



Simple ways to battle lifestyle diseases

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Not easily detectable, most lifestyle diseases like diabetes, heart disease, hypertension, high cholesterol levels are insidious in nature. They gradually develop over the years and can cause serious complications even when in the borderline stage. The good news is that just a lifestyle change can go a long way in reversing these lifestyle diseases

The main causes of lifestyle diseases are sedentary lifestyle, unhealthy eating practices, stress, alcohol, smoking, anxieties, and genetics. Irregular visits to the doctor lead to further complications; hence it is extremely important get an annual medical checkup done by your family physician. Due to the fear of hospitals/ doctors/ medicines and the high cost factor involved, people visit their doctors only once in a long while. In most cases this is done when the condition of the patient is already worsened and little can be done to reverse the harm caused.

Following are a few guidelines that can change your life for the better and help you live a normal life without these lifestyle diseases -

- Get your ABCs checked regularly: A1C* (blood glucose), Blood pressure, and Cholesterol. It is extremely important to maintain the levels within the desired target range.
- Also, one must also monitor their eating habits and eat 'right', without which it is impossible to curb lifestyle diseases. Avoid being dependent on packaged food such as, chips, burgers, pizzas, jams, pastas, etc.
- Eat a hearty breakfast, moderate lunch and light dinner. Control portion sizes, eat slowly and stop when you are satisfied, not stuffed full. It is not what you eat but how much you eat that matters. Using smaller plates and bowls helps you limit your serving size & eat moderately

- Include 2 servings of fruits and 3-4 servings of vegetables every day. Get fiber friendly by choosing wholegrain foods instead of refined foods, whole fruits with peel instead of fruit juices.
- Nevertheless, remember that even healthy foods can cause problems if you eat too much of them. Sugar free foods could be loaded with fat and fat free foods with sugar, so choose diet foods only after reading food labels carefully. A nutritionist can help you decide how much you should eat.
- Limit TV/Internet time. Switch off the TV during meals. Make slow changes and pick one habit you want to change every month. eg. Instead of a desert opt for a fruit. Don't stock traditional Indian deep-fried snacks and sweets at home-eg chiwda, chaklis, chips, laddoos etc. Instead, Stock the house with healthy food like fruits and nuts. Have set-meal times. This limits snacking and eating alone.
- Increase the protein intake by incorporating cottage cheese, lentils, nuts, milk in the meals. Add vegetables to parathas, soups, dosas, poha, upma and idlis to increase the fiber content .

- Sedentary lifestyle featuring long working hours, lack of physical exercise and stressful job profile go a long way in ruining your health. So avoid it, and fit in a little fitness every day.
- On a more serious note, reduce your body weight if overweight (BMI>23kg/m²). Body fat around the waist (central obesity) is a common culprit of lifestyle diseases. You are more predisposed to lifestyle diseases if your waistline is more than 35 inches if you are a man or 32 inches if you are a woman. Remember “Longer the belt shorter is the lifespan”. The American Heart Association & the American Diabetes Association recommends at least 30 minutes of moderate intensity physical activity on at least five days of the week. You could use a pedometer to monitor activity (10000 steps equals calorie expenditure of 300 calories). Balance the number of calories you eat with those you use up each day. To lose weight gradually, you may need to reduce your intake by about 500 calories each day or increase your physical activity to 150 minutes each week
- If you choose to drink, do so in moderation, if you smoke, it is *essential* that you STOP!

MODERATION IS THE KEY TO GOOD HEALTH