

Students can be in charge of their own health and happiness

By Don Cook

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What we sometimes notice in the business of treating cancer is what happens when someone is diagnosed. Some people spring into action when they get

the news. They become determined, arm themselves with expert advice and manage their treatment in a wise, deliberate and enlightened way. And often beat it.

So here's a question: what would happen if you managed your body for maximum health without a diagnosis of cancer?

There is a large body of emerging science on disease prevention. And the preventative prescription is the same for many chronic diseases, such as heart disease, obesity, stroke, diabetes, emphysema and cancer.

The basic proposition is that some slight changes in personal choice can

have a big payoff. An increase in vigilance about risk, a slight improvement in nutrition, a commitment to moderate exercise, a slight improvement in how to manage stress and avoiding all forms of tobacco can throw a young (or old) body

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into the category of the healthy and seldom sick.

The following are some dos and don'ts of personal health.

Do:

- Have an annual or bi-annual physical exam.
- Talk friends out of using tobacco.
- Fasten seatbelts
- Wash hands a lot.
- Get a pap smear or mammogram
- Examine yourself for testicular cancer.
- Get five to 10 servings of fruits and vegetables per day and eat half the servings raw.
- Reduce animal protein to one serving a day.
- Eat cold water fish one to three times a week.
- Get 20 to 30 minutes of exercise three to four times a week.
- Do physical as well as seated work.
- Find ways to relax before a test or other stressful event.
- Figure out a way to have a positive, cheerful mental attitude.
- Resolve conflicts with positive steps - ditch the grudge.

Don't:

- Binge drink.
 - Use tobacco
 - Drive while using a hand held cell phone.
 - Get in a car with a new driver and four other teens.
 - Get sunburned or use tanning beds.
 - Eat a steady diet of high fat fast foods.
 - Eat only highly processed foods such as pizza, pastries, fried potatoes, chips, ice cream or sodas.
 - Always take the car or elevator.
 - Always use power tools or appliances.
 - Sit in front of the television all day.
 - Ignore stress and endure body symptoms.
 - Let another person drag you down.
 - Reach to stress uncontrollably.
- Become a student of your own well-being. Take note of the risks, trends and preventative steps appropriate to each decade of your life.
- *DON COOK is coordinator of community outreach and education at the UT M.D. Anderson Cancer Center Science Park- Smithville.*