

Personal Health

Summary:

1. good health is not merely an absence of disease
2. you are responsible for your health
3. smoking
 - a. highly addictive
 - b. deadly – more likely to have cancer
 - c. hurts others also
 - d. smoking mothers have smaller babies
 - e. men may experience impotence (can't have sex)
 - f. if you smoke, then stop
4. exercise
 - a. all can exercise
 - b. exercise has many health benefits
5. drugs and alcohol abuse
 - a. hurts health
 - b. hurts mental health
 - c. hurts others
 - d. seek help if there is a problem
6. diet
 - a. don't eat the white stuff (fat, salt, sugar)
 - b. eat vegetables
 - c. drink water
 - d. don't overeat
7. mental health
 - a. lower stress
 - b. have a *balanced* life
8. rest and relaxation
9. the mouth
 - a. brush teeth daily
10. cleanliness
 - a. avoid bad body odor
 - b. avoid spending money on fads to enhance beauty

While personal health is an exhaustive subject, we will mention a few of the most important aspects of good personal health.

First, good health is not merely an absence of disease. Good health is holistic. In other words it involves all of you. It means not only good physical health but good mental health. Think of good health like a car. If just one part does not work properly then it can not do its job. In the same way if one part of us is not functioning properly, then all of our being is affected.

Second, you are responsible for your health. Doctors can sometimes do wonderful things. There are drugs and surgeries whose results seem miraculous. However, no medicine or physician can cure the result of unhealthy living.

What can you do for your health. Volumes have been written about good health. To go into detail about good health is beyond the scope of this chapter. However, we will briefly touch on a few of the most obvious concerns. These include:

1. Smoking
2. Exercise
3. Drugs and Alcohol Abuse
4. Diet
5. Mental Health
6. Rest and Relaxation
7. The Mouth
8. Cleanliness

Smoking

Smoking is one of the most preventable causes of disease. Smoking has no physiological benefits. In other words, it does not help the body in any way at all. Smoking is highly addictive and deadly. In other words, it is difficult to stop and it will eventually kill you. Smoking causes cancer. Lung cancer is about 25 times more likely in smokers than in non-smokers. Also lung cancer is one of least treatable kinds of cancer. If you have lung cancer, you probably will die from it. But smoking does not only affect the lungs and throat where the smoke comes in direct contact with the body. Bladder cancer, stomach cancer, and kidney cancer are attributable to smoking.

Smoking not only affects those who do it but others as well. Spouses of smokers are more likely to develop cancer. Mothers who smoke deliver babies who are smaller in weight. The baby gets many of the harmful effects of the smoking as the fetus gets all of its nourishment from its mother.

One risk to men is that smokers are much more likely to develop impotence. That means the man cannot have sex.

If you are a smoker, then stop. There are agencies to help you break the habit. Some one has said that a boy starts smoking to prove he is a man and 20 years later he tries to stop for the same reason.

**Smoking is highly addictive and deadly.
Smoking will eventually kill you.**

Activity:

1. Why do you think people start smoking?
2. Study a cigarette advertisement. What do you think is the appeal of cigarette advertisements?
3. Why do you not smoke (if you don't)?

Exercise

Daily exercise is important for good health. Vigorous exercise several times per week has all sorts of benefits. It helps the heart. It helps the muscles. It helps in weight control. It helps in controlling diabetes, the disease of imbalance of the blood sugar. It reduces stress. It helps people to sleep better.

Some people think of exercise as something painful and sweaty. However, walking can be exercise if done long enough. Some people enjoy exercising with friends. Some like organized sports. Whatever you enjoy, do it vigorously and maintain your good health.

One myth is that exercise is only for children and young people. Exercise is good for people of any age. People who are active tend to live longer. Many people still do vigorous exercise at an elderly age.

Activity:

1. What are some of the reasons people give for not exercising?
2. If you exercise, tell the benefits you receive from this.

Drugs and Alcohol Abuse

Obviously so much has been written on this topic that any well-informed person would know the dangers of drugs and alcohol.

The abuse of drugs and alcohol not only affects people's physical health, it also affects their mental health. Moreover, drug and alcohol abuse causes serious social problems including the breakdown of the home, domestic abuse, crime, and violence.

If you have a drug or alcohol problem, then seek professional help. There are agencies, both government and private, to help you. If you are the victim of drug or alcohol abuse, you are advised to also seek help.

Diet

Eating properly is one of the best things you can do for good health. There are three things we should avoid in excess. They are all white. They are:

1. fat
2. salt
3. sugar

Some fat and some salt is essential for a healthy diet. However, most people eat way too much. One of the biggest sources of fat is grease. For example, when we eat fried food such as fried chicken, fried potatoes (chips and crisps), and the like we are eating fat. While many like fried food, this should be limited.

Many people salt their food. Try to limit salting food. In fact, try to avoid salting food totally. Salt is known to contribute to hypertension (high blood pressure) which can cause kidney disease, heart disease, and strokes. Of course, these can be deadly.

Our bodies need sugar to function. However, when we eat complex carbohydrates our bodies break them down slowly and release the sugar into our blood. The sugar we need in our blood is glucose. Examples of complex carbohydrates are bread, potatoes, noodles, and the like. If we eat simple sugars, such as candy, sweets, and the like, then too much sugar gets into our bodies and this causes problems.

**Don't eat much of the white stuff.
(fat, salt, and sugar)**

For most people a diet with plenty of vegetables and fruits is generally considered best.

Most people do not drink enough water daily. Drinking plenty of water gives various benefits.

A recent survey has revealed that 56% of all South African women are overweight. While the number for men is smaller, it is also way too high. If you are overweight, losing weight will, obviously, provide various health benefits. You are advised to seek professional help if this is something you feel you cannot do on your own.

Activity:

1. If you have successfully lost excess weight, tell how you did it.
2. What are some of the benefits of not being overweight?

Mental Health

Mental health is important to good physical health. Some physicians say most of their patients suffer from psychosomatic illnesses. In other words, their poor mental health is affecting their physical health.

As mentioned in a previous chapter, lowering chronic stress is important. If you are suffering from chronic stress, you are advised to seek professional help. For example, if you feel trapped in a helpless or abusive situation, then seek help.

People who enjoy good mental health establish *balance* in their lives. In other words, their work, their families, their hobbies, their social activities, all receive the proper attention. One area of their lives does not dominate all the others.

Rest and Relaxation

Sometimes we don't think of rest and relaxation as part of good health, but it is.

Over 3,500 years ago Moses got the Ten Commandments from Mount Sinai. The fourth commandment says (Exodus 20: 8-10) "Remember the Sabbath day by keeping it holy. Six days you shall labor and do all your work, but the seventh day is a Sabbath to the LORD your God. On it you shall not do any work..." One of the Ten Commandments says we should rest.

What is rest? This may differ from person to person. For example, for an office worker or taxi driver, working in the garden may be rest. For a farmer it might be work.

What is relaxation? For one it might be playing soccer. This is probably not true for your grandmother! For another it might be watching television. For another it might be reading a good book. Like rest, relaxation is different for different people.

Can a person rest too much? Yes, of course. Look again at the fourth commandment. It says to work for six days and rest one day. It assumes a person will work. You may ask, What is work? Like rest, it will differ from person to person. Don't confuse employment with work. For example, a mother of many small children may do lots of work but be unemployed.

Work and rest in the proper amounts.

Activity:

1. What do you like to do to rest?
2. What do you like to do to relax?
3. Which would be worse, a life of no rest or a life of no work? (This question has no correct answer. It is put here for you to explore why both work and rest are important to our good health.)

The Mouth

The face is one of the most important parts of our body. When we look at photographs we usually look at the face. Of the face, the mouth is important in many ways. One of these is good health.

People who have teeth and gum problems usually have other health problems as well.

It is important to maintain good oral health. Flossing your teeth daily is important. Most people who floss do it before retiring at night. Brushing your teeth properly is part of good health.

Brush your teeth daily before retiring.

Cleanliness

Some cleanliness helps us to keep and maintain good health. However, mostly it just helps us socially. For example, no one wants to sit next to a person with bad body odor. Bathing and using the proper deodorant can avoid that problem. If you have chronic odor problems, then bathe. If that doesn't work, then seek professional help.

One word of caution is necessary. Many people make lots of money off of people selling beauty products. While some help, many have little or no benefits, especially considering their cost. Millions are spent annually on special skin lotion, hair shampoo, and the like. Remember, not smoking, exercising, avoiding drugs and alcohol, eating correctly, maintaining good mental health, and getting enough rest will probably do more for your appearance than all the lotions in the world.

Activity:

1. Obtain a fashion magazine and look at the beauty advertisements. Study them and compare them with the cigarette advertisements.
2. How are these the same? What about advertisements for cars? Are these also similar in their appeal?

(It is assumed that cigarette, beauty aids, and cars often advertise to create an image. Most people in the advertisements are young, sexy, healthy, appear wealthy, appear successful, appear powerful, appear to be having fun, etc.)