

Some Healthy Advice for the Rest of the Year – And Maybe the Rest of Your Life

By Scott LaFee | September 25, 2013

We asked some of our newest physicians in the UC San Diego Health for a tip or two on getting or staying healthy. No secrets here perhaps, but all good reminders. Who knew eating yogurt could be so good for so many?

You can contact any of the doctors below by clicking on their names.

Two words: diet and exercise



“If I could distill all of my medical knowledge down into a few simple words to capture the essence of getting and staying health, it would be this: diet and exercise. We hear these words over and over again, perhaps without capturing the day-to-day, moment-to-moment significance of each.

“Simply put, as a society we are eating too much while being too sedentary, resulting in an explosion of obesity, diabetes, high blood pressure and all of the downstream consequences of these conditions. My simple advice: Don't eat until you're 'stuffed;' share a restaurant meal with a friend or family member; eat an apple instead of cookies; walk to the store instead of driving; and don't keep too many sweets, treats and ice cream at home - you'll eat them!

These simple steps, followed daily, will result in weight loss, lower blood pressure and feeling better overall. Who doesn't want that?!”

Brett White, MD

“Motion is lotion”

“My favorite saying in Sports Medicine is ‘motion is lotion’ and I think the most important area of motion, when it comes to exercise and staying healthy and fit, is the hips!

“It's all in the hips. Much of what we see in primary care sports medicine are variations of overuse injuries, and often the root of the injury ends up being relatively weak hip and core muscles. The therapy for many musculoskeletal injuries involves strengthening and flexibility in the hip musculature.

“So when it comes to staying healthy and hopefully injury-free, work those hips! Zumba, yoga, Pilates, salsa, even ‘prancersize.’ Do whatever it takes to stay strong and healthy. Don't be afraid to shake what your momma gave ya!”

[Amy Leu, DO, CAQSM, FAAFP](#)

Gut feeling

“It's becoming increasingly clear that the well-being of our bowel microbiome – the hundred trillion beneficial bacteria that live within your gut – is an important factor modulating our overall health. Certain bacterial flora may even help modify diseases like HIV.

So maintaining a favorable bacterial flora in your bowel could be one way to improve your general health. Eating yogurt or other products containing bacteria like lactobacillus is one way to increase these beneficial species.”

[Sheldon Morris, MD, MPH](#)

The Pap gap

“There are very few women, if any, who relish the thought of going to see their doctor for their yearly Pap smear. Well the dreaded annual Pap test is no more! You should still have your Pap test done because it is an important part of a woman's routine health care, but if your previous Paps were normal, the recommended interval now is every three to five years.

“The Papanicolaou test or the Pap test is used to screen for cervical cancer. The latest guidelines from the American College of Obstetrics and Gynecology, the U.S. Preventive Services Task Force and the American Society for Colposcopy and Cervical Pathology, among others, recommend that women start screening for cervical cancer at age 21 and above. It is no longer recommended that we screen women under the age of 21.

“From 21-29, if the Pap test is normal, a woman should be screened every three years. Starting at age 30, we can perform an additional test along with the Pap. We test – or co-test – for the high-risk or oncogenic (cancer-causing) Human Papilloma Virus or HPV. This is the virus responsible for

nearly all cervical cancers. If both the Pap and the high-risk HPV are negative, you can wait five years until the next Pap.

“Once you reach 65 and have no past history of an abnormal Pap, you can stop screening altogether.

“It’s still recommended that you schedule your yearly physical with your doctor. Skipping the annual Pap will allow you more time at those visits to discuss or review other important issues with your physician.”

[Rebecca Rosen, MD](#)

Know yourself

“Patients are advised to ‘eat healthy, exercise regularly and maintain a healthy weight.’ The recommendations are so nebulous because everyone works differently and there are no general guidelines that work for everyone. Health isn’t limited to one’s body. It includes a healthy mind, too.

“Here are a few things I do to stay healthy and happy:

“I eat breakfast every day and try to avoid fattening or heavy foods. I indulge occasionally so I won’t feel like I’m denying myself.

“I exercise before work. It gives me a sense of accomplishment before my day even begins and mitigates any stress I may encounter that day. If I put it off until after work, it usually will not get done as fatigue and hunger tend to take over.

“When I do workout, I engage in activities I enjoy and find fun. There is nothing like getting lost on a bicycle or spending time in the ocean on a surf board. I try to focus on fitness as a goal, rather than weight. For example, I will sign up for a race or ride, an event to keep my workouts specified to reach that goal.

“Finally, I try not to take myself too seriously, to take insults too personally or focus on the negatives. There is always something to be thankful for.

“Everyone is different. It’s important to know yourself and find what motivates you.”

[Julia A. Cassetta, MD](#)

Changing hearts and minds

“The late months of the year always come up faster than expected and the time to fulfill New Year’s resolutions seems to disappear at an ever-faster rate. Where health is concerned, the cooler weather and onset of the rainy season team up with football parties, holiday festivities, and business of the holiday season to stress even the best health plans. I often joke with patients that we should check their cholesterol in February rather than January so they have an extra month to

recover. The 'respiratory virus' season also corresponds to this time of the year and helps no one. So how do you both enjoy this time of year and make it work for your health? It starts with making lasting choices.

"The most important change you can make for your health is the one you will maintain. Whether big or small, the change that becomes life-long is infinitely better than the one that reverts moments later. So when you decide to exercise more or eat healthier or drop a bad habit (like smoking or not washing your hands before you eat), make a choice you intend to make for life. Convince yourself that a splurge for a holiday is a splurge for the holiday, not for the whole holiday week – or month – or season. If you get sick and cannot get to your usual exercise regimen, let yourself rest when you need it most, but commit to bringing yourself back to activity as soon as possible.

"The next key to maintaining choices is to actually believe in the change you are making. If you do not really believe in something, it will be easy for temptation to convince you to revert to your previous behavior. Invest in understanding how your behaviors affect your health so that you can decide not just to skip that fifth sugar cookie but also to actively choose to eat something healthy. And yes, I do understand the temptation to sample each of the cookie cutter shapes, but I promise you it is all the same cookie dough. Find a way to make exercise satisfying for you, so that it is an enjoyable activity rather than a chore.

"This year, stop worrying about the New Year's resolution and instead worry about changing your heart and mind and the way you relate to your health and body. It does not matter if your goal is big or small, but whether or not you convince yourself it is worthwhile and within your power to achieve. If you really want it, you will fight for it."

Benjamin F. Johnson, MD
