

# Living Right<sup>®</sup>

Your Health and Wellness Awareness Bulletin

August 2018

Chronic  
Conditions

## Chronic conditions costly but preventable

What do heart disease and cancer have in common with type 2 diabetes, obesity, and arthritis?

They are all chronic diseases, as classified by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), and are largely preventable.

Chronic diseases don't come and go like the flu or a common cold. They are lingering conditions that are heavily impacted by lifestyle choices.

Poor eating habits, a sedentary lifestyle, and tobacco and alcohol use all play a role in the development of chronic diseases. For example, they can contribute

to cancer and heart disease, which are responsible for almost half of U.S. deaths, according to the CDC.

In addition, a poor diet and inactivity can lead to obesity, which impacts about a third of adults in the United States. A person who does not exercise, has a poor diet, and is overweight has a higher chance of getting type 2 diabetes, and arthritis often occurs with other chronic diseases.

These conditions are costly; medical expenses for heart disease alone topped \$180 billion in 2012. That's enough to buy an annual gym membership for everyone in the United States.

Prevention of these conditions rests largely on lifestyle choices. While it's not always easy to find time to make a nutritious meal or go for a walk, taking steps to eat right, exercise, and avoid tobacco and excessive alcohol pays off with a reduced risk of these serious conditions.



### By the numbers

117 million people had at least one chronic health condition in 2012.

7 in 10 deaths in the U.S. are caused by chronic conditions.

About half of all adults had one or more chronic conditions in 2012, and 1 in 4 had two or more.

Source: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention



## The Big Four: Risky behaviors behind chronic disease

Many of the problems caused by chronic diseases are caused by four health risk behaviors:



**Lack of exercise** – About half of adults do not get enough aerobic exercise, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). It's recommended that adults get at least 150 minutes of moderate aerobic activity each week and do muscle strengthening activities on two or more days of the week.



**Poor nutrition** – Fruit and vegetables are important for good health, but CDC data shows that only 1 in 10 adults meet the federal fruit and vegetable recommendations. A healthy diet includes two to three cups of vegetables and 1 1/2 to two cups of fruit each day.



**Tobacco use** – More than 480,000 deaths each year are caused by cigarette smoking. Quitting reduces your risk of chronic disease. For example, risk of a sudden heart attack goes down within a day of quitting.



**Too much alcohol** – One in 6 adults binge drinks (a woman having 4 drinks or a man having 5 drinks in about two hours) four times per month. If you choose to drink, do so in moderation (no more than one drink per day for women, or two for men).

## Those minutes of exercise really do add up

Exercise is an important part of reducing the risk of chronic disease, and new research is showing that even small amounts of exercise add up.



Currently, the Physical Activity Guidelines for Americans recommend that exercise be obtained in bouts of at least 10 minutes in order to gain substantial health benefits. However, a study published in the *Journal of the American Heart Association* found that there are benefits to exercise for even shorter intermittent periods of activity.

The study looked at data relating to sporadic exercise as well as exercise obtained in bouts lasting 5 to 10 minutes. It found that the risk of death is lowered through moderate to vigorous exercise no matter how those exercise minutes add up.

More research needs to be done, but this study points to the benefits of any exercise. If you're avoiding exercise because you don't have a large chunk of time for it, don't let that stop you. Even a little bit of movement will help.

## Use these time-saving tips to create healthy meals

When you're pressed for time, it can be challenging to make your meal a healthy one. Shopping for some key ingredients, and doing just a little work ahead of time, can give you nutritious options that are easy to prepare:

- Start the day with plain yogurt topped with berries, granola, and nuts.
- Swap the cheese in your lunchtime sandwich for lettuce and tomato.
- Portion mini carrots, snap peas, and broccoli into sandwich bags for midday snacks.
- Before heading to work, place potatoes and skinless chicken breasts in the crock pot. Top with salsa or drizzle with Italian dressing. Cook on low all day, and enjoy after work.
- Spend some time on the weekend preparing for weeknight meals:
  - Make a double portion of your main dishes, and freeze leftovers to enjoy during the week.
  - Cook brown rice and cool it on a baking sheet. Place 1- to 2-cup portions into freezer bags, squeeze as much air out of freezer bags as possible, and freeze. You can also freeze bulgur or barley.
  - Wash and chop vegetables, such as broccoli, cauliflower, and carrots. Freeze and serve with a mid-week meal or use in stir fry.
  - Buy vegetables so you can create our own salad bar. Try romaine lettuce or spinach, carrots, peas, broccoli, and cherry tomatoes. For protein, add tuna or leftover chicken. You can also add walnuts and a few dried cranberries. Top with vinaigrette dressing, or create your own dressing with three parts vinegar to one part oil. You can add a little salt, pepper, and mustard for flavor.



## Eating out? Use the menu to count calories

Many restaurants, and even some grocery store salad bars, are now required by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration to list calorie information on their menus and menu boards.

You can take advantage of this information to make healthier choices when eating out:



- Swap a fried sandwich (570 calories) for one that's grilled (380 calories).
- Choose water (0 calories) over a high-calorie beverage. Another option is black coffee (0 calories) rather than a cappuccino (120 calories) or latte (140 calories).
- Go with a side salad with vinaigrette dressing (about 50 calories) instead of French fries (265 calories for a small order).
- Instead of fruit salad with marshmallows (200 calories in one cup), choose fresh fruit (72 calories for an apple, 105 for a banana, 62 for an orange).
- If you're craving a piece of cake, share it with a friend or save half for tomorrow, cutting your calories in half.

Calorie needs vary from person to person, depending on factors such as age, gender, and activity level. Nutritional information is based on 2,000 calories per day. Use the posted information to make better choices and keep your calorie count from getting too high.



**J. J. Keller & Associates, Inc.<sup>®</sup>**

3003 Breezewood Lane, P.O. Box 368  
Neenah, Wisconsin 54957-0368

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