



Keeping Healthy in Today's World

Many factors affect how healthy you are, including factors you might or might not be able to control, such as:

AGE With increasing age, the risk of developing some diseases increases.

SEX Some diseases affect only men or only women, such as prostate cancer (men) or ovarian cancer (women).

RACE Some diseases are more likely to occur in people of certain races. This includes diseases such as sickle cell anemia in African-Americans and Tay-Sachs disease in people of Jewish descent.

HEREDITY Certain illnesses are more likely to occur among family members. This is true with diseases like breast cancer. Having a mother, sister or aunt who has had breast cancer gives you a higher chance of having it. However, if you know your family history, you can talk to your doctor about prevention of disease and screening methods to detect disease early. If needed, treatments can begin early while they are the most effective. Alcoholism is another disease that occurs more often among members of the same family.

ENVIRONMENT Sometimes where you live or work might increase your chances of having some health effects from exposures to chemicals in your environment. This includes exposure to secondhand smoke causing lung cancer or asthma; work with pesticides causing a rash; exposure to radon gas in your home causing lung cancer; or direct exposure to certain levels of chemicals at a hazardous waste site leading to certain health effects. However, some exposures can be decreased if proper steps are taken, such as avoiding secondhand smoke, wearing protective gear on the job, staying away from a hazardous waste site, or checking your home's radon levels and taking measures to reduce any high levels detected.

ACCESS TO HEALTH CARE If you cannot afford to see a doctor and do not have health insurance to pay for it, you might not get proper, effective, and timely treatment for a disease.

VIOLENCE If you are the victim of domestic abuse or other physical trauma, your health is likely to suffer if you do not receive proper treatment or if the violence continues to occur over time.

INCOME If you do not make enough money to take care of your basic needs, it might be difficult to maintain a healthy lifestyle, eat well, or get medical care.

MENTAL OUTLOOK Your health is affected by whether or not you have a positive outlook on life. If you have some sort of mental illness, it also might affect your physical health.

MAINTAINING A HEALTHY WEIGHT Research has shown that if you are only 20 pounds overweight, your health can be impacted. The chance of having many diseases increases if you weigh more than the recommended amount for your height, build and age. These diseases include diabetes, heart disease, and high blood pressure. If you are obese, the risk for adverse health effects increases even more.

PRE-EXISTING DISEASES You might have been born with a type of disease, like diabetes, that can increase your chances of additional, related diseases.

PAST EXPOSURE TO ALCOHOL, ILLEGAL DRUGS OR HORMONES Treatment of chemical abuse needs to be accompanied by healthy lifestyle choices. Your history of lifestyle choices might still affect your health, even after you quit drinking alcohol, using drugs, or taking hormones.

STRESS LEVELS Your ability to deal with life's stressors can affect your health. If you are easily stressed and upset, your body might suffer damage over time, such as by increasing your blood pressure. An increase in blood pressure might lead to heart problems. Also, if you have good, supportive relationships with friends and family, your stress level might be decreased.

Other factors, such as lifestyle choices that you usually can control, also affect health. Here are some things you can do to lead as healthy a life as possible:

- ✓ **Wash** your hands with **soap and water**.
- ✓ Don't smoke, chew, inhale or dip **tobacco**.
- ✓ Drink **alcohol** in moderation, if you drink at all. Don't drink at all during pregnancy or if you are planning to become pregnant.
- ✓ Eat a **balanced, healthy, diet** that is high in fiber, low in fat and includes a good supply of fresh, washed fruit and vegetables to get adequate nutrition.
- ✓ Drink an ample amount of clean, fresh **water** daily (eight 8-ounce glasses per day is generally recommended).
- ✓ Take a **multivitamin** daily.
- ✓ Get adequate **exercise** (at minimum 20 minutes per day).
- ✓ Keep regular **dental** appointments.
- ✓ **Sleep** a proper amount (about eight hours per night).
- ✓ Use prescribed **medications** properly.
- ✓ Do not take illegal **drugs**.
- ✓ Obey proper **safety** precautions for appropriate situations, such as using seatbelts, bicycle helmets, child car seats, and/or condoms.
- ✓ Have medical **screenings**, such as pap smears, mammography, or prostate exams, as needed.
- ✓ Seek appropriate, consistent medical **treatment** for a chronic illness like heart disease or arthritis.

Each of these factors can affect your health. Together these factors can make the difference in staying healthy.

For more information about the **Health Assessment Team**, please call 877-798-2772 or visit us online at: www.doh.state.fl.us/environment/medicine/superfund.

