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HealthyLife[®] Letter

Promoting Health. Enhancing Life. Reducing Costs.

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Common gym fears & solutions

If going to the gym makes you nervous, you're not alone. Many people feel uncomfortable going to a new place with new people. But, if you find ways to deal with these fears, you could end up with a healthy habit that makes you feel great!



Fear #1: I don't know how to use the equipment.

Solution: Ask for help from others. This can be a gym employee, personal trainer or a trusted friend. When choosing a gym, choose one that is well-staffed and has helpful employees who make you feel comfortable. Another option is to join a gym your friend already belongs to, and set up a time to go with them. Some gyms have personal trainers who work with members and show them how to use the machines and other equipment.



Fear #2: I don't know what to do at the gym.

Solution: Have a plan before you go. Many fitness websites have printable exercise plans, or you can make your own by writing down a few activities yourself. Start with simple things you already know how to do, such as walking or running. Another option is to take a class you'll enjoy and follow with a few minutes of stretching.



Fear #3: I don't want people looking at me while I exercise.

Solution: Many people feel self-conscious at first. But, most people are there to exercise — not look at others. And they may be just as nervous about others watching them as you are. Wear comfortable clothing. Don't worry about the latest styles, but choose something that makes you feel good and allows you to move freely.



If you're not comfortable going to a gym, don't let that stop you from exercising. Choose workout videos that can be done at home. Many libraries have a variety of videos so you can try before you buy. If those don't appeal to you, lace up your shoes and walk around your neighborhood.

Avoiding chemicals in the home

Many common household items contain chemicals. Not all chemicals are bad for your health, but some can be harmful. To keep yourself and your family healthy, it's best to take steps to reduce or avoid chemicals that could be unsafe.

Did you know possible toxic substances can be found in cleaning products, furniture, carpet and shower curtains? Here's how to avoid unsafe levels of toxins:

- **Read labels carefully.** Many cleaning products have warnings and directions for how to use them. Follow these carefully. For instance, if it says, "use in a well-ventilated area," you should be sure to open a window to the outside.
- **Be aware of odors.** If something gives you a headache, sore throat or makes you cough, this may be a sign that you shouldn't use it anymore.
- **Protect your skin.** Wear gloves when using cleaning products and wash your hands after cleaning. Don't let children use products with any chemicals in them like bleach, ammonia or strong cleaning ingredients.
- **Get checked for lead.** If you live in a home built before 1980, ask your local health department how you can get your home and water checked for lead. You can't see, smell or taste lead. Lead is harmful to the brain and affects children's development. Find out if your home is at risk and take steps to get it removed, if needed.
- **Avoid pesticides whenever possible.** Contact professional pest control companies for insect problems.



Remove dust for a healthier home

- **Choose fragrance-free products when possible.** Many fragrances contain chemicals that disrupt hormone functions in the body. Also, some people are sensitive to fragrances.
- **Replace old nonstick pans that look worn or scratched.** They may contain chemicals that can get into your food.
- **Look for cleaning products that have the Environmental Protection Agency's "Safer Choice" label.** For more information, visit www.epa.gov/saferchoice/products.

If someone in your home may have ingested a poisonous product, call The American Association of Poison Control Centers at (800) 222-1222.

Did you know household dust often contains chemicals and toxins from your home? A good way to reduce your exposure to them is to keep dust down. Try these tips:

- Choose non-toxic or "Safer Choice" cleaning products. White vinegar is an effective non-toxic cleaner for many surfaces.
- Use a damp rag without chemicals to dust.
- Clean floors with a damp mop or a steam-only mop.
- Vacuum floors regularly and use a vacuum with a high efficiency particulate air (HEPA) filter.
- Open windows to bring in fresh air whenever possible.
- Change furnace and air filters regularly.
- Wash hands often.

4 reasons to get your colonoscopy

If you're age 50 or older, your doctor may have recommended you get a colonoscopy. This test, which uses a thin, lighted tube to view inside the colon and rectum, checks for:

- Polyps, which are growths or bumps that could turn into cancer
- Colorectal cancer (cancer in the colon and/or rectum)



A colonoscopy gives the doctor a chance to remove polyps and possible cancerous growths during the test.

Even though a colonoscopy is a safe and effective way to help prevent colorectal cancer or find it early, many people put off getting one. This is often because they are nervous about the test or they don't want to do the "prep." Preparing for a colonoscopy usually means you take medicines that cause diarrhea the day before the test. This can be inconvenient, but it's worth the hassle.

If you're putting off getting your colonoscopy, here are 4 good reasons you should call your doctor about scheduling it today:



1. Early colon cancer has no symptoms.

Many people have polyps or even colon cancer for months or years and don't know it. A colonoscopy can find these things early and increase the chances of a good outcome. The earlier colon cancer is found, the higher the likelihood of successful treatment.



2. One day of prep could save your life.

No one likes to have diarrhea. But, one day of prep means you're getting a test that checks for a common and sometimes deadly cancer. In fact, the American Cancer Society says more than 50,000 Americans will die from colorectal cancer in 2018. It is the third most common cancer in the U.S.



3. There are ways to make the prep easier.

Ask your doctor about adding certain flavorings to your medicine to make it taste better. Also, there are many clear liquids other than water you may be able to drink. Sports drinks, tea, coffee, popsicles and some broths may be allowed. Usually, red, blue and purple dyes need to be avoided, but other flavors are fine.



4. Can't put a price on peace of mind.

With so many people being diagnosed with colorectal cancer, isn't it worth a day of discomfort to know that you've been screened? Even if a polyp or possible sign of cancer is found, you can get on the path to treatment that could be life-saving.

Change your food cravings to healthy

Food cravings can be hard to ignore. Many people find they want to eat healthier, but simply can't get over their cravings for unhealthy foods.

There are ways to overcome food cravings and change them into good habits. It takes time and practice, but it's well worth the effort.

Everyone has setbacks when they are trying to change unhealthy habits. If you slip up, start again tomorrow. Don't give up — believe you can do it!



If you're hoping to overcome cravings and give your body healthier foods, try these tips:

- ***Accept you have cravings and want to change.*** Everyone craves certain foods sometimes, and this is normal. Tell yourself it's okay to have cravings, and that you're going to find ways to handle them better — starting today.
- ***Avoid shopping while hungry.*** This is often when people buy those items they crave the most. Go shopping after you've eaten a healthy meal.
- ***Avoid the temptation.*** Stay away from the places or things that cause you to eat unhealthy foods, like fast food restaurants or regular afternoon trips to the bakery.
- ***Take it slow.*** Focus on one change at a time. For instance, if you always crave something sweet in the afternoon, think about one way you could change that food. You could have your favorite fruit washed and ready to eat.
- ***Focus on your eating.*** Think about what you are eating. If you have healthy foods ready to eat, you are less likely to grab whatever is easiest, like what's in vending machines or fast food.
- ***Look for healthier substitutes.*** Instead of a whole chocolate bar, eat one small piece. Purchase small, individual servings of treats so you're less tempted to eat larger portions.
- ***Eat more protein.*** Healthy proteins like lean meats, beans and lentils, small portions of nuts and low-fat dairy foods can help control your hunger.
- ***Look for ways to relieve stress.*** Many people crave unhealthy foods when they are stressed. Try walking, deep breathing, relaxing music or other non-food comfort tools.
- ***Drink more water and get enough sleep.*** Both of these healthy habits can help you feel less hungry and less likely to reach for unhealthy foods.

Tips to help kids succeed

Parenting is not an easy job, and it seems there are thousands of ways to do it. With so many parenting books and techniques available, how do you know what works? Sometimes, it helps to go back to the basics. You don't have to be perfect or read every parenting book on the market.

Years of research from medical experts says the following parenting tips will help keep your kids healthy and happy:



BE LOVING. Kids need love every day. Tell them you love them and give hugs and kisses.



GIVE THEM COMFORT. If a child is scared, help them to feel safe. Take steps to protect them and help them cope with fears.



SPEND TIME WITH THEM. Set aside time each day to focus on them, and put the phones and devices away during this time.



POINT OUT GOOD THINGS THEY DO. Be specific. For example, you might say, "I'm really proud of you for cleaning your room without being asked."



BE A GOOD LISTENER. No matter what the topic, kids will feel valued if you look at them and listen to what they say.



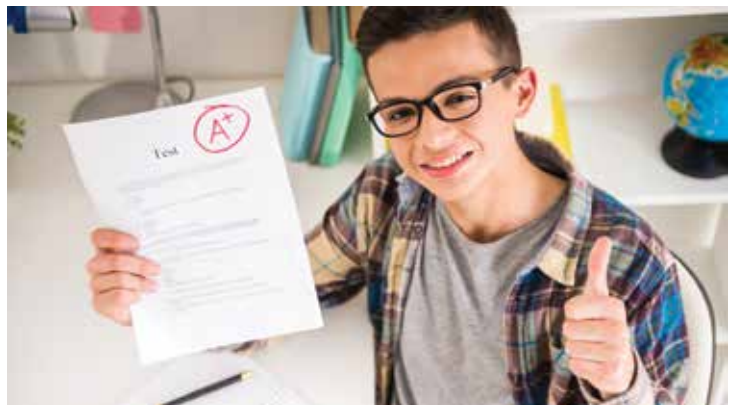
USE A ROUTINE. Kids like to know what's coming next. Set times for bed, meals and simple chores to help them feel secure.



FORGIVE MISTAKES. Help them by saying what they could do next time to avoid the mistake. Don't criticize them as a person by saying, "you were bad."



HAVE RULES & STICK TO THEM. Parents, babysitters and other caregivers should follow the same rules. Don't change them or let certain people break them. This only creates confusion and can lead to behavior problems.



Even with the best advice, parents may need help from an expert. This doesn't mean you're a bad parent. Sometimes, talking to someone who can help makes a big difference. If you feel you need help with parenting, try the following resources:

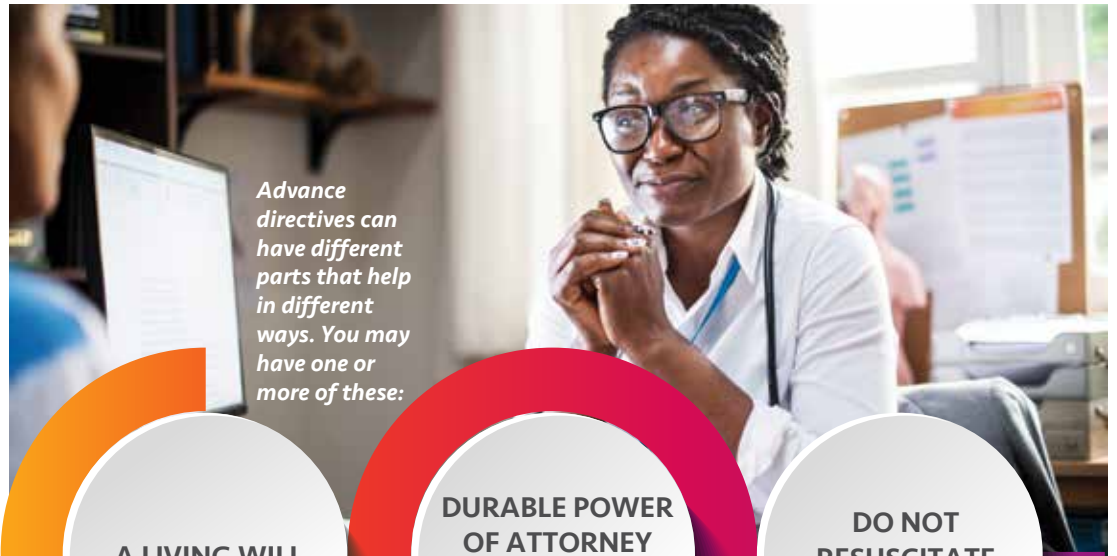
- Your child's pediatrician
- Your own primary doctor
- Local parenting classes at hospitals, schools or community centers
- A family counselor or minister
- Online support groups

Don't be embarrassed to ask for help. It's a sign that you want to be the best parent you can be, and that's a good thing!

Making your health care wishes known

It's a tough topic to think about, but also a necessary one. What are your wishes for your own health care if you were unable to communicate?

Most people don't think about this kind of scenario, especially if they are healthy. But if you are in a serious accident or become severely ill, you may not be able to tell your family what you want. This is when an "advance directive" can be very useful for you and your family.



Advance directives can have different parts that help in different ways. You may have one or more of these:

A LIVING WILL

DURABLE POWER OF ATTORNEY (DPA) FOR HEALTH CARE

DO NOT RESUSCITATE ORDER (DNR)

Advance directives: what are they?

An advance directive is a document that states your desires about your care when you cannot speak for yourself. If you are admitted to the hospital, the doctor may ask if you have an advance directive. It may describe:

- Care you want if you have an illness that won't get better.
- What you want if you are permanently in a coma or unconscious.
- Treatment that you don't want to receive.
- Treatment you do want, regardless of how sick you are.

A LIVING WILL.

This is a written, legal document. It covers what treatment you want if you were terminally ill or would not wake up from a coma. It can list specific things you would like done depending on how sick you are.

DURABLE POWER OF ATTORNEY (DPA).

It names a person to make health care decisions for you. A DPA becomes active any time you cannot make medical decisions for yourself. Sometimes it is called a Medical Power of Attorney or health care proxy. Only use a DPA if you have someone you trust to make these decisions. Talk to your DPA about their role and your health care wishes.

DO NOT RESUSCITATE ORDER (DNR).

If a person's heart stops or they stop breathing, hospital staff will give CPR, or cardiopulmonary resuscitation. If you have a DNR, you are telling hospital staff that you do not want CPR given to you. You do not have to have a living will or DPA to have a DNR.



Some states do not consider living wills or DPAs to be official legal documents. Even if it's not legal, an advance directive or DPA can be very helpful. It can help your family and/or doctor make decisions you want so you get the care you desire. Your doctor or an attorney can tell you about your state's laws. All states recognize and honor DNR orders that are in a patient's medical record. An attorney does not have to do a DPA or living will. Many people fill them out themselves.



What do I put in an advance directive?

If you're thinking about getting an advance directive, you may be wondering what it should say. Your doctor or an attorney can help you, and you may want to think about it for a while.

Health care items that are often listed in a living will include:

- Ventilation (artificial breathing machines)
- Dialysis (machines that work for kidneys that are failing)
- Tube feeding (used when a person cannot eat or drink)
- Palliative care (care that keeps you comfortable, such as pain relief measures)
- Organ donation or donating organs to be used for research



Why do I need an advance directive?

Most medical experts agree that an advance directive is helpful. It makes your preferences about medical care known before you become sick or injured. It means your loved ones will not have to make hard decisions about your care while you are sick.

An advance directive can give you peace of mind. If you feel strongly about receiving certain treatments, an advance directive helps ensure that your wishes will be honored. It gives you more control over your own health care.



Where do I start?

An advance directive doesn't have to be hard. It can be short and simple. You can:

- Get a form from your doctor.
- Write down your own wishes yourself.
- Discuss your wishes with your DPA.
- Meet with an attorney to write an advance directive.
- Get a form from your local health department or Area Agency on Aging in your area.

It's a good idea to have your doctor or an attorney look at your advance directive. This ensures your wishes are in line with state laws. It also gives you a chance to answer questions and make sure your wishes are understood. When you are done, have your advance directive notarized. Give copies to your family and your doctor.

You can change or cancel your advance directive. This can be done when you are of "sound mind," which means you are able to think and communicate clearly. Any changes you make must be signed and notarized according to the laws in your state. Make sure that your doctor and family members know about the changes.

Why you shouldn't eat at your desk

It seems like a convenient way to get through your day. Rather than take a break to eat lunch, you grab a bite and eat while you're at your desk. But, this may be leading the way to unhealthy habits.

Here's why you should escape your workspace for your meals:

- **You need a mental break.** Getting up and eating away from your desk can help you clear your mind and boost mental energy.
- **Moving more is better.** A 5-10 minute walk is better than no walk at all. Being active and sitting less will improve your health.

- **You may eat more mindfully.** If you munch on food while working or watching a screen, you may eat more than you need to. Instead, sit down away from a screen and focus on your food. This can help you pay attention to your feelings of hunger and fullness.
- **You could be missing out on fun.** Bonding with others at your workplace can be fun and enjoyable. You may even look forward to social lunch breaks, which could increase your happiness at work.



Healthy lunch, healthy wallet

Packing a healthy lunch can be good for your health. It can help you steer clear of the vending machine or other unhealthy options. Plus, bringing your own lunch may be healthy for your wallet. The average American spends \$53 a week on lunch and coffee expenses during the workday. That adds up to more than \$2,700 a year.

