

Five keys to health that have nothing to do with your doctor.

By Dr. Scott A. Null

This article was originally designed as a large power point presentation for a group of college students to help them with their health choices. It was later modified and condensed into an article that was printed in a newspaper's health edition. This was put together from my many years of experience and reading multiple peer reviewed scientific journals. I have tried to utilize the latest and most accepted scientific data and have tried not to be swayed by special interest groups or information that may be intended to sway people for monetary gain. It is intended to help people with suggestions that could help someone live a healthier lifestyle. It is not intended to treat or diagnose any particular disease. Like any other health advice, you should consult with your health care provider before making any changes to your diet or exercise routine. This is general advice and cannot encompass every person's individual health care needs.

With that being said, I would like to offer a few suggestions on things that are fairly easy to implement that almost everyone can do to help improve their health. We can't control all of our genetic or inherited shortfalls, but we can choose to participate in a proactive lifestyle that includes physical fitness and eating for fuel and not just for fun.

Over 90% of a healthy lifestyle comes from five things that you have a lot of control over. These five things are: what you eat, what you drink, how much exercise you get, how much sleep you get, and how much stress you have. Here are some suggestions to help you get and stay healthy. This is basic information and we could go into much more detail in each section. If you have any questions or would like more information about any of these suggestions, please contact me. I would be happy to discuss this with you in more detail.

What you eat.

The Standard American Diet (SAD) is truly sad. A few years back Americans were obsessed with a fat-free diet. Now we are seeing a carb-free diet. Our bodies are designed to utilize and need fats, carbs and proteins. We just need the right ones. As a general rule, you should cut back or eliminate four things from your diet: Grains, pasta, sugar (including artificial sweeteners) and dairy products. Consume a diet primarily high in healthy fats like avocados, coconuts, olive oil and raw nuts like almonds and carbs, such as: raw vegetables. Good proteins such as grass fed meats, wild salmon (also a good fat) and free range eggs. Eat fruits moderately, as they contain fructose but whole fruit is much better than fruit juice.

What you drink.

Water. There is no substitute for water. Water is needed in every cell in your body. Over 70% of your body weight is water. Do not be fooled by healthy sounding names. A 20 oz. bottle of

Vitamin Water contains over 30 grams of sugar. That is equal to three Krispy Kreme original glazed donuts.

Exercise.

Get moving. Movement is life. A study showed that for people that sit at work or a computer all day, getting up 20 times from a sitting position was more beneficial than sitting all day and working out in a gym for 20 minutes each evening. Interval training, working out with quick bursts of exercise followed by slower exercise and repeating quick bursts, was better for you than long distance endurance training. A 2001 study in the Lancet concluded that 15 minutes of exercise per day increased lifespan by three years.

Sleep.

Not sleeping well or not sleeping enough can increase your risk of diabetes and many diseases. Research shows that a well-rested person's immune system may launch a stronger response to an invading virus than that of a sleep deprived individual. Your bed should be for sleeping, not watching TV or reading. Tips to help you sleep include going to bed and getting up at the same time every day and keep your room as dark as possible.

Stress.

We know that chronic stress can have a severe negative impact on your health and immune system. This may be the hardest part of the health related things that we have control of but there are some things you can do to try to reduce your stress level. These include getting plenty of sleep, relaxation techniques, meditation and yoga.

If we were given a test we would probably be able to answer what is healthier, however, we don't always follow our own advice. Trying to change everything all at once is difficult. Start by adding just one of these health keys and, once you've mastered it, move onto the next key. You can ultimately improve your health, your ability to maintain it, and your resistance to disease by choosing a healthier diet, drinking more water, moving, getting more sleep, and not sweating the small stuff.

If you have any questions, or would like to discuss any of this further, please contact me. I would like to go into much more detail in all of the healthy tips but space in this article did not allow it.