



For Immediate Release

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HCC Encourages Small Modifications for Good Health

You've read the headlines and seen the ads about quick weight loss gimmicks. But what if you could make gradual lifestyle changes that really packed a punch? The thing is, you can. Too much soda, not enough water, sedentary lifestyles (sitting all day) and fast food lead to heart disease, type 2 diabetes and ultimately premature death. The Health Care Collaborative (HCC) of Rural Missouri wants to motivate and encourage Lafayette County to make small daily modifications to live healthier. Consider this:

Soda and diet soda pack on the pounds

One of the major causes of obesity is soda. Addictive by nature, soda consumption accounts for more than a quarter of all drinks consumed in the U.S. Among children, it accounts for more sugar intake than cookies, candy and ice cream combined. For both children and adults, risk factors include diabetes, tooth decay, weakened bones and vitamin A, calcium and magnesium depletion—nutrients needed for healthy weight loss.

Research suggests that soda, including diet soda, increases feelings of hunger due to artificial sweeteners that signal the brain to crave extra food. In addition, diet soda enhances weight gain by as much as 41 percent (University of Texas Health Science Center in San Antonio).

One simple soda modification to reduce weight gain

Studies show that two cans or glasses of soda, per day, add approximately 24 to 35 pounds of fat per year, depending on body size, age, habits, etc. Some have reported that exchanging two cans of soda per day with water—without exercise—resulted in losing 20 pounds after six months. Similarly, people who have replaced their daily, large Coca Cola at McDonald's with water logged a 32-pound weight loss within a year.

Drinking more water is a win-win

Drinking 8 to 10 cups of water has major benefits. For starters, it's great for your skin. Those who don't get enough water may suffer from dry skin, skin puffiness, fine lines and wrinkles, water retention and bloating.

Water helps with weight loss because it suppresses the appetite and burns stored fat, while helping to build and strengthen muscle. How this works is water carries oxygen to the cells, allowing the muscles to work harder and longer before they tire.

Water improves cognitive ability which makes you sharper. The brain needs oxygen to function at optimum levels. Drinking 8 to 10 cups of water per day can improve cognitive performance by as much as 30 percent.

Drinking plenty of water also supports nerve functioning as it ensures the body's electrolyte levels remain high enough to allow the nerves to relay messages to and from the brain as the body is designed to do.

Water also helps joints stay strong, healthy and lubricated. This lubrication fosters flexibility which in turn allows smooth, pain free movements.

Get up and move

People who sit in an office chair or on the couch for more than 6 hours per day increase their risk of heart disease by 64 percent, according to the National Center for Biotechnology Information. What follows is a snapshot of what happens to a body that sits.

Immediately after sitting more than six hours per day, the electrical activity in the muscles slow, limiting the calorie-burning rate to one calorie per minute.

After two weeks of sitting more than 6 hours per day, the body increases plasma triglycerides (fatty molecules), bad cholesterol (LDL) and insulin resistance. The result is weight gain, deteriorating muscles and decreased oxygen consumption. Some of the physical manifestations are difficulty climbing stairs or taking walks. Even for those who work out after work, the deterioration (or atrophy) takes place the moment movement stops. The bottom line is, people with sitting jobs have twice the rate of cardiovascular disease as people with standing jobs.

After a year of sitting more than six hours per day, the longer term effects can manifest subtly. For instance, women can lose up to 1 percent of bone mass per year.

After 10 to 20 years of sitting more than six hours per day, a person's lifespan can be cut by as much as seven quality-adjusted life years. The risk of dying from heart disease increases by 64 percent and breast cancer increases by 30 percent, according to a study published in USA Today.

HCC gets moving

HCC staff is actively pursuing its own wellness campaign. The main goals are to move more, eat healthier, well-balanced meals and gradual weight reduction. "It's important for us to practice what we preach," said Executive Director Toniann Richard. "We understand the benefits of a healthy lifestyle as well as the health risk factors associated with unhealthy choices. We want to err on the side of good health."

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About HCC's Programs:

- Health information technology initiatives to support telemedicine and telehealth services designed to increase patient access to quality health care;
- Diabetes and Depression Program to improve the health status of individuals with diabetes and/or depression;
- Student nursing programs through a collaboration with Area Health Education Centers (AHEC);
- ACA Health Insurance Marketplace enrollment assistance;
- Rural Health Initiative, funded by REACH, to increase access to quality health care; and
- Primary care, oral health care, behavioral health care, and OB/GYN services at Live Well.

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