



Living Well to Increase Your Healthy Life Expectancy

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“Those who think they have not time for bodily exercise will sooner or later have to find time for illness.”

Edward Stanley, 15th Earl of Derby

Do you know what your life expectancy is? And what influences it? In the last century, human population has increased and life expectancy extended significantly. The United States in the mid 1800's, saw a life expectancy of 40 years. Fast forward to 2019, according to the CDC Health Statistics, the life expectancy is 78.8 years. Much of the increase is due to advancements in sanitation, modern medicine and science. Yet, interestingly, while the current United States life expectancy is close to 80 years, it is a bit more complicated.

According to the article Does Medicine Actually Make People Live Longer? (HuffPost, January, 2019), “healthy life expectancy”, a measure that discounts the years a person spends severely ill, found that the average American only has 68.5 years of life expectancy. These numbers will likely continue to fluctuate in the years to come. Medical conditions like obesity, and its complications like diabetes, can reduce life expectancy, as can other diseases and unforeseen global catastrophes. Advances in medical care certainly impact quantity and quality of life, but following a healthy lifestyle also helps to increase your “healthy life expectancy.”

During the Covid19 pandemic, it was reported that a compromised immune system, which includes, among other conditions, diabetes and heart disease, would put one at a higher risk for contracting the virus and experiencing further complications. There are behaviors we can engage in to strengthen our immune system just as there are choices we can make that weaken our immune system, including sitting too much, smoking, eating poorly, poor stress management, sleep deprivation and excessive alcohol consumption.

Adopting strategies such as self-education, good personal hygiene, wearing masks, social isolation when infected and quarantine to control the virus and ward off illness are important health and safety measures to engage in. To extend our “healthy life expectancy,” we need to play a bigger and more active role in keeping ourselves disease-free.

While not all diseases and illnesses are preventable, many are, and for most, there are things we can do to control the severity of symptoms. It can be a worthwhile and life changing goal to attain the healthiest version of ourselves, whatever that may look like and despite our circumstances.

What does “health” mean to you? What does it look like? Are you familiar with the saying “health is wealth?” This age-old adage carries a lot of weight. The great political and spiritual leader Mahatma Gandhi, once said something quite similar, “It is health which is real wealth, and not pieces of gold and silver.” But what does health mean? Health is not an easy word to define as there are many interpretations. MIIA believes good health is a balance of physical, mental, social, spiritual and intellectual wellbeing. Good health is not simply the absence of disease in the mind and body. It is how well the mind and body work in conjunction with one another. In 2021, we seem more accepting of the relationship between what goes on in our head (mind) and the functioning of our immune system (body). It has been widely established that the mind and body do not operate in isolation and whatever activity is taking place in the head shows up in our body and vice versa.

There is much to learn from the Covid19 and Spanish Flu pandemics, the simplest of which is how short and precious life is. To improve healthy life longevity and reduce our risk for disease and illness, it is essential that we put ourselves in the driver’s seat and take control of our health. For long lasting change, we have to build a long-term, daily commitment to health and wellness. We start by working on healthy strategies until they become established routines.

The resources below are intended to help you take that first step towards living a healthier lifestyle or support you as you continue on your path of staying healthy and strong.

Stress Management

Stress is an imbalance of mind, body and spirit and affects us all in different ways. Not all stress is bad but chronic stress can have ill consequences and exacerbate medical conditions. Many of us cope with stress in unhealthy ways, including overeating, drinking and smoking. Engaging in mind body techniques, like meditation and yoga can counteract the harmful effects of stress. MIIA members can participate in free live online yoga and meditation classes by visiting the ompractice.com website. For additional stress reduction resources, click any of the links below.

<https://www.tarabrach.com/guided-meditations/>

<https://bensohenryinstitute.org/guided-relaxation-exercises/>

<https://self-compassion.org/category/exercises/>

https://www.ted.com/talks/shawn_achor_the_happy_secret_to_better_work?language=en.

Exercise

Daily physical activity can improve heart health, lower risk for disease and illness, build muscle and bone mass and help to maintain weight. Participate in MIIA's fitness videos by visiting <https://miiawinners.org/> Click [here](#) for instructions.

Diet

Maintaining a balanced diet is key to longevity and feeling good overall. Eating plenty of fruits and vegetables contributes largely to good heart health. MIIA has health coaches and food recipes available to you. For more information on Nutrition & Weight Management visit <https://www.emiia.org/well-aware/nutrition-weight-management>.

Click [here](#) for information on coaching.

Understanding your illness or disease

Knowing as much as you can about your illness or disease keeps you in control of your medical condition. Seek out reputable websites and resources from your primary care physician, join a support group, and stay socially connected to your healthcare team. Reach out to others with similar conditions as a way to cope with your emotions. Stay in control of your illness and don't let it control you. Our monthly Quizzify quizzes include many questions on medical care with resources for further information. [Login or Register](#) to play today.

Healthy Sleep Schedule

Lack of sleep can weaken the immune system and leave us vulnerable to illness and stress. Establishing a healthy sleep routine is an important part of living a healthy lifestyle. Try adding calming music, chamomile tea, meditation or yoga in the evening to your sleep routine for a restful night's sleep. CDC recommends seven to nine hours of sleep per night for adults.

Books

A good read can inspire, transport and relax us. Sometimes all three! There are a lot of great books out there but if you are looking for a suggestion, consider any of these; *When Breath Becomes Air* by Paul Kalanithi, *Daring Greatly* by Brené Brown, and *Eleanor Oliphant is Completely Fine* by Gail Honeyman.

“There are only two ways to live your life. One is as though nothing is a miracle. The other is as though everything is a miracle.”

Albert Einstein, Author and Theoretical Physicist