1-2012

New Year's Health-Check

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Every day the average American is bombarded by about 250 marketing messages that encourage us to buy things we don’t really need or eat things which are mostly unhealthy. With the beginning of a new year, now is a good time to take an inventory and see how many of the following ten health habits you can check off. And then, set out to practice all ten to achieve optimal health in 2012.

1. Nurture your spiritual life. Trust Jesus with your problems. Share His love with others. People who have a vibrant spiritual life enjoy better health. Commitment to God is associated with less anxiety and depression, healthier lifestyles, improved overall health and lower death rates.

2. Be proactive in preventing disease. Take personal responsibility for your healthcare. Nobody knows your body better than you do. Have regular medical and dental checkups. Overall, you will feel so much better when you are in control of your health.

3. Develop healthy relationships with the people around you. People with trustworthy friends and close family ties have stronger immune systems and experience better recovery when sick. Those who are involved with helping others experience improved mental health. Doing volunteer work on a regular basis can give you an emotional boost.

4. Maintain a healthy attitude. Cheerfulness, unselfishness and gratitude have marvelous, life-giving power. Hope, faith, sympathy and a caring attitude promote health and prolong life.

5. Manage stress effectively. Learn how to relax. Set realistic goals and new priorities. Stress increases your risk of heart disease, high blood pressure, irritable bowel, depression, forgetfulness, headaches, insomnia, fatigue, allergies and irritability.

6. Take time for adequate rest and sleep. Don’t spend excessive time on the Web, Facebook, Twitter, blogs or text messaging. Chronic sleep deprivation can increase blood pressure, increase your risk of diabetes, impair memory, contribute to depression, and increase the risk of colds and infections. Avoid caffeinated beverages, which disturb your normal sleep patterns.

7. Eat a diet rich in fiber, including colorful fruits and vegetables, beans, nuts and whole grain products. During winter, it’s important to eat plenty of fruits and vegetables to counterbalance some of the holiday foods. People who consume a plant-based diet, rich in antioxidants, enjoy better health.

8. Keep well-hydrated. An adequate water intake will help you concentrate better, and manage your winter infections. We need about 30 percent more water than our thirst tells us. Drinking adequate water does lower your risk of heart disease.

9. Exercise 30 minutes every day. This helps your cardiovascular fitness, improves your memory, and greatly diminishes anxiety and depression. During the winter months, keep up your exercise program; it boosts the immune system and reduces the risk of upper respiratory infections.

10. Keep a regular schedule. Habits of regularity are associated with improved health and memory, and a better disposition. An irregular schedule in your life has an effect on the body and mind similar to that of jet lag.

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