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Do-It-Yourself Health: Healthy Lifestyle Choices, August 2018

 Health & Wellness

By **Ali Sabert**

August 1 2018

Are you tired of feeling run down? Do you wish you could avoid getting sick? Unfortunately, no one is guaranteed a healthy life, but good lifestyle choices *can* help you feel your best and help reduce the risk of getting sick or developing serious health problems.

Scientists are still working on understanding **what links exist (or don't) between lifestyle and the immune system specifically**, but there is broad agreement that following certain guidelines will support better overall health. Let's take a closer look at five lifestyle choices we can all make to give us a strong foundation for health.

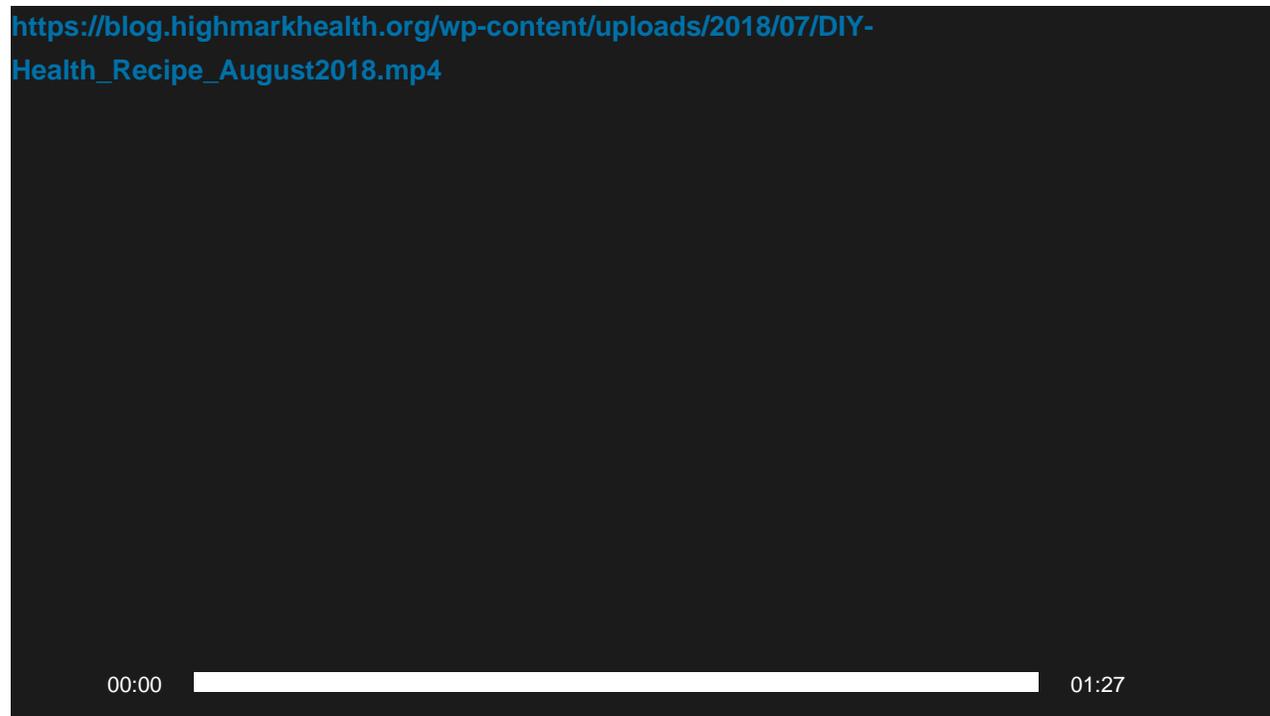
Eat Like a Champion

How many times have you heard a parent, spouse, health coach or care provider say something like “eat your fruits and vegetables”? There's a good reason to give, and take, that advice. If you want to feel like a champion, you have to eat like a champion. Healthy eating is important in helping to maintain a healthy weight, but the benefits go far beyond that, including helping to **reduce our risk for diseases such as type 2 diabetes**, heart disease and cancer.

Ok, but what does it mean to “eat like a champion”? The good news is that healthy eating doesn’t have to be complicated. In fact, one of our favorite nutrition tools is very simple and straightforward: **MyPlate**. Along with other helpful resources at www.choosemyplate.gov, MyPlate gives you an easy visual model to build a healthy plate at every meal. To guide you in getting the nutrients and calories you need, MyPlate shows you how to balance five food groups: fruits, vegetables, proteins, dairy products, and grains. It also gives important tips like consuming whole fruits, getting a variety of vegetables, making half your grains whole grains, choosing low-fat or fat-free dairy products, and selecting lean sources of protein.

To help you eat like a champion, check out [this month’s Eat for Health recipes and grocery list](#), featuring meals and snacks that limit sodium, fat, and/or sugar.

https://blog.highmarkhealth.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/07/DIY-Health_Recipe_August2018.mp4



Twisted Chicken Salad (adapted from CookingLight.com)

Oat and Fruit Muffins (adapted from SnackNation.com)

Veggie Dip

Fruit Dip

Baked Apples (adapted from healthyhappymama.com)

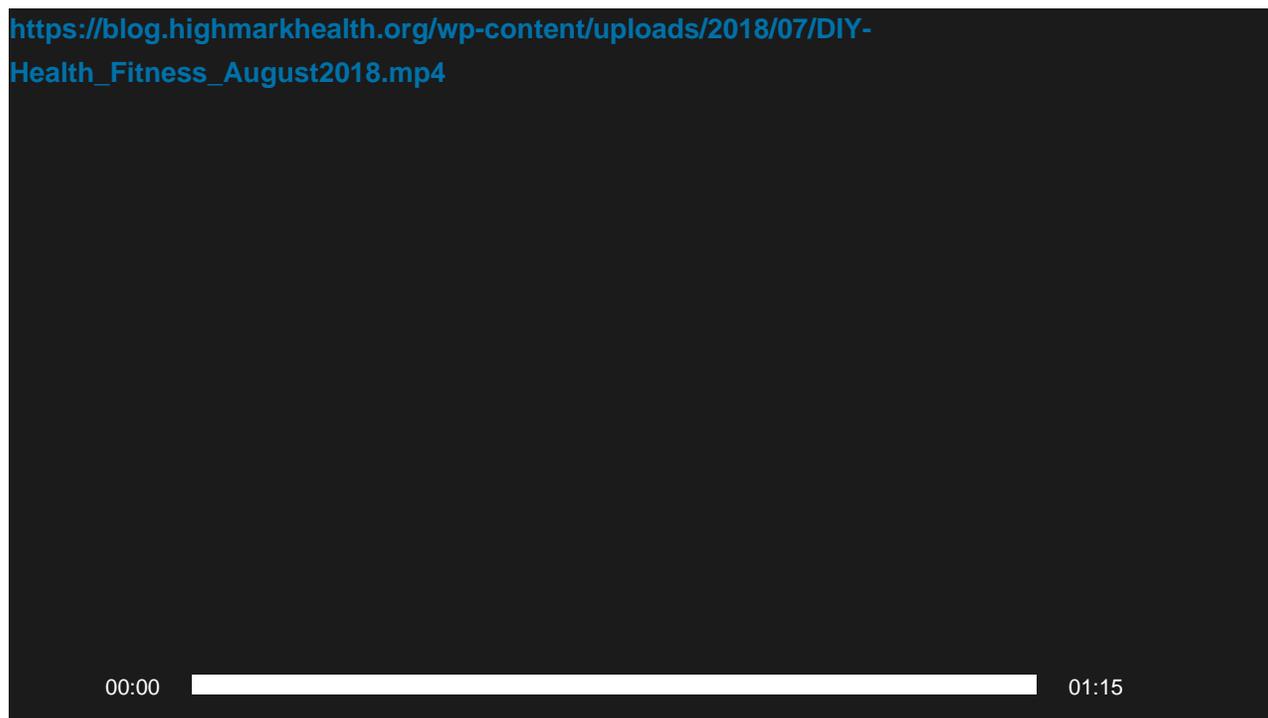
Exercise Regularly

If you’re **someone who runs half-marathons** or hits the gym five times a week, that’s great! But if you’re not, don’t treat advice to “exercise regularly” as if it’s all or nothing. The “nothing” side of **inactive lifestyles has real health risks**, including high blood pressure, type 2 diabetes, heart disease, anxiety and depression. Since many jobs now keep people sitting at a desk for long periods, it’s more important than ever to find ways to add physical activity to our days. Regular activity benefits physical *and*

mental health, improving energy levels, helping with weight management, decreasing the risk of developing certain diseases, aiding the body's ability to recover from injury or illness, promoting a more relaxed sleep, and more.

The American Heart Association recommendation to get **150 minutes per week of moderate exercise or 75 minutes per week of vigorous exercise** is a good goal, but you can get started with simple choices like **taking the stairs**, or setting aside a few minutes to do stretches like those in **this month's Move for Health handout**, which can improve circulation, posture, and lower back pain while reducing stress.

https://blog.highmarkhealth.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/07/DIY-Health_Fitness_August2018.mp4



Chin Tucks (while sitting)

Neck Rolls (while sitting)

Fingertip Reach (while sitting)

Standing Back Extension

Lateral Lean Stretch (while sitting)

Sleep Well

Adequate sleep is a key part of a healthy lifestyle and reducing your risk of illness. Did you know that **adults should get 7-9 hours of uninterrupted sleep per night**? Not getting enough quality sleep doesn't just leave you feeling tired or unable to think clearly, it can also lead to memory problems, feeling depressed, a weakened immune system, and even increased perception of pain.

Need ideas on how you can improve your sleep? Here are **20 quick tips**.

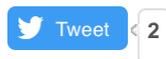
Don't Use Tobacco

No matter how old you are, you can improve your chances for a healthy life by **quitting smoking or other tobacco use**. The American Cancer Society's **Benefits of Quitting Smoking Over Time** tells us that within the first 20 minutes of your last cigarette, your blood pressure will be lower than when you were smoking, and within 12 hours of quitting, the carbon monoxide level in your blood returns to normal. Long-term health benefits include a lower risk of cancer, heart attacks, stroke and fractures, reduced belly fat, improved lung function, a stronger immune system, and a healthier mouth, preventing dental diseases. Giving up tobacco is a lifestyle choice with endless benefits for living a happier, healthier life!

Get Check-Ups and Recommended Screenings

Regular health exams and recommended screenings help identify problems before they start, or at early stages when the chances for successful treatment are better. Annual check-ups have another benefit: they help you establish an ongoing relationship with your health care provider, which can lead to more personalized health counseling and also establish a continuity of medical records that may be helpful if health concerns do arise.

So, just as it's important to make time for healthy eating, exercise, and sleep, be sure to work appointments with your health care provider into your busy schedule. Based on your age, gender, health status, personal health history, current symptoms or chronic health concerns, your provider will be able to guide you on what else you need and when you need it, including immunizations, vaccines, physical evaluations, lab work, x-rays and medically appropriate health screenings.



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