

Management of Your Personal Health

What do I need to do to manage my personal health?

Start by going to your primary healthcare provider's office. Discuss your family medical history as well as your personal medical history. Let your provider know about any symptoms you are having or any concerns you have about your health. Schedule a basic medical exam if you haven't had one recently.

If you don't have a primary healthcare provider, it's a good idea to start developing a good relationship with a healthcare provider recommended to you by a friend or another healthcare provider. You should feel comfortable asking and discussing questions with your healthcare provider. Then if you should develop a concern or medical problem, you'll be able to get help from someone who already knows you.

Practice disease and injury prevention. Preventing disease can be much easier than having a disease. For example, you can do these things to help prevent injury and disease:

- Wear sunscreen.
- Wear your seatbelt in the car.
- Don't smoke.
- Don't use or abuse illegal drugs.
- Get the shots (immunizations) recommended for your age and medical condition.
- Prevent sexually transmitted infections by avoiding high-risk sexual behavior. Use latex or polyurethane male or female condoms with every sexual encounter if you have more than one sexual partner or your sexual partner has more than one partner.
- Get regular exercise. Ask your healthcare provider for an exercise prescription. Eat a healthy diet.
 - Eat a high-fiber diet.
 - Get protein from lean meats, poultry, and fish. Get more protein from other foods, such as beans, peas, nuts, seeds, and milk products.
 - Eat foods that are a source of healthy fat, for example, olive oil, flax seed oil, fish, and nuts.
 - Eat whole grains.
 - Eat at least 5 servings of fresh fruits and vegetables daily.
 - Drink alcohol in moderation if you drink at all.

Schedule regular screening tests, according to your healthcare provider's recommendations, such as:

- Weight and blood pressure measurements
- Mammograms and other women's health exams, including Pap tests (if you are a woman)

- Blood sugar and cholesterol tests
- Colorectal cancer screening
- Prostate cancer screening (if you are a man)

Try to keep a healthy weight. Follow your healthcare provider's advice about managing your weight.

What are some basic ways I can improve my health?

- Quit smoking if you are a smoker.
- Drink more water.
- Eat a healthier diet.
- Get more exercise, according to your healthcare provider's recommendations. Besides its other health advantages, exercise gives you more energy for all of your activities, helps you sleep better, and can help you feel better if you are mildly depressed.
- Lose weight if you are overweight. Try to keep your weight at a comfortable, healthy level. Ask your healthcare provider to help you determine a healthy weight for you.

What are some things I can do in my home to protect my health and the health of my family?

- Don't smoke.
- Use alcohol safely and responsibly.
- Test all the smoke detectors in your home to make sure that they are all working properly.
- Teach your children about fire safety and have an escape plan, especially if your home has 2 or more floors.
- Check the safety of your home (such as stairways and the placement of throw rugs) to prevent accidents.
- Protect your family from domestic violence.
- Keep guns unloaded in a locked cabinet, away from children.
- When there is a threat of violence, call the police, your healthcare provider, your friends, a domestic violence shelter, or a local hotline for help.
- Keep a clean, uncluttered home.
- Teach your children about playground, sidewalk, and street safety.
- Lower the temperature of the hot water heater to 120°F (49°C) or the "low" setting.
- Keep all medicines, prescription and nonprescription, where children cannot get to them.
- Teach your children the techniques and importance of good hand washing.
- Keep up-to-date with all shots recommended for each family member according to their age and medical condition.

How can I improve my social life in a healthy way?

- Build lasting friendships. Family and friends provide emotional and social support.
- Get out of the house and interact with other people at:
 - Evening classes
 - Your place of worship
 - Social clubs
 - Volunteer opportunities
- Avoid bars and nightclubs as places to meet new friends.
- Limit how much TV you watch.
- Limit how much time you spend on the computer.
- Be as physically active as possible.

How will I know if I am correctly managing my health?

Set goals that are realistic and achievable. Set up a time frame to reach these goals and track your progress. Find ways to reward yourself for good progress—for example, with a massage or fun activity.

Take a confident, active role in staying well. Follow these guidelines to develop the confidence you need to take charge of your health. And learn what to do in times of illness, injury, or emergency--yours or someone else's.

If you have questions or concerns about how you are doing, review your goals with your healthcare provider.

What if I have questions about my health?

Ask your primary healthcare provider. You can also seek other good, reliable health resources. Places where you can find information are:

- The local library
- Trusted Internet sites such as <http://www.cdc.gov> or <http://www.nih.gov>
- Licensed or certified health professionals
- Community education courses, often provided free by local hospitals and organizations
- Health organizations, such as the American Diabetes Association, American Heart Association, and American Cancer Society
- Bookstores

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