How Can I Make My Lifestyle Healthier?

It’s never too late to make better health choices. All you need is a goal, a plan and the desire to live better. Here are some simple steps to take:

• Don’t smoke cigarettes or use other tobacco products.
• Have your blood pressure checked regularly. Keep your blood pressure below 120/80 mm Hg.
• Eat a healthy diet consistent with recommendations from the American Heart Association.
• Get at least 150 minutes of moderate-intensity physical activity or 75 minutes of vigorous-intensity activity (or a combination) each week.
• Maintain a healthy weight (body mass index less than 25 kg/m²).
• Keep your total cholesterol at less than 200 mg/dL.
• Keep your fasting blood glucose at less than 100 mg/dL.

How do I stop smoking?
• Ask your family and friends to support you.
• Ask your healthcare provider for information, programs and medications that may help.
• Go where smoking isn’t allowed, and avoid being around people who smoke.
• Keep busy doing things that make it hard to smoke.

How do I manage my blood pressure?
• If your doctor has put you on medication, take it exactly as prescribed.
• If you are overweight, lose weight.
• Be more physically active.
• Reduce your salt (sodium) intake.
• Eat more fruits, vegetables and non-fat dairy products.

How do I change my eating habits?
• Eat at least 4.5 cups of fruits and vegetables per day.
• Eat at least 2 (3.5-oz) servings of fish per week.
• Eat at least 3 1-oz servings of fiber-rich whole grains per day.
• Keep sodium to less than 1,500 mg per day.
• Limit sugar-sweetened beverages to no more than 450 calories (36 oz) per week.
• Limit processed meats and choose fat-free or low-fat dairy products.

What about physical activity?
• Start slowly and build up to a total of 30 to 60 minutes on most or all days of the week.
• Look for ways to be more active. Take 10–15-minute walking breaks during the day or after meals.
• Check with your doctor before you start if you’ve been inactive a long time or have a chronic condition.

How can I reach and maintain a healthy weight?
• To lose weight, you must take in fewer calories than you use.
• Follow an overall healthy diet pattern.
• Get and stay physically active.

**How do I manage my cholesterol?**
• Get your blood cholesterol level checked at least once every five years. Start at age 20.
• If your total blood cholesterol level is 240 mg/dL or higher, it’s too high. You’ll need it checked more often.
• Limit your saturated fat intake to less than 7 percent of total calories.
• Keep your trans fat intake to less than 1 percent of total calories.
• If your doctor has put you on medication, take it exactly as prescribed.

**What can I do to reduce my blood sugar?**
• Reduce consumption of simple sugars that are found in soda, candy and sugary desserts.
• Get regular physical activity! Take medications or insulin if it is prescribed for you.