

# The Wellness Family

Dr. Cuperus Keeps You Informed

## A Fresh Start to Wellness

Anytime of year is the right time to make a decision to strive for a wellness lifestyle. It doesn't have to be at the beginning of the year, and it doesn't have to be a major change; in fact, when choosing to make the "wellness change" smaller is better.

### **What is a Fresh Start?**

The definition of "start" is to begin or set in motion; this has never been more fitting than when used in this context of wellness. Your plan is not to go from 0-60 in 3.5 seconds, but to set in motion a lifestyle change. Huge changes that are made overnight with an expectation of success rarely succeed.

Our society has decided that everything should happen in an instant and when we don't get what we want immediately, or see the results we expect right away, we become discouraged and quit. We almost set ourselves up for failure from the beginning. A fresh and successful start is going to begin with baby steps.

### **The First Step**

Your ultimate goal is wellness, and it's more than just an absence of symptoms. It is a true expression of health in every area of your life: physical, emotional and spiritual. Considering these three categories of wellness, the first step to a fresh start is to make a list of the top five areas where you want to improve.

There may be a multitude of changes you eventually want to make, but success begins by setting small things in motion. Like a marathon runner, the strategy is to set a steady pace and go the distance. Consider the following examples of areas where you may want to improve and suggestions on how to make lasting changes with baby steps.

### **Lose Weight**

A recent study by the World Health Organization (WHO) estimated that 1 in 3 of the world's adults is overweight and 1 in 10 is actually clinically obese. This statistic helps to support the fact that one of the most common lifestyle choices made is to lose weight. It's a wise choice, and definitely an important one, but also one that is proven to be typically unsuccessful.

Research has shown that 95% of those who lose weight will eventually gain it back (usually within three

years). This is why losing weight is linked to two important lifestyle choices: nutritional changes and physical activity.

### **Nutritional Changes**

The first step to weight loss, this change needs to start small by increasing your low-glycemic vegetable intake, the greener the better, and avoiding high-glycemic vegetables such as corn, potatoes, carrots and peas.

Start by eating one extra low-glycemic vegetable a day; in a month, add another vegetable to your diet. Within five months you will be eating the recommended daily allowance of vegetables and you'll be feeling healthier and losing weight.



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### **Move More**

A sedentary lifestyle is one of the leading causes of preventable deaths worldwide. This is defined as a lack of regular, routine physical activity for a sustained minimum of 20 minutes more than 3 days a week. It's not just being physically active that is required, but being in continuous physical activity for a minimum of 20 minutes.

Starting small, pick two days a week and walk out for ten minutes, then walk home. If you miss one day then go the next day but don't give up. After two weeks add a day and begin walking three times a week. Then on the sixth week walk out for fifteen minutes, then walk home (30 minutes total). The ultimate goal is to be walking 45 minutes at a time four or five days a week.

### **Decrease Caffeine, Sugar and Other Chemicals**

Treat caffeine or junk food just like any other bad habit and slowly reduce your intake. For instance, drinking four cups of coffee and 8-34 ounces of soda per day is

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extremely unhealthy. Begin by reducing your coffee from four to three cups a day for one or two weeks, then go to two a day for one or two weeks until you are down to only a cup a day. As for soft drinks, these should be consumed no more than once or twice a month due to their chemical content.

This plan also works with snacking, high sugar intake, consuming chemically altered diet snacks or drinks, and high carbohydrate/low protein diets. Slowly decrease your intake over a regular period of time and you'll hardly notice it, but you will be making a change.

### **Less Over-the-Counter Medications**

It may be that you're one of the millions of people worldwide who find they reach for over-the-counter (OTC) drugs on a regular basis: allergy medications, cough or eye drops, pain relievers, sleep aids, antacids, cold remedies and weight-loss drugs are taken routinely. This is called "self-medicating" and can be dangerous for those who aren't aware of drug interaction risks as well as the side-effects of the chemicals in these drugs.

Talk to your Family Wellness Chiropractor about any OTCs that you take and why; it may be that there are healthier, holistic options you haven't considered.

### **More Restful Sleep**

Research has shown that eight hours of sleep is vital to your mental and emotional wellness. This can be affected by not going to bed early enough, insomnia, or not getting restful sleep once you're in bed. The first step to making a change in this area will be to determine which of these problems you face.

Going to bed earlier is just a matter of telling yourself that you're going to make the change; if you're staying

up until 11 then start going to bed at 10:45, and a few weeks later go to bed at 10:30, and so on. Insomnia can have several possible causes such as drinking caffeine or eating too close to bedtime, as well as stress. If you sleep fitfully consider your mattress, diet or physical activity.

### **Decrease Stress and Increase Peace**

One of the biggest demands on our time is television and computer time, with the average person wasting four hours a day. Imagine reducing this to one hour; that adds three hours to a day or 21 hours to a week. Think about what you could do with almost an extra day every week.

The problem with busy lifestyles is that we don't allow ourselves any time to shut down or decompress, and watching television or playing on the computer doesn't count. Down time is several minutes spent letting go of the stresses of the day, and the best time to implement this is right before bed.

Begin with just five minutes of being quiet. If you meditate or pray then do so, but even just sitting and trying to empty your mind of racing thoughts will help to calm you before bed. A quiet stroll up and down your street or standing in your backyard contemplating the stars can be equally peaceful. The goal is to let go of the stresses of the day and allow your mind and body to shut down and fully rest.

### **Successful Goals in Summary**

The concept of baby steps is not new but where we can apply it could be. The areas of our lives that fall under the category of wellness are limitless, only we know where we really want to make a change. Remember that a successful strategy is one that can be accomplished. Make small changes over a longer period of time and you will succeed.

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*Dear Patient,*

*Dr. Cuperus is dedicated to providing you with the absolute best in family wellness care. So take a moment today to discuss with your Family Wellness Chiropractor any concerns you may have regarding you or your family's wellness goals.*

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