

How to Keep Your Loved Ones Healthy

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With the cost of medicine continually on the rise, Americans are taking their health into their own hands. One of the best ways to protect the health of your loved ones is to practice random acts of health. Here are ten of my favorite strategies for keeping your loved ones strong and healthy!

One: Lead by example. Being a role model is the most powerful way to influence the behaviors of people in your life. Numerous studies have shown a link between parents' behaviors and the behaviors of their kids. The same is true of healthcare professionals. Physicians who engage in a healthy lifestyle are more likely to have healthy patients. If you want those you care about to take care of themselves, first take care of yourself!

Two: Keep a variety of healthy foods around. This sounds too simple to be effective, but it works. Behavioral research shows, time and time again, as variety increases, more food is consumed. This is true with both low-nutrition and high-nutrition foods. If you want your loved ones to increase their consumption of healthy foods, adding variety helps. Instead of just bananas on the counter, try peaches, apples, pears, oranges, berries, etc. This strategy works well with all kinds of healthy foods.

Three: Trade TV time for physical activity at least once a week. According to a report by the Nielson Company, the average American spends 34 hours per week watching television. Those 34 hours represent a golden opportunity for improving your health. Trading TV time for physical activity is a huge step in the right direction. Research has also shown that increasing physical activity increases other healthy behaviors (such as healthy eating). I like to think one good decision leads to another!

Four: Partner up! Psychologists recognize that people who practice healthy behaviors with others are more likely to sustain those behaviors. Having a partner allows you to socialize while adding accountability and support. Try meeting for a walk, workout, bike ride or healthy meal. Partnering up on a

weekly or monthly basis adds ongoing support and accountability. I like partnering up for both physical activity (usually an evening walk) and healthy meals.

Five: Beef up the nutrition in your favorite dishes. An easy way to sneak vitamins, minerals, fiber and other nutrients into your diet is to add vegetables to your favorite dishes. One of my favorites is a vegetable pizza. At 5 to 10 calories per ounce, you can add volume and nutrition while keeping calories low. Adding veggies to the standard pizza lowers the calorie per ounce value by about 30%. I usually add a specific number of cups – such as 4 cups and then go for what I like (broccoli, green pepper, mushrooms, onions, etc.). This strategy works with soups, casseroles, stews, sandwiches and just about any recipe.

Six: Join a fitness center together. When you join together, you are more likely to get to the fitness center. We see this with our members. Couples (family members, friends and spouses) are more likely to work out together and by themselves. The team approach adds support, accountability and socialization. These are powerful ingredients when you are practicing a behavior that can literally save your life!

Seven: Walk to a local restaurant. This is a great way to add spontaneous physical activity to your week. Eating in restaurants usually involves waiting for a table, waiting to be served, waiting for your food and waiting for the check. This can add hours of inactivity to your day. A short walk to a local restaurant will burn calories and create some synergy (get you thinking about healthy choices) with your meal.

Eight: Stash healthy snacks everywhere. Stashing healthy snacks into a book bag, lunch bag or briefcase supports spontaneous healthy eating. Many of our food choices are spontaneous. By stashing healthy snacks in unexpected places you increase the odds your loved ones will munch on some healthy snacks.

Nine: Donate your time. Our fast-paced, modern lifestyles can leave loved ones busy and overworked. A great way to lighten their load is to donate your time. In other words, offer to do a chore so they can take care of themselves. The free time they gain can be applied towards a variety of healthy behaviors - including relaxing - something we could all use more of.

Ten: Plan a simple meal at home. One of the easiest ways to improve your diet is to eat at home. Numerous studies show that Americans consume more calories and salt and less fiber when they eat out. Eating at home is an easy way to cut calories and improve nutrition. By keeping your meals simple (such as sandwiches and a salad) you can save both calories and time.

Get Some Help

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