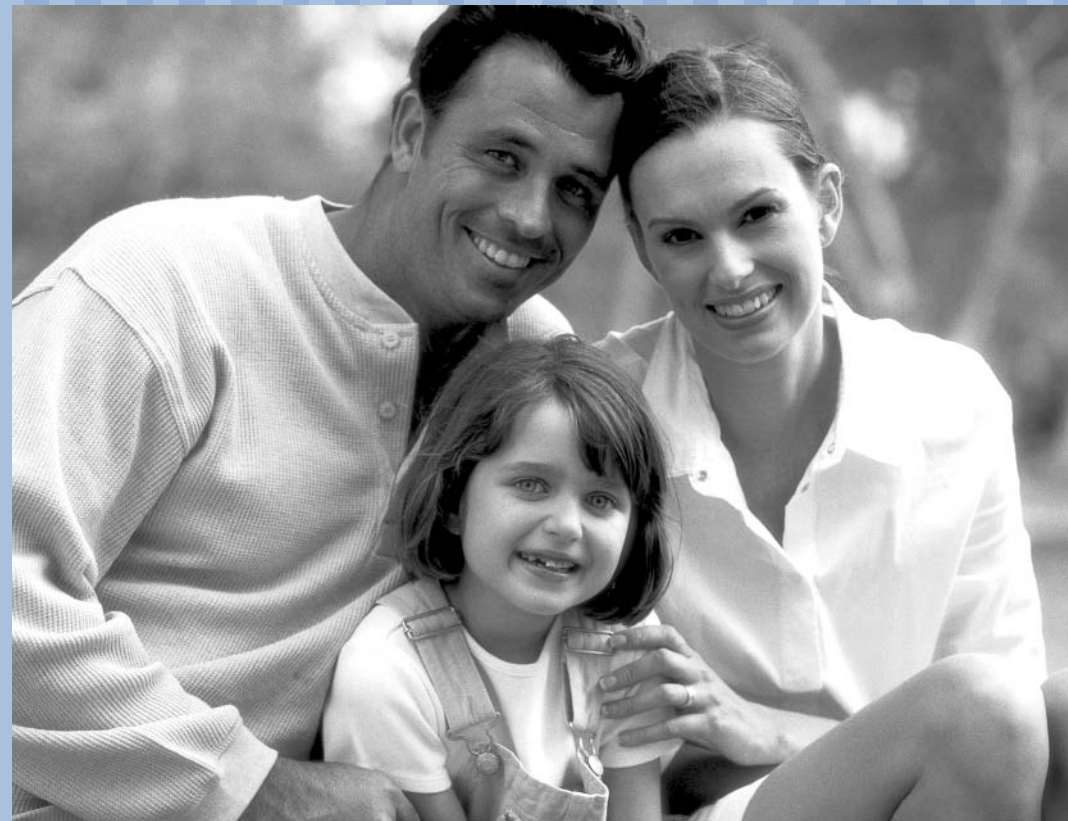


# Wellness 101

*Wellness: The quality or state of being in good health especially as an actively sought goal*

It just makes sense.<sup>SM</sup>



## why is wellness so important?

“Wellness” is a simple but powerful concept that can change your life. Wellness is all about being as healthy as possible — physically, mentally, socially and spiritually. And it comes with a big payoff: a major boost toward living as long as possible and with the highest quality of life. Even if you have a chronic condition such as asthma or diabetes, you can still achieve a state of “wellness” by ensuring that what you do in your daily life is focused at maintaining the highest level of good health.

After all, genetics is only one predictor of your health down the road. The choices you make every day also have a big impact on your health tomorrow.

Research has shown that even modest changes in your nutritional habits and making time for physical activity will impact your overall health and well-being in a positive way. These lifestyle choices can actually help you prevent some chronic diseases in later years, such as heart disease, diabetes, osteoporosis and some types of cancers. “Exercising your mind” through activities like reading and critical thinking tasks can also help you keep your mind sharp later in life. Nurturing relationships with friends and family members also contributes to overall well-being. After all, “wellness” is about the total being which is comprised of physical, mental, emotional and spiritual health.

Choosing lifestyle behaviors that are focused on wellness will help you enjoy life to the fullest. You deserve the chance to be your best, feel your best and reap more enjoyment from everything you do.

People who make unhealthy lifestyle choices usually pay a high price, although it may come later in life. According to the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, unhealthy behavior causes more premature deaths than genetics, social status, lack of health care access and environmental factors. Americans spend more than \$240 billion each year to treat illnesses such as, diabetes, obesity and tobacco-related ailments — conditions that can be managed, reduced or even prevented with healthy lifestyle choices and preventive care.

On the positive side, life expectancy in the past 100 years has increased by 30 years. About 25 of these extra years are attributed to public health advances and to preventive medicine. Improved access to medical care and advanced treatments for chronic disease have had a major impact on life expectancy. But so have factors like better nutrition and preventive measures such as immunizations. This tells us that any effort you make to prevent health problems is time well spent.

Wellness is not a new concept. Even the Greek physician Hippocrates, who lived more than 2,000 years ago, knew that nutrition and exercise played critical roles in our health and well-being.

*Positive health requires a knowledge of man’s primary constitution [genetics] and of the powers of various foods, both those natural to them and those resulting from human skill. But eating alone is not enough for health. There must also be exercise, of which the effects must likewise be known. The combination of these two things makes regimen, when proper attention is given to the season of the year, the changes of the winds, the age of the individual and the situation of his home. If there is any deficiency in food or exercise the body will fall sick.*

Being overweight, poor dietary habits and lack of physical activity account for at least 14 percent of deaths – or about 300,000 premature deaths each year.

— U.S. Department of Health and Human Services



The most important motivator for choosing a wellness lifestyle should be the fact that you are improving the length and quality of your life. You owe it to yourself and to your family.

Making some simple changes to your daily routine, like starting to eat a serving of fruit each morning at breakfast, can bring you rich rewards. They can quickly become part of your healthier lifestyle. And the sky's the limit!

## Choosing a wellness lifestyle

While your primary care physician is your partner in good health, you are in charge of your health and your health improvement. To achieve optimal wellness, you need to take steps to prevent health problems. Even small changes can affect your overall well-being for the rest of your life, by preventing injuries and reducing your risk for chronic disease.

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You may already know many of the important categories of wellness: physical activity, healthy food choices and stress management. But others include factors as varied as having loving relationships and friendships, a spiritual connection (whatever your beliefs), and being an informed health care consumer who is knowledgeable about self-care and when to appropriately access health care professionals.

## Free health assessment gives you personalized feedback

Where do I start? At the beginning, of course; but where is that? A good first step is being honest with yourself about your current lifestyle choices and health behaviors. One excellent way to identify lifestyle changes that would be of most benefit to you is to take a health assessment. A comprehensive, confidential assessment is available at [myuhc.com](http://myuhc.com)® at no charge. Ask your benefits administrator for more information.

By answering a series of questions, the assessment identifies health habits most in need of improvement. It also points out positive areas to help encourage you and reinforce those areas. Your personalized report also suggests how you can improve — giving information on healthy lifestyle techniques and health improvement resources. The results will show you how you rate in 11 important health lifestyle areas, including activity and exercise, alcohol use, back care, driving, eating, exams, self-care, tobacco use, stress, weight control and well-being.

This personalized assessment is fun, fast and easy. It takes only 15 minutes to complete and provides information tailored to fit your healthy lifestyle goals.

The good news is that there are many ways for you to make changes that can have a big impact. Following are some places to start.

### Eat healthy

You probably already know about the value of making healthy food choices. Eating a variety of healthy foods helps ensure you receive the best nutrition, including needed vitamins, minerals and fiber. Fruits and vegetables, in particular, are loaded with disease-fighting “phytochemicals” that may protect good health. More research shows that a diet rich in fruits and vegetables can lower your risk of certain cancers, lower your risk of heart disease, lower your risk of stroke, reduce high blood pressure and help you manage your weight.

Many of us don't eat the five or more servings of fruits and vegetables each day as recommended by the National Cancer Institute and the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. The government's Dietary Guidelines for Americans recommend that we eat five to nine servings of fruits and vegetables each day: two to four servings of fruit and three to five servings of vegetables.

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The American Dietetic Association (ADA) describes eating a variety of complex carbohydrates and a moderate amount of protein and fat as the key to healthy eating and weight control. The ADA is the nation's largest organization of food and nutrition professionals. It is the leading accreditation body for dietetics professionals and one of its major goals is educating the public about optimal nutrition, health and well-being. Complex carbohydrates, found in whole-grain breads, brown rice, beans and vegetables, provide fiber and a variety of nutrients — far outdoing the nutrition in simple carbohydrates such as white bread, processed foods and most salty or sweet snacks.

Cutting back on high-fat, high-sugar and high-sodium foods are also healthy changes. Low-fat or nonfat dairy products provide calcium and vitamins and help round out your nutritious diet. For general guidance on food groups and portions, check out Dietary Guidelines for Americans 2005. A summary can be found at:

[www.healthierus.gov/dietaryguidelines](http://www.healthierus.gov/dietaryguidelines). The Food Guide Pyramid is another widely recognized nutrition education tool, which you can access from the USDA at: [www.usda.gov/cnpp/pyramid.html](http://www.usda.gov/cnpp/pyramid.html).

If excess weight is a problem, know that being overweight increases your risk for heart disease, diabetes and high blood pressure.

No one expects 100 percent adherence to a healthy diet. If you indulge in a high-fat meal or binge on sweets, you can eat healthier the rest of the day. Making better food choices doesn't mean you have to give up your favorite foods. Moderation and portion control can help you enjoy the foods you love while you watch your weight or otherwise choose a lifestyle that centers on healthy foods.

But consider where you can make simple changes to make healthier food choices. Start with a realistic goal and then make a few simple changes in behavior. Examples of goals are drinking eight glasses of water each day, buying lean ground turkey instead of hamburger, or buying whole-grain bread instead of white bread.

While it is important to select healthy choices to meet your nutritional needs, it is just as important to eat an appropriate portion size. Many of us fool ourselves into believing that as long as it's healthy food, we can eat as much as we want. As with anything, finding a correct balance is important. Monitoring portion sizes is also part of healthy eating habits. To help keep you on the path to good health here are a few tips to adjust your nutritional intake to the correct portion size.

- 3 oz of lean meat is about the same size as a deck of cards
- 1 cup serving of "something" is about the size of a tennis ball
- 1 oz of cubed cheese is about the size of four dice
- 1 tsp of "something" is about the size of one die
- 1 piece of fruit should comfortably fit in your hand with your fingers closed (thumb barely touching fingers); if it's bigger, it's 2 servings

### Get moving

Physical activity is good for your body and your mind. Did you know that regular exercise reduces feelings of depression and anxiety? The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) tout exercise as a solid way to promote psychological well-being and reduce feelings of stress.

Regular physical activity can improve your health in any number of ways. We know that physically active people, on average, outlive inactive people at any age. According to the CDC, regular exercise can reduce your risk for developing heart disease, high blood pressure, colon cancer, a stroke and type 2 diabetes. It also increases insulin sensitivity and improves blood sugar control, which help people who have diabetes better manage it.



Exercise also:

- Lowers both total blood cholesterol and triglycerides, and increases “good cholesterol” (HDL, high-density lipoproteins)
- Helps reduce blood pressure in people who already have hypertension
- Helps people achieve and maintain a healthy body weight
- Helps build and maintain healthy bones, muscles, and joints
- Helps older adults become stronger and better able to move about without falling or becoming excessively fatigued

The good news for couch potatoes is that moderate exercise has been shown to provide many of the same benefits as more vigorous exercise. Studies show that men who participated in small amounts of light or moderate physical activity had lower rates of heart attacks and death than those who did no exercise. Men participating in 30 minutes of moderate exercise were as protected from fatal heart attacks as those who exercised three times as much.

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And don't worry about needing to set aside a big chunk of time each day for exercise. The benefits of physical activity are cumulative; every minute you are active throughout the day adds to the total. What counts is the total amount of activity per day.

Especially if you are new to exercise, walking is a fantastic way to get moving. It's easy, it's free and you can easily adjust your pace and your time spent walking. Participants in one study who walked as little as a mile a day had a 30 percent lower risk of stroke; those walking more than a mile a day had a 50 percent lower risk. (Source: Kaiser Family Foundation)

About 70 percent of American adults do not get enough physical activity to provide health benefits. Forty percent are not active at all.

— U.S. Department of Health and Human Services

### Get recommended check-ups, immunizations and screenings

Prevention is the name of the game. Early detection of a medical problem — whether it's a breast lump or skin cancer — is critical for the best chances of recovery. Make sure you perform some self-checks at home (for example, regular breast and testicular self-exams) and know when to get preventive screening and other tests and exams at your doctor's office.

A recent government study showed that more than half of all Americans do not receive many important preventive services, including recommended immunizations, screening tests for early detection of disease, and health education. To learn more about preventive services recommended for adults, seniors and children, visit the Web site of the Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality, part of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services: [www.ahrq.gov/ppip/adguide/](http://www.ahrq.gov/ppip/adguide/) and review section three, “Checkups, Tests, and Shots — Which Ones You Need and When To Get Them.” Section two is a good resource on ways to take charge of your health. You can also find information online at [myuhc.com](http://myuhc.com).

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One-fourth of children in America spend four hours or more each day watching TV.

— U.S. Department of Health and Human Services



### Watch out!

Are you a health risk-taker? Perhaps the single most deadly risky behavior is smoking. It can take more than 10 years off of your life. According to the American Cancer Society:

- Smoking damages nearly every organ in the body.
- It is linked to at least 10 different cancers.
- It accounts for about 30 percent of all cancer deaths.

Even if you smoke filtered cigarettes, smoking injures blood vessel walls and speeds up the process of hardening of the arteries. It is especially dangerous for people with high blood pressure.

Women who smoke experience almost as many deaths from heart disease as from lung cancer. They are two to six times more likely to suffer a heart attack than a non-smoking woman, and the risk increases with the number of cigarettes you smoke each day. Smoking also boosts the risk of stroke.

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And smoking cigarettes impacts more than the health of the smoker. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention estimates that about 35,000 non-smokers die from cardiovascular disease each year as a result of exposure to tobacco smoke. The risk of death from cardiovascular disease increases by up to 30 percent for people exposed to tobacco smoke at home or at work.

If you're a non-smoker, think about friends and loved ones who may appreciate some encouragement and support to quit smoking. Sometimes simply asking if they've thought about quitting can lead to a constructive conversation. Maybe they've tried to quit in the past but have lacked the support they needed.

Kicking the habit is one of the best things you can do for yourself. No matter how long you've used tobacco, stopping can pay immediate dividends. And your risk of heart disease can be cut in half just one year after you quit. Quitting also reduces the risk of a second heart attack in someone who's already had one.

## 10 Great Reasons to Quit Smoking

Need more reasons to quit smoking? The following are from the National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute:

1. You will reduce your chances of having a heart attack or stroke.
2. You will reduce your chances of getting lung cancer, emphysema and other lung diseases.
3. You will have better smelling clothes, hair, breath, home and car.
4. You will climb stairs and walk without getting out of breath.
5. You will have fewer wrinkles.
6. You will be free of your morning cough.
7. You will reduce the number of coughs, colds and earaches your child will have.
8. You will have more energy to pursue the physical activities you enjoy.
9. You can treat yourself to new books or music with the money saved from not buying cigarettes.
10. You will have more control over your life.

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Call UnitedHealthcare Customer Care at the number on the back of your ID card to find out if your health plan covers smoking cessation resources. For help in smoking cessation, you can also contact state and local public health departments or the American Cancer Society or American Lung Association for information. Joining a support group can help you maintain motivation and be a source of encouragement and ideas. Nicotine replacement products and other types of medication can help ease withdrawal symptoms. You can do it!

Besides quitting smoking, keep in mind ways you can avoid accidents or prevent serious injuries. Think prevention by buckling your car's seat belt — no matter how short the journey. Make sure that babies and young children are secure in properly installed car seats. Be an attentive driver. If you ride a motorcycle, you are 26 times more likely to die in a crash than someone riding in a car; so always wear a helmet and eye protection, and take other precautions.

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The largest single preventable cause of premature death is tobacco use. It causes almost one-fifth of all deaths (19 percent) in the United States — about 440,000 premature deaths each year.

— U.S. Department of Health and Human Services

### **Be informed**

To maintain good health, know when to self-treat and when you need to see a health care professional. The Health Topics and Tools section of **myuhc.com** is an excellent resource for health information. Logon today to read about medical conditions, treatment options and the latest research. If you have a chronic condition like asthma or diabetes, learn how to best manage it and prevent complications.

The more you know, the more you can prevent health problems. For example, do you know what you can do to prevent a heart attack or a stroke? The American Heart Association recommends the following:

- No exposure to tobacco smoke
- Blood pressure maintained below 140/90 (below 130/85 for people with kidney damage or heart failure, or below 130/80 for people with diabetes)
- An overall healthy eating pattern
- Cholesterol lowered to appropriate level based on individual risk
- At least 30 minutes of moderate-intensity physical activity on most (preferably all) days of the week
- Achieve and maintain desirable weight
- Normal fasting blood glucose (below 110 mg/dL)

### **Be prepared**

Keep a list of prescription medications that you and your family members take and, at each office visit, inform your physician and nurse. Also tell them about any herbal supplements, aspirin or other over-the-counter medicines you take regularly. Visit the United Health Foundation Web site (**[www.unitedhealthfoundation.org](http://www.unitedhealthfoundation.org)**) where you'll find a checklist of questions to take to your next doctor visit as well as a medication log to help you keep track of your medication. These tools are great resources to help you and your physician manage your health.

Keep a well-stocked medicine cabinet so you can treat minor injuries or illnesses at home. Know the location of your local urgent care center. Make sure your children know about 911.

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### **Reduce your stress level**

It's hard to escape stress, whether at home or at work. You may have a demanding job requiring long hours, long meetings and tight project deadlines, and your department or company may have gone through reorganization or other changes. When you get home, it's time to make dinner, get the kids to activities at school and do laundry and other chores. Life events such as moving, accidents, chronic illness in the family, divorce and loss of a loved one can add additional stress.

Chronic stress is more than a nuisance. It can lead to illnesses and accidents. Signs of chronic stress vary but can include shoulder, back and neck tension and pain; irritability and overreactions to situations; and negative self-talk.

But you can choose to manage stress, a skill that can be learned and improved. Learning to better manage stress can help you relax in pressure situations and improve coping skills, improve your ability to think clearly and problem-solve, and relieve muscle tension and headaches. Managing your stress can help in unexpected ways, too, such as reducing the urge to overeat.

One of the best ways to offset the effects of stress is to increase your physical activity. Others include setting priorities, improving organizational and time management skills, and getting good nutrition and adequate rest.

### **Have some fun**

Getting sufficient sleep and regularly making time for relaxation can help you relieve tension and stress, become more productive at work and enhance your feeling of well-being. Make time for things you truly enjoy; having some fun can even bring about health benefits. Laughter truly can be good medicine.

Having fun and doing things that bring you pleasure can help you feel better about yourself and be more satisfied with life. When you feel better, you may find yourself reaching out to friends and family and even starting to make healthy food choices, making time for exercise and being more inclined to access needed medical care.

## **Time to take action**

With so many potential health benefits available from making some relatively simple changes, don't wait another minute. You deserve to enjoy life to its fullest. Start making changes today to make wellness part of your lifestyle.

All you need to do is:

- Identify your health improvement needs
- Set goals
- Take action

### **Identify your health improvement needs**

Learn more about lifestyle changes that can pay big benefits over your lifetime. Logon to **myuhc.com** today and discover the wealth of health information and resources at your fingertips. Take the online health assessment to identify and prioritize your most important areas of focus.

You may want to talk with your primary care physician for guidance, especially if you are ready to start an exercise program. And depending on your particular health plan from UnitedHealthcare, you may have access to even more services. UnitedHealthcare offers many programs and services to support your decision to maintain and improve your health and wellness.

Of course, many changes are ones you know instinctively — avoiding risky behaviors, eating more fruits and vegetables and less junk food, managing stress and getting more physical activity.



### **Set goals**

Once you've identified where you could make changes to positively impact your health, it is important to set goals, whether they relate to your body, mind or spirit. Your goal could be losing 15 pounds in the next three months, walking a certain distance at least three times a week or bringing fruit to work each day for a snack. You may decide you need to spend more time with your children or that it's time to fulfill your desire to start volunteering by making a monthly commitment.

Setting goals is powerful because it gives you a specific focus and a way to hold yourself accountable. Goals enable you to measure your progress over time and see if you need to make adjustments to help you achieve your goals.

Write down your goals and keep them in your day planner or better yet, on your refrigerator to keep them top of mind. Keep track of your progress and don't forget to reward yourself for your achievements.

### **Take action**

Once you identified the changes that will be most useful to your health improvement plan, and you've set specific goals, it's time to take action. To effect change and make it last, the little changes you make — whether it's switching to whole-grain bread or taking the stairs instead of the elevator each day — need to become a way of life versus something you try for a few weeks.

Starting small is OK. The important thing is making those changes part of your routine. Consider taking the free online health assessment on [myuhc.com](http://myuhc.com) to help set goals.

So make a commitment to improving your health today! You'll be glad you did, and so will your family.

## 10 health tips for the workplace:

1. Park at the far end of the parking lot.
2. Take the stairs.
3. Walk to an employee's office for a conversation, instead of calling.
4. If you work at a computer, make sure your chair, keyboard placement and monitor height are ergonomically correct.
5. Take a few minutes for stretching exercises to relieve muscle tightness and improve circulation.
6. Drink water and caffeine-free beverages.
7. Instead of buying candy and salty snacks, bring fruit, raw vegetables or baked crackers with low-fat cheese to work.
8. At least once a week, bring a salad for lunch or a sandwich with plenty of vegetables on whole-grain bread.
9. To help reduce stress, use a calendar to schedule your appointments and try to minimize interruptions. Prioritize tasks.
10. Keep your desk as clutter-free as possible.