and diabetes, and regular blood pressure checks. Regular dental care, wearing sunscreen, and having periodic vision exams are also important healthy behaviors. Immunizations or vaccines are an important preventative practice as well. Childhood vaccines against diseases such as polio, measles, mumps and rubella, and hemophilia influenza are required. Other vaccines

may be indicated depending on your age, where you live, and risk of disease. There are several vaccines recommended for people on dialysis that are included in the “My Life: Vaccines for People on Dialysis” page in the MY KIDNEY KIT.

A note of caution: If you have had an organ transplant or your immune system has become compromised, you must avoid any live vaccines. Consult your healthcare provider if you are not sure whether a particular immunization is indicated and safe for you to take.

Maintain a Healthy Weight and Get Enough Hours of Sleep

A healthy diet and exercise both help you to maintain a healthy weight. Obesity is a national epidemic, causing higher medical costs and a lower quality of life. Obesity means having excess body fat. Obesity is defined by body mass index, or BMI, which is calculated from your height and weight. BMI greater than or equal to 30 means you are obese. Besides diet and behavior, additional factors such as environment, disease, medications and family history may also have an effect in causing people to be overweight and obese. Obesity can cause many health problems.

Sufficient sleep is increasingly being recognized as an essential aspect of health promotion and chronic disease prevention in the public health community. Notably, insufficient sleep is associated with the onset of chronic diseases and poses important implications for their management and outcome.

My Questions

Ask your Care Team:

- What else could be making me gain or lose weight?
- Is it safe for me to exercise?
- What can I do if I’m not sleeping well?

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