

## good health care coverage

means many things to consumers: covering doctor visits, emergency room visits, surgeries, and medications among others. Being healthy can reduce your cost of health care with less illness, fewer doctor visits and fewer medications. There are several things you can do personally to reduce visits to health care facilities, thus easing your overall health care costs.

reducing  
the cost of  
health  
care...



with mary druke

**EXERCISE** First of all, adults need to exercise consistently. Experts recommend that adults get at least 150 minutes a week of moderate-intensity physical activity, such as brisk walking. An inactive lifestyle has been identified as a significant risk factor for heart disease, cancer and stroke. According to Steven Blair, professor of exercise science and epidemiology and biostatistics at the University of South Carolina, physical inactivity is “the biggest public health problem of the 21st century.” Many adults sit at work for most of the day and then sit down once they are home to watch television or work at a computer. Finding the time and motivation to get regular exercise can be challenging, but the benefits of regular physical activity are numerous. Among the benefits are: 1) Reduced risk of developing high blood pressure, colon cancer, and diabetes 2) Reduced risk of dying from heart disease 3) Healthier bones, muscles, and joints; and 4) Reduced symptoms of anxiety and depression.

**SNACKS** Eating healthy snacks (200 or fewer calories) while on the go is important. Small portions of crackers, pretzels, chips, and popcorn can all be part of a healthy diet. Snack bars can be a beneficial snack, but they should be made with real fruit and whole grains and low in sugar. Chilled milk, cheese, and yogurt are excellent snacking options. Nuts (almonds, walnuts, pecans, pistachios, and peanuts) if eaten in small amounts are a great choice. Fruits and vegetables are ideal, natural food snacks.

In addition to exercising and snacking better, buying better groceries is key. Weight-related issues such as high blood pressure, diabetes, or painful joint conditions can be addressed by making healthier purchases at the grocery store. You can help keep these in balance by 1) Eating a nutrient-dense breakfast everyday 2) Serving plenty of vegetables at meal times 3) Keeping healthy snacks on hand 4) Drinking water or low-fat milk with meals.

**ALCOHOL INTAKE** Finally, staying healthy involves monitoring alcohol consumption. It is evident that excessive alcohol use over months and years can cause significant health problems, including: Liver disease, high blood pressure and heart disease, type 2 diabetes, neurological and psychological problems, pancreatitis, gastrointestinal problems, and increased risk for certain cancers.

**In summary**, there are many things you can do to create and improve a healthy lifestyle. Eating right and exercising, along with monitoring alcohol intake have proven to reduce the number of visits to health care facilities and reduce your cost as well as promoting a healthier lifestyle.

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