It’s Time to Take Action

A long and healthy life doesn’t just happen. Everyday choices influence the quality of life you experience. Decisions start before your feet hit the floor in the morning. For instance, you made a decision whether or not to set an alarm or what time to set the alarm. Many decisions during the day are food-centered. Perhaps you think you just make three food decisions daily: Breakfast, lunch, and dinner. Well, think again. You choose how much or what kind of milk to pour on cereal, whether to have a second helping of lasagna, if you will eat that pastry or drink soda or coffee at the office, and on and on.

Other important decisions revolve around physical activity. Take the stairs or elevator? Exercise in the morning before work or in the evening after work. Since all of these decisions affect how your day goes, it is important to consider making a few common-sense changes. Many serious health problems are directly related to personal habits or behavior. So, set down and write out a plan to regain or maintain a healthy lifestyle.

Over time, poor eating habits affect overall health status. Problems related to obesity or chronic diseases such as diabetes, heart disease, or arthritis didn’t happen overnight. Making poor nutrition and exercise choices can even contribute to a generally poor emotional or mental outlook.

Start your day with breakfast and eating with your family. Food consumed first thing in the morning jump-starts metabolism and helps the body function better physically and mentally.

Include a fruit or vegetable with every meal or snack. Fruits and vegetables are naturally high in fiber and low in calories. They also provide a wide range of disease-fighting vitamins, minerals and antioxidants.

Making a conscious effort to reduce food portion size will do much to reduce the number of calories, as well as the amount of fat and added sugar consumed.

Eating slowly and eat only until you are no longer hungry is important. Learn to enjoy feeling satisfied and light on your feet instead of stuffing yourself. Try laying your eating utensil down between bites, taking a drink, or engage in conversation around the dinner table to help everyone slow down. When you routinely stop eating just as you begin to feel full and don’t take even one more bite, you can save as many as 500 calories a day.

Eat whole foods instead of highly processed foods. Whole foods mean less sugar, fat, sodium, and chemicals, and they provide more fiber and natural nutrients.

Along with choosing to consume healthier food, many people can achieve a healthy lifestyle by increasing physical activity. Start by investing in a good pair of walking shoes and walking around your neighborhood. Another habit that will increase success is scheduling time for physical activity during your day.

If you have been inactive for a period of time, make sure you do not overdo your first workout. Sore muscles or shortness of breath translate to not wanting to continue. As with any exercise program, check with your health-care provider first. It takes approximately six weeks of repetition to turn something into a habit. Get started and enjoy the outcome.