

It's up to you

A healthy lifestyle is key to preventing diet-related chronic diseases.

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DO you wake up before the sun rises, and only reach home after it has disappeared from the horizon? Are you always rushing from one meeting to the next on a daily basis?

With so much going on in our lives, it is little wonder that many of us take our health for granted. Most of us often place a higher priority towards our careers at the expense of our time, our youth, and ultimately our health. Such unhealthy lifestyles are not uncommon, but at the end of the day, are the gains really worth endangering your health for?

Ideally, the prevention of non-communicable diseases (NCDs) such as diabetes, heart disease, cancer, etc should begin from a young age, but it's never too late to start now. Don't make the mistake of procrastinating, or waiting until you have chest pains to start paying attention. Start practising healthy eating and active living now.

Despite our hectic schedules, it is entirely possible to lead a healthy lifestyle. You can certainly accomplish this if you are determined and disciplined.

Focus on the four areas outlined below and you will be on your way to achieving a healthy and balanced life.

Practise healthy eating

Kickstart your day with a healthy breakfast. It has been proven that starting the day with a well-balanced breakfast may improve your attention span, alertness and memory function. Make sure your breakfast includes high fibre, wholegrain and high protein foods such as milk and cheese to boost your metabolism.

If you find that you are always rushing in the morning or need to leave home earlier, here are some simple steps you can take:

- Prepare breakfast at night so you can bring it to office.
- You can also buy a healthy breakfast on your way to work.
- Always keep foods such as fruits, fresh bread, canned tuna, or sardines, small packets of milk, wholegrain products, and single serving boxes of cereal or muesli in the office's pantry or your work desk.

Never skip your lunch no matter how busy you are. However, avoid overeating as it will leave you feeling bloated, sleepy and unproductive.

Always have a well-balanced dinner, and don't overeat. Go home to have a home-cooked meal with your family. Don't miss out on cooking during weekends if you're always busy during weekdays.

In addition, skip unnecessary snacking during working hours. Many working adults indulge themselves in unhealthy snacking, which usually comprise carbohydrate-based foods. If you really need to, opt for healthy snacks such as fruits, nuts, high fibre cereals/oats/granola bars and biscuits or crackers with no cream.

Choose foods wisely

First and foremost, always take well-balanced meals that are moderate in portion sizes and vary the types of foods you eat. Follow the Food pyramid guide to help you achieve this.

Here are some other smart tips to choose wisely:

- Always opt for food prepared with healthy cooking methods such as steamed, roasted, or soup-based cooking instead of deep-fried options.
- Opt for foods with less fat, salt and sugar.
- Incorporate more fruits and vegetables in your meals.



Plan ahead and schedule the dates for your monthly, quarterly or annual health check-ups.

- Avoid consuming a lot of gravy as it is usually high in salt and fat.
 - Choose wholegrain products whenever you can.
 - Choose more high-fibre foods.
 - Drink plain water rather than sweetened beverages.
- Make an effort to personalise your meal when ordering food. For example, you can request that your meals be prepared with less oil/less salt/more vegetables, etc.

Be physically active

No matter how busy you are, find time for simple exercises. It can be done at home or at work; every little bit counts. Build physical activity routines into your daily schedules.

Take the stairs instead of the elevator/escalator, and walk longer distances every day by parking further away. You could also have short, regular breaks at your work place to move around or do some stretching. When back at home, do housework more vigorously.

Keep track of your health

It is vital that you learn about any of the NCD risk factors that you may have as early as possible. This way, you will have a chance to get them under control.

If they are detected early, you can still do something to modify these factors. We often face problems because the risk factors for NCDs are detected too late, thus making it difficult to reverse or treat.

Plan ahead and schedule the dates for your monthly, quarterly or annual check-ups. When it comes to your own health, you should always know where you stand. You can even do some of the monitoring yourself, such as simple weight and height measurements.

It has reached the stage where it's no longer a rarity to hear of the younger generation suffering from NCDs. Don't hesitate to get your NCD risk factors checked, or these may sneak up to you like a thief in the night and rob you of your health.

To learn more about other interesting nutrition information, join us at the Nutrition Month Malaysia "Eat Right, Be Active: Stay Free From Diet Related Disease" Family Carnival at the Mid Valley Exhibition Centre (Hall 1) on Friday and Saturday, May 3 and 4, 2013.

There will be free nutrition screenings, expert advice from nutritionists and dietitians, exciting activities, and much more. So bring your family along and join in the fun from 10 am onwards.

For more information, call 03-5632 3301 or visit www.nutritionmonthmalaysia.org.my.

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