

Replace Silent Diseases

With Healthy Living

By Jessica K. Hairston, MD

Silent diseases develop from our habits. Our personal lifestyle traits can silently sabotage our health and well-being. These habits are our familiar and comfortable lifestyle patterns that are signature to our being.

For example, are you the person who gets that extra slice of cake or polishes off the bag of cookies? Or, are you known for your love of the grilled 8-ounce slice of prime rib? Do you come home from work, head for the dinner table and then make a bee-line for the couch to watch your favorite TV show with your favorite alcoholic beverage in hand? Are you the leader of your colleagues at the hourly gathering around the work-place coffee pot? Or, do you pat yourself on the back after completing your 18-hour day, only to relive the day while you sleep each night? And then do you bemoan again and again how you never seem to make progress at your annual goal of losing that last 10 pounds or that extra inch around your mid-section?

If you see yourself in this litany, then you know what it means to have been “done in” by your habits. No worries, though, there is help.

How do you “get rid” of a bad habit? You replace it with a better and healthier habit. It takes a minimum of six weeks to make a habit either good or bad. It is all the same—a pattern of behavior. Choose one healthy habit for yourself—now. Focus on how your life would improve if you were practicing that healthier habit. Feel the revitalization of your body, the renewed sense of purpose, the strength of a stronger, healthier, and more flexible body, and the quietude of fresh air, a slow walk, and a peaceful mind.

Develop Moderation. Enjoy your favorite foods in smaller quantities in different settings. Explore the idea of treating yourself for a job well done weekly, not daily. Use moderation as your guide for salt and



sugar, knowing that special savory moment can happen again and again. By doing so, you reduce your risk of diabetes, hypertension, and obesity.

Eat more fresh fruits and vegetables.

Make them your between meal snacks. By eating fresh fruits and vegetables at the beginning of your meal, your meal becomes vitamin dense instead of calorie dense while lowering your risk of colon cancer and breast cancer.

Move more. Exercising the body soothes the mind, relieves stress, lowers blood pressure, and improves blood glucose metabolism. Choose your favorite movements, stretch your back and all your limbs and repeat the movement for 12-15 minutes each day. Exercising within your physical capacity lowers the risk of all diseases.

Drink water. Flushing your body with 64 ounces of water daily removes toxins while energizing all of your cells. Think of yourself lowering your risk of cancer, hyper-

tension, and kidney disease with each sip.

Relax with solitude. Have time alone, daily. Pray, read, reflect, and meditate on the meaning and purpose of your life. Write about yourself, where you have been and where you will go. Five minutes a day before bed will bring closure to your day and set the stage for a more enjoyable tomorrow and reduce worry, stress, anxiety and depression.

Sleep and sleep some more. Your body needs 7-8 hours of uninterrupted sleep to repair itself. Your brain sorts through the day's events while your sleep. A good night's rest reduces stress and lowers the risk of obesity and heart disease.

Now the key to success. Daily write about the experience of performing your new personal habit. Write about how your day has improved since you have created your new habit. Tell a sincere friend about your new life changes and what a difference your healthy habit has made for you. By changing your patterns of behavior you have changed the course of your life, today. **h&h**

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