

Chapter 3. Being Healthy Matters to You

In the big picture, a number of things, in addition to food and physical activity, affect our health. Some of us struggle with reducing stress, getting enough sleep, or trying to quit smoking. Everyone is different. Today's decisions affect our health today, tomorrow, and beyond. Only we can figure out what is right for our lifestyle, but these decisions start with having the right information. That's where *A Healthier You* can help.

Healthy for life

It almost goes without saying that there are many benefits to improving our health. Developing good habits early in life helps, yet it's never too late to start. There is something to be said for starting to live a healthier life before gaining too much weight or becoming at risk for serious illness—to incorporate change while it's our decision. Why wait for a health scare to “get it together”? Wherever we are in life... whatever the reason... we can prevent many bad health consequences and gain quality time to enjoy things that really matter to us. Whether we are 15, 25, or 65, any time is a good time to start!

Eating right and being physically active may reduce your risk for heart disease, high blood pressure, diabetes, osteoporosis, certain cancers, and being overweight or obese.

Dietary Guidelines for Americans,
2005

A lot of us have tried diets or started fitness programs. We stick with them for a while, then stop. The weight comes right back, or our cholesterol and blood pressure go back up.

Say to yourself, “This time it's going to be different—my efforts are going to result in a better, healthier me.”

Right now, wherever we are today, let's give ourselves a break. Make it a day to start with a clean slate. Our past choices are just that—past. Recognize that by taking small steps to eat better and be more physically active—even if we are starting from scratch—we can improve our health. And it doesn't take a lot to begin to have an impact.

“Me at my best”

We want to recapture that feeling—“me at my best.” It’s hard to describe, but you definitely know it when you feel it. People say, “When I’m eating healthy and being more active, it’s like I’m energized” or “on top of my game!” Sometimes, don’t you just dread the idea of taking time out for physical activity? Especially if it means getting out of bed a half hour earlier or squeezing it into a packed day. But afterwards, do you ever regret it? In fact, doesn’t it change your mood for the rest of the day? It’s empowering when you know you are taking control and making healthy changes that will make a difference for the rest of the day...the rest of your life. It’s about looking and feeling better, knowing you are healthy inside and out. Wouldn’t it be great to feel a renewed confidence in yourself or to simply take small steps to be your very best every day?

There’s a lot of information about healthy living, but how do you find success for you—just for you? Take a moment. Think about what you want. You have a vision of who you want to be. Ask yourself, “What is ‘me at my best’?” Write it down if you need to. Now, let’s get started and find that healthier you...