



Choose Health

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Achieving and maintaining optimal health involves addressing the building blocks to health and making decisions based on long-term health as your goal. Health is a journey and the outcome is largely determined by the decisions and choices that are made along the way.

The journey of health starts when we are conceived and is impacted by the decisions that we make, or are made for us throughout life. Currently, many decisions affecting children are based on convenience, pleasure or lack of time. Many children are nutrient deficient because of the over consumption of sugared cereals, fast-food, pop, candy and junk food or they aren't eating enough. The inactivity of children affects the development of muscles, bones, mental function and other physiological processes. The hours in front of the television, on the computer and cell phones are impacting the health of our children.

As young people there is often a feeling of being invincible. Late nights, a lot of partying, poor eating habits and poor posture are common. We tend to fool ourselves into thinking that the body is a wonderful machine (which it is) and that it can handle anything (which it can't). Decisions that stress the body on a continual basis often lead to health problems in the future. Some people make decisions that are beneficial, but then they avoid other aspects of health. For example, they eat properly and drink enough water but they don't exercise and they don't breathe properly or they eat well and they exercise, but they constantly work long hours and don't get enough sleep.

Throughout life there are often aspects of our health that we want to change; such as, decreasing weight, looking different or having more energy. In order to maintain or achieve long-term health, decisions need to be made where health always takes priority over any individual aspect. For example, many extreme diets and treatments, such as high protein; low carbohydrate diets or surgical procedures promise weight loss often at the expense of health. For many people, when everything is said and done, the weight is back and they are dismayed to find out that their health has been negatively affected in the process. People are often lacking energy because of a poor diet or inadequate sleep. The healthy choice is to improve one's diet and to get more sleep. The less healthy choice is to take a supplement or herbal product that increases energy, but in doing so takes a system that is exhausted and makes it work harder.

Many people stay in a job or a relationship that they don't like, even when they know it negatively impacts their health. They stay for a number of reasons - the security, the money, the benefits, the fear of starting over, or because it is expected of them. It is valuable to know the decisions that keep us in jobs or relationships that we don't like. I find that most people aren't surprised that their job or a relationship affects their health. What surprises them is the degree to which it can affect their health. For some people evaluating their expectations, goals and beliefs are what is required; for others some sort of change is needed.

Health is affected by many different factors. Some of them you can directly affect, such as what you eat, the amount of water you drink, your amount and type of exercises, the way you breathe, adequate sleep and relaxation, the feeling of a worthwhile life, your internal thoughts, how much stress you have, and have had throughout your life. External factors such as heavy metals, toxins and chemicals in foods, cosmetics,



packaging and consumer goods also affect health. Not all factors that impact health are known, but many of them are and can be affected by the choices that you make on a daily basis.

Health is also determined by our reaction to ill-health. When the body is out of balance it will display signs and symptoms, often mild initially. The way you choose to react to these signs and symptoms determines whether health is restored or worsened. For example, if you have a skin rash as a result of eating foods that the body can't handle, you restore health by avoiding the food; you worsen health if you suppress the skin rash and still eat the food. If you have pain in your hip due to poor posture you restore health by addressing your posture; you worsen health if you take something to block the pain and continue with the poor posture. Signs and symptoms are a message. Listen to your body. If you don't know what factors are contributing to your signs and symptoms of ill-health, work with a Naturopathic Doctor or other health professional who is trained to look for and treat the cause of disease.

Health, for the most part, is logical. Multi-factorial, but logical. At any given point-in-time, it is based on accumulation of many factors. Most of these factors you have control of, some you do not. It is based on your initial vital force, how you have lived your life, the choices that you have made and how you are currently living. The body has a wonderful innate ability to heal itself and it is never too late to start making healthy choices.