

Take Control of Your Future Health

(ARA) - A quick fix -- it's the American way. If we want to lose weight, we try the current fad diet. If we get a new diagnosis, we hope the cure is as simple as popping a pill. When it comes to health, understandably, we all want the instant fix.

Unfortunately, it's not that simple. With many employers, insurance companies, and the government cutting back on health care coverage, people are paying more out of pocket than ever before. Additional factors such as the aging baby boomer population, and the increased cost of prescription medication, office visits, procedures, and diagnostic tests, all make health care reform an issue that will affect everyone and their future health.



PERSONAL ACCOUNTABILITY

To bring health care costs down, doctors and insurance companies may begin to hold patients more accountable for their health. Patients need to take action now to prevent disease -- eat healthy, exercise regularly, and quit smoking. These three behavior changes alone will reduce the chance of developing cancer, stroke, and common chronic conditions such as heart disease and type 2 diabetes. Chronic conditions tend to be expensive to treat because of all of the related issues and the lifelong nature of the diseases.

So how can people become more proactive about their health? There are many resources available in public libraries, gyms, community centers, and even in many workplaces to help people get started on a path to health and wellness and disease prevention. To research and develop a plan for a healthy lifestyle, one place to start is MayoClinic.com where they can find easy tools for assessing their own health and helpful tips from doctors and health care professionals at Mayo Clinic. Here are some things to consider when creating a personal health plan:

WEIGHT

Maintaining a healthy weight is a key part of overall health. A good place to start is to know your Body Mass Index (BMI). Your BMI is determined by evaluating the proportion of your height to your weight. This number will help indicate if you are at a healthy weight for your body type or not. People who are overweight are more likely to develop type 2 diabetes, heart disease, cancer, stroke, and other conditions such as sleep apnea, bone and joint trouble, depression, and acid reflux issues. Adopting exercise as a regular part of your life is an important factor in successful weight management. MayoClinic.com offers an online tool that calculates your BMI for you, nutrition and lifestyle information, including a wide selection of healthy recipes and videos that help guide and teach good exercise technique.

FOOD AND NUTRITION

It's important to understand the fundamentals of food and nutrition including the food pyramid, fiber, fat and cholesterol,

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calories and the elements of a healthy diet. Diet basics can vary depending on your age, sex, and conditions such as being pregnant or having diabetes. The best way to eat healthy is to make nutritious, yet delicious meals you can enjoy. Visit the “Healthy Recipe Center” on MayoClinic.com to search by special diet restrictions, the main ingredient, course type, meal type, preparation method or number of servings.

SELF ASSESSMENT

Every person has their own unique health concerns. Learning more about a variety of conditions by taking a self assessment test in the privacy of your home is a great way to begin looking at your individual needs. Do you think you might have diabetes? Feeling depressed or stressed? Think you have flu symptoms? Wondering if you drink too much? Taking self assessment tests online helps you learn more about the state of your current health so you can work with your doctor to manage or resolve these issues and make necessary changes for the future.

HEALTH SCREENING GUIDELINES

Ever wonder what health screenings and tests are important for someone your age? Depending on your age, sex and family history, there are guidelines for the tests your doctor should be performing. For example, did you know screening for colon cancer usually starts at age 50? Or that you should get a lipid test done to monitor your cholesterol level every 5 years? Health screening guidelines help you know and understand what health issues should be monitored and at what age. By monitoring these factors, you can see your progress over time, or identify the need for change.

FAMILY HEALTH

Because the health of your family is also important, look for specific information from a reputable source for each individual. MayoClinic.com has special sections with information about baby’s health, children’s health, men’s health, women’s health, teen’s health and senior health. Each section is filled with information to help guide you and your family toward the best individual health possible.

Taking the steps necessary to develop a health plan now will benefit you in a variety of ways. By focusing on prevention and wellness throughout your lifetime, rather than treating disease after it has already diagnosed, you can take charge of your health and your health expenses. You’ll feel better, visit the doctor less and you will lower your health care costs because you are doing everything you can to stay as healthy as possible. Get on the road to good health today by visiting www.MayoClinic.com.

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