

10 Tips for Getting and Staying Healthy

Claudia Sencer NP-CNM

1. Love—Having an on-going emotional connection to another being is sustaining, affirming and health promoting. This does not need to be with another human, an animal friend can fulfill this basic human need. When we feel connected to another, we are drawn into life and health.
2. Laugh—We have all heard the adage “Laughter is the best medicine”. Laughter opens the heart and creates connections between people. And for you doubting Thomases, there is even a study showing that people who laughed more had less heart disease than the group that simply was not amused.
3. Exercise. Not new news, but so important in the prevention of heart disease, diabetes and cancer. As well as improving mood and mind. And you don’t have to do a marathon. If you do no exercise, just walking 15 minutes 3-4 times a week can have a significant positive impact on your mental and physical health. When you get bored with that— crank it up, the sky is the limit!
4. Moderation. You are what you eat, drink and smoke. It’s not rocket science. High sugar, high fat foods in large amounts cause heart disease and diabetes. If you exercise and eat healthfully you can occasionally eat these tasty but less healthy foods and do fine. BUT they can not be your main diet. Sorry cigarettes are ALWAYS seriously not good for you.
5. Minimize Medications—all medications have multiple effects: the desired effect/s and the undesired or side effects. Some medication are remarkably helpful and life saving, many are used so we can continue with our bad habits. Take a good look at your medications and decide, with your health practitioner, what you could do/change in your life that could enable you not to need your meds. Consider this when you are looking at starting a new medication as well. Changing your lifestyle in order to avoid medications is always an excellent life sustaining choice.
6. Supplements. Food is your best supplement. Sometimes we can not get the food we need, and supplements help. For some folks with certain health concerns there is an important place for supplements. For most everyone Vitamin D is necessary at 2000 IU/day.
7. Compassion. Love yourself as you would have others love you. We are all so hard on ourselves. Self criticism is very destructive and has no redeeming quality. Reflect on your mistakes and learn and grow from them, then let them go. At times we all struggle with life, and believe that other people have it more together than we do. IT’S NOT TRUE! Counseling can be very helpful if you get stuck and keep beating yourself up.
8. Eat well. HOW you might ask? Google The Harvard Food Pyramid and learn about their Healthy Eating Pyramid. Men eating closest to this diet had a 40% reduction in heart disease and women had a 30 % reduction. The USDA pyramid conferred only an 11% improvement for men and 3% for women.
9. Dedication. So you learn about how to best care for yourself. You know it all. But it doesn’t happen by itself, you must commit to change. Create a plan and carry it through—and when you mess up, try and figure out why, modify your plan to help support your goals and your weakness and do it again. When you mess up forgive yourself and repeat the process. When you mess up again, re-focus, re-commit and repeat the process. Repeat as necessary. A support person can be helpful to remind you about your path and help you strategize and stay the course.
10. Faith. Last and most important. Know you can create health in your life. Have faith in your ability to transform yourself and heal yourself. For some faith in external being helps and in others faith in themselves is what works. This is a difficult but very rewarding path and there are many roads that can get you there. Meditation, visualization, prayer and Qi Gong to name a few. Often guidance from a group or a professional is helpful.