

# HealthyBy Choice

...One Day at a Time

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## May is National Physical Fitness Month

Physical activity provides long-term health benefits for everyone! By being active, you will burn calories that you store from eating throughout the day and—it can be as easy as walking the dog or as rigorous as running a marathon. Providing opportunities for children to be active early on puts them on a path to better physical and mental health. It's never too late to jumpstart a healthy lifestyle.

Physical activity, along with proper nutrition, is beneficial to people of all ages, backgrounds, and abilities. And it is important that everyone gets active: over the last 20 years, there's been a significant increase in obesity in the United States. About one-third of U.S. adults (33.8%) are obese and approximately 17% (or 12.5 million) of children and adolescents (aged 2-19 years) are obese.

The health implications of obesity in America are startling:

- If things remain as they are today, one-third of all children born in the year 2000 or later may suffer from diabetes at some point in their lives, while many others are likely to face chronic health problems such as heart disease, high blood pressure, cancer, diabetes, and asthma.
- Studies indicate that overweight youth may never achieve a healthy weight, and up to 70% of obese teens may become obese adults.
- Even more worrisome, the cumulative effect could be that children born in the year 2000 or later may not outlive their parents.

The impact of obesity doesn't end there. Obesity has personal financial and national economic implications as well. Those who are obese have medical costs that are \$1,429 more than those of normal weight on average (roughly 42% higher). And annual direct costs of childhood obesity are \$14.3 billion.

By incorporating physical activity into your daily life—30 minutes for adults and 60 minutes for children—as well as healthy eating, you will experience positive health benefits and be on the path for a better future.

## Not Physically Active?

When you are not physically active, you are more at risk for:

- High blood pressure
- High blood cholesterol
- Stroke
- Type 2 diabetes
- Heart disease
- Cancer

Regular physical activity can produce long-term health benefits. It can help:

- Prevent chronic diseases such as heart disease, cancer, and stroke (the three leading health-related causes of death)
- Control weight
- Make your muscles stronger
- Reduce fat
- Promote strong bone, muscle, and joint development
- Condition heart and lungs
- Build overall strength and endurance
- Improve sleep
- Decrease potential of becoming depressed
- Increase your energy and self-esteem
- Relieve stress
- Increase your chances of living longer



*Move...it makes you feel good all over!*



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## Healthy Vision Month

Living an overall healthy life is good for your eyes. You can start taking steps toward living a healthy life by:

**Maintaining a healthy weight.** Being overweight or obese increases your risk of developing diabetes and other systemic conditions, which can lead to vision loss, such as diabetic eye disease or glaucoma.

**Eating healthy foods.** You've heard carrots are good for your eyes, but eating a diet rich in fruits and vegetables, particularly dark leafy greens such as spinach, kale, or collard greens, is important for keeping your eyes healthy too. Research has also shown there are eye health benefits from eating fish high in omega-3 fatty acids, such as salmon, tuna, and halibut.

**Not smoking.** Smoking is as bad for your eyes as it is for the rest of your body. Research has linked smoking to an increased risk of developing age-related macular degeneration, cataracts, and optic nerve damage, all of which can lead to blindness.

**Managing chronic conditions.** Many conditions, such as diabetes, hypertension, and multiple sclerosis, can greatly impact vision, resulting in inflammation of the optic nerve, diabetic retinopathy, glaucoma, and even blindness. Managing these conditions with the help of your health care provider can often prevent these eye problems from occurring.

### Get a Dilated Eye Exam

You might think your vision is in good shape or that your eyes are healthy, but visiting your eye care professional for a comprehensive dilated eye exam is the only way to be completely certain. When it comes to common vision problems, many people don't realize their vision could be improved with glasses or contact lenses. In addition, many common eye diseases such as glaucoma, diabetic eye disease, and age-related macular degeneration often have no symptoms. A dilated eye exam is the only way to detect these diseases in their early stages. Talk to your eye care professional about how often you should have one.

During a comprehensive dilated eye exam, drops are placed in your eyes to dilate, or widen, the pupil. Your eye care professional uses a special magnifying lens to examine your retina and look for signs of damage and other eye problems. After the examination, your close-up vision may remain blurred for several hours.

### Wear Sunglasses

Sunglasses are a great fashion accessory, but their most important job is to protect your eyes from the sun's ultraviolet (UV) rays. Some of the sun's effects on the eyes include:

- Cataracts, a clouding of the eye's lens that can blur vision. An estimated 20% of cases are caused by extended UV exposure.
- Macular degeneration, resulting from damage to the retina that destroys central vision. Macular degeneration is the leading cause of blindness in the United States.
- Pterygium, a tissue growth over the white part of the surface of the eye that can alter the curve of the eyeball, causing astigmatism.
- When purchasing sunglasses, look for ones that block out 99 to 100% of both UVA and UVB radiation, so you can keep your vision sharp and eyes healthy. A hat offers great protection, too!



Healthy You...Healthy Eyes!

