

Keys to Health

One thing you'll never hear from me is that making changes in your life is easy. Even making gradual changes can be difficult for some individuals. It's not an accident that in my office, we talk about improving your health one step at a time. Losing weight and improving your health can change your life for the better, often in ways that you may not expect.

Many patients have found that losing weight and improving their health made them more open to trying a variety of new things that they would never otherwise have attempted. They shed the extra pounds and felt a whole lot better and became more confident in social situations. The discovery of new people and new experiences resulted in them eventually leading a very different life than before. Each step you take towards reaching your health goals is really a gift that you give yourself. When you eat right and exercise, you are taking care of yourself, treating yourself with respect and acknowledging that you deserve to not only be healthy, but also happy.

I do not believe that health improves simply by hoping that it will – I believe health gets better by **design**; and the most important **key** to the **design** is you! So, let's talk about some of the **design keys** and then, please think about your current health status and how you would design your health improvement plan.

Let's discuss the major **design keys**:

- The first **key** in achieving and maintaining health is **taking personal responsibility**. In this context, responsibility means choosing a healthy alternative over a less healthy one. If you want to be healthy, **simply make healthy choices**. This may seem too simplistic; but, if we look at the cumulative effects of our routine choices on attitude, diet, lifestyle and exercise; it is quite apparent that we do, in fact, control much of our degree of health. **It's your health so you must be the one in control. You must become a pro-active manager of your health.** It is usually not until the body fails us in some manner that we realize that we haven't taken care of it. Ralph Waldo Emerson said, "The first wealth is health."
- Another **design key** to better health is your **nervous system**. From your brain to your spinal cord, then branching out to every cell, organ, muscle and fiber of your body, the nervous system is in control of virtually everything. Think of the nervous system as your body's interstate highway system transporting commands from the brain throughout all of those cells, organs, muscles and fibers that manage our very life and actions. Your spine is the protective housing that shields your spinal cord from injury and there is very little space for error within the tight confines of your spine. By keeping your nervous system healthy – you maintain the health of your entire body. Aches and pains are signs that your body isn't working right. Again, please remember... your brain, spinal cord and all of your nerves control how your body works. Physical, chemical and emotional stresses can produce postural changes in your spine, muscles can contract locking spinal joints that pinch or irritate nearby nerves. The disruption of the nervous system control invites various systemic diseases and ill health.

It is worth remembering, that the musculo-skeletal system is the largest energy user in the body. Tight muscles waste energy, increase wear and tear on surrounding tissues and joints and, whether it's your feet, knees, pelvis, spine or neck, those muscles ultimately demonstrate their disapproval of being misused by becoming tired, painful and dysfunctional. When these tissues, joints and muscles start to complain, we also then find **ourselves** becoming tired, pained and less active. Are those the symptoms of just growing old and we are to expect them? No! It's due to the cumulative effect of the negative stress and strain pressures and eventually the system just saying I have had enough! You may not have to live with those symptoms if you do something about it **now!**

A wellness approach to health management is to practice preventative before-the-fact treatment to reduce the triggers of ill-health before the aches, pains and problems develop. Many people visit us when they are feeling really good and not in pain. Why? It's because they want to stay out of pain and we help correct developing imbalances thereby partnering with them to help continually improve their health.

- An additional **design key** to better health is **nutrition**. Your body cannot survive without food... “fuel.” Did you know that on average each one of us will consume approximately 70 tons of food in our lifetime! No wonder it plays such a dominant role. The common thread throughout your life will be the effect of those 70 tons of food on your energy levels, well-being, health and longevity. We live in a cause and effect universe. Things don't just happen to you. They happen as a consequence of choices and actions you took earlier in life. By example – is it yesterday's meal at the local fast-food restaurant that caused you to be overweight and have excessively high triglycerides? Of course not... it's been your choices in your everyday lifestyle. It's your diet, sleep pattern, exercise level and how you deal with stress that has contributed to your current health status. The reality is that our cumulative actions and choices determine whether or not we live in pain and disease or vibrancy and health. Our diet; that approximately 70 tons of food to be consumed in a lifetime, and the quality of water and juices we consume are determining factors in acquiring and maintaining vibrant health. Hundreds of billions of cells in your body die off every day and must be replaced by new cells. The building blocks for the replacement cells come from the foods you eat and the water you drink. The enormous importance of diet in determining our health is no longer a matter of speculation; but, a scientifically substantiated fact. There are no longer debates about whether diet plays the immense role we now know it does; but rather what sort of diet is the optimum diet for vibrant health.

The more **pure and natural** the diet the better our body can convert or use it as fuel. Like a car, your body depends on fuel (food) which it converts into energy. As with any conversion process there is a waste by-product. Just as the oil in your car's engine becomes dirtier and dirtier as time passes, a certain amount of toxic residue is continually generated in your system as a natural result of the body's biological processes and your daily living habits. This waste must be eliminated from every part of the body. Simply put: the cleaner the body, the better it works. What would eventually happen if you never changed your oil filter?

I believe it is important to be sensitive to the fact that the dietary, weight-loss and lifestyle changes that I encourage people to make may seem unique; almost radical. Isn't anything that is different from what the majority of people are doing considered unique? Please don't tell yourself, “I can't make changes,” because that would be a lie. The truth is... you can make a change in your life. Ask yourself, “Am I pleased with my health as it is today?” What do I want my health to be 5, 10, 20 years from now? **Is your health going to change without a coach who is willing to help guide and partner with you during this transition?** Part of my personal purpose as a chiropractic physician, is to help an individual in their journey of discovery into how amazing this wondrous body is, how it works and how it affects every aspect of your life in regards to your health.

Most everyone has heard of Tiger Woods, considered by many to be one of the greatest golfers to ever live. Even Tiger maintains a coach. Someone to help him, someone to fine-tune what he does, someone to help bring him back up when he falters. We can be there to help you as well. Will you have set-backs? Well, let's face it, we all have bad days. None of us are perfect; but, tomorrow is a new day. You are the one that can take control of your health. As you have just heard... **you** are a key component to improved health!

Health is a term that is difficult to define – a definition somehow tends to place unnecessary boundaries on its meaning. The World Health Organization defines health as, “A state of complete physical, mental and social well-being; not merely the absence of symptoms or disease.” This definition provides a positive range of health and well-being beyond the absence of sickness. Too many Americans live at the lower end of the health spectrum. It is not normal for the majority of people to have poor sleep patterns, be fatigued and have low energy levels, feel achy, be over-weight, tire after only a flight of stairs and be taking multiple medications. That is not health; and yet, that describes the majority of Americans. Many of our health practices and lifestyle choices are based on habit and marketing hype. A great deal of time, energy and money is spent to market bad health practices. The mass media constantly bombards us with messages urging us to make unhealthy choices regarding our health, diet and lifestyle. In addition, the health practices and lifestyle of our parents usually becomes intricately woven into the fabric of our own lifestyles.

Yet, you may have been brought up to believe that your health depends exclusively on the quality of healthcare you receive. The truth is, “your health is your responsibility.” You are the only person who can make the lifestyle

decisions that contribute to your well-being. You are the one who must take steps to preserve your health and promote your wellness. **Only you have the power to create wellness for yourself.** Your power lies in the choices you make every day on your behalf. To improve your health and create wellness, you must expand your focus beyond that of physical health. Achieving wellness requires balancing the various aspects of the whole person. These aspects are physical, dietary and emotional. This broader, holistic approach to health involves the integration of all of these aspects and is an ongoing process.

But, begin your journey towards optimum health one step at a time, with open eyes; because you need to realize that the cards are heavily stacked against you. Just look at the numbers. In 2006, the United States spent over two trillion dollars on “health” care. The majority of the money spent had absolutely nothing to do with health or health promotion; but, everything to do with expensive drugs and surgeries designed to deal with or suppress symptoms of diseases. When compared with nearly two dozen other industrialized countries, the United States has the highest infant mortality rate and the lowest life expectancy for people who have reached the age of 60. That means the present system isn’t working. Cancer, Diabetes, Osteoporosis, Cardiovascular disease and strokes are increasing in epidemic proportions.

Certainly there are many things that are necessary to live a healthy life. These include: food, pure water, clean air, adequate sleep, suitable exercise, sunshine, loving relationships, cleanliness, and proper function of your nervous system.

Our goal is to partner with you and help you improve your health from this point forward throughout your life one step at a time. What you must understand is that the most effective ally you have in achieving the higher level of health you desire is literally right under your nose. I am talking about the dynamics of the human body; an incredible machine so taken for granted that it is overlooked as the miracle that it is. I’m certain you understand what I mean. By example – How much mental effort did you exert to help heal the last cut or scratch you had. Probably, like me... you didn’t even think about it; it just happened! Our body’s internal intelligence recognized the wound and the healing was done for us. It may seem simplistic... but, how amazing is that? Think of all the things happening inside us... basically on auto-pilot. Now... what if you helped the auto-pilot a little bit?

Are you sick and tired of being sick and tired? Are you frustrated that when you are sick, your doctor only prescribes drugs? Have you paid a fortune for your drugs or surgery; only to suffer many serious side-effects? The odds are high that you answered “yes” to one or more of these questions and you are interested in taking more control of your health. The reward for most people who maintain a positive mental attitude, eat a healthy diet, keep their nervous systems functioning properly and exercise regularly is a life full of energy, joy, vitality and a tremendous passion for living. I urge you to take action now.

One of the major principles to understand is that your body has an enormous capacity for self-healing. It is designed to be healthy and will move in that direction once you provide it with all the essential building blocks; but, you must begin a healthy lifestyle program. You must remember... your body wants to move towards health and away from diseases and can, as long as you provide the environment for it to do so. Not only can you extend the quantity of years you live; but, also the quality

Thank you for allowing me this opportunity to offer you the major keys to your better health. These included; taking personal responsibility by (1) earnestly enhancing your knowledge and attitude about health (2) gaining an optimally functioning nervous system and (3) employing an appropriate diet balanced with exercise and sufficient sleep. Today can be the beginning of a new you! Enjoy the discovery process.

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