

Improve Your Health At Any Age

Think it is too late to start living a healthy lifestyle? You can make lifestyle changes regardless of age to have a healthier future.

Minor lifestyle changes can lead to a higher quality of life and a longer life. Changes like being physically active, eating nutritious food more often, maintaining a healthy weight, moderating alcohol consumption, and avoiding smoking can improve your chances for a healthy future. When you replace an old habit with a new one, your hard work pays off, reducing your risk of illness like heart disease.

How many of these statements describe you?

- I do not use tobacco products.
- I drink in moderation (no more than two drinks for men and one for women daily).
- I get regular physical activity.
- I weigh within my doctor's recommended guidelines.
- I get seven to eight hours of sleep per night.

The health risks of smoking are well known. There are many over-the-counter and prescription drugs that can increase your chances of quitting. The Wyoming Department of Health has support, resources, and tools to help you discontinue tobacco use.

Heavy alcohol drinking increases your risk for heart disease, liver disease, high blood pressure, cancer, and mental health problems. Talk with your doctor if you need help cutting down the amount of alcohol you drink.

Adding more movement to your days will keep you mobile throughout life and even reduce aches and pains. You also do not have to hit the gym to get enough physical activity. The best thing to do is find activities you enjoy. Walking is inexpensive and can be done at home. You can start slowly and work up to 30 minutes daily. Walking around your living space indoors is a great way to help you form an exercise habit. Check with your doctor before beginning an exercise program. HealthinAging.org has a tip sheet, 'Walking For Older Adults,' to help you start a walking routine.

Excess weight puts you at a higher risk for many diseases, such as cancer, diabetes, and heart disease. When you add healthy eating to your list of habits, it will be easier to maintain a healthy weight. Our nutrition needs change as we get older. Metabolism slows down, yet we need more nutrients. Just at the time when we need to be eating healthier, our eating habits often worsen. Sense of taste diminishes, so we eat extra sugar and salt. Medications and medical conditions may change appetite. The challenge while eating less overall is to eat more nutrient-rich foods, such as fruits, vegetables, whole grains, nuts, beans, fish, low-fat dairy products, and lean cuts of meat. Eat a healthy diet by filling half your plate with fruits and vegetables. This change is a

small step toward eating a healthy diet. The MyPlate website has a lot of great tips to help you with this goal. Make one or two small, achievable dietary changes at a time, like gradually shifting from regular pasta to whole wheat pasta or steadily reducing the amount of sodium in your diet.

Sleep is the foundation of your body's natural repair systems. Sleep preserves and strengthens your immune system. Most adults need seven or more hours of good-quality sleep on a regular schedule each night. A lack of sleep puts you at a higher risk for many physical and mental disorders. If you have a sleep problem, talk with your doctor about changes you can make to get a better night's sleep.

It is never too late to get healthy! You can improve your health at any age. Every new day is another chance to change your life.

(Sources: www.myplate.gov; health.gov; health.wyo.gov; www.healthinaging.org
www.quitwyo.org;)