

Get The Facts About Healthy Living



- A person can improve their health by eating nutritious foods, becoming physically active, and quitting smoking.
- Eating healthy means choosing fruits and vegetables, whole grains, and a variety of foods with protein like lean meats and chicken, eggs, beans, and nuts.
- Becoming physically active involves regularly participating in aerobic and strength-building activities.
- Quitting smoking can be achieved and multiple sources of support are available.
- Better health choices can lower the risk for heart disease, stroke, and some cancers.

People are bombarded every day with conflicting information about their health, leaving them with many questions.

- *Is it healthier to eat a low-carb diet, a high-fat diet, or a balanced diet?*
- *Is it better to be physically active 3 times a week or 5 times a week?*
- *How can a person be expected to follow any of these recommendations when they are always so busy?*

It's no wonder that many individuals throw up their hands and give up. But in order to live long and fulfilling lives, it is essential that people learn the real facts about health, nutrition, and physical activity.

- **FACT:** Eating healthy is good for your overall health – and there are many ways to do it.
- **FACT:** Participating in regular physical activity is good for everyone's health. Even 5 minutes of physical activity has real health benefits!
- **FACT:** Avoiding tobacco keeps the body healthy and gives people energy to join family and friends in enjoyable activities.

With the facts in hand, a person can take concrete steps to improve their health and quality of life.

Eating Healthy

Where to start: Eating healthy means following a healthy eating pattern that includes a variety of nutritious foods and drinks. It also means getting the number of calories that's right for you (not eating too much or too little).

To eat healthy, be sure to choose:

- Fruits and vegetables
- Whole grains
- Fat-free or low-fat dairy products
- A variety of foods with protein, including seafood, lean meats and poultry, eggs, beans, peas, nuts, seeds, and soy products

It is also important to limit certain nutrients and ingredients:

- **Sodium**, which is found in table salt, but most of the sodium we eat comes from packaged food or food that's prepared in restaurants
- **Added sugars** such as the syrups and sweeteners that manufacturers add to products like sodas, yogurt, and cereals — as well as things you add, like sugar in your coffee
- **Saturated fats**, which come from animal products like cheese, fatty meats and poultry, whole milk, butter, and many sweets and snack foods. Some plant products like palm and coconut oils also have saturated fats.
- **Refined grains and starches** such as cookies, white bread, and some snack foods



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A Library and Resource Center on Alcohol, Tobacco, Other Drugs, Mental Health and Wellness

Why it's important: Making smart food choices can also help an individual manage their weight and lower their risk for certain chronic diseases, including:

- Obesity
- Heart disease
- Type 2 diabetes
- High blood pressure
- Some types of cancer

Becoming Physically Active

Where to start: Physical activity is anything that gets the body moving. A person should aim for at least 2 hours and 30 minutes of moderate-intensity aerobic activity each week. They should also participate in activities that strengthen their muscles at least 2 days each week.

- **Aerobic activities** make an individual breathe harder and cause their heart to beat faster. Walking fast is an example of aerobic activity.
- **Muscle-strengthening activities** make a person's muscles stronger. Examples include lifting weights, using resistance bands, and doing push-ups.

An individual who has not been active before should start slowly—remember, even 5 minutes of physical activity is beneficial. Once a person gets the hang of it, they can add a little more activity each time.

Why it's important: Physical activity increases the chances of living longer. It can help to control blood pressure, blood sugar, and weight; lower "bad" cholesterol and raise "good" cholesterol; and prevent heart disease, type 2 diabetes, and some types of cancer. In addition, being more active can:

- Be fun
- Boost mood
- Improve sleep
- Make bones, muscles, and joints healthier
- Lower the chances of becoming depressed
- Lower the risk of falls and reduce arthritis pain
- Help a person feel better about themselves

Quitting Smoking

Where to start: Quitting smoking is one of the most important things an individual can do for their health. The sooner the person quits, the sooner their body can start to heal. A person can take the following steps to help them quit:

- Make a list of reasons to quit
- Set a quit date
- Make a plan to deal with cravings
- Ask family, friends, and coworkers for support
- Talk to a doctor about counseling and medicines that can help a person quit
- Call 1-800-QUIT-NOW (1-800-784-8669) or visit www.smokefree.gov for free help

Why it's important: The body begins to heal as soon as the individual stops smoking. The risk of heart attack, stroke, and dying of cancer goes down. The person feels better:

- They breathe more easily.
- Their senses of taste and smell improves.
- They have more energy.
- They cough and wheeze less.
- Their lungs become stronger, making it easier for them to be active.

Connecticut Resources

CT Department of Mental Health
and Addiction Services
www.ct.gov/DMHAS

CT Department of Public Health
www.ct.gov/DPH

CT Quitline
1.800.QUIT.NOW (784.8669)

National Resources

My Health Finder
www.health.gov/myhealthfinder

Smokefree.gov
www.smokefree.gov

