

# Lifestyle as Medicine— A “Prescription” for Physical Health and Self-Improvement

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## Learning Objectives

- Discuss the current state of health in the United States
- Explain the concept of wellness
- Analyze the dynamic interplay between key health behaviors
- Apply lifestyle medicine “prescriptions” to optimize your physical health and overall well-being





MY  
WHY

## Current State of Population Health

- Approximately 6 in 10 adults in the U.S. have at least one chronic health condition
  - 4 in 10 Americans have two or more chronic health conditions
- Non-communicable diseases (NCDs) have surpassed communicable diseases as the greatest global health burden
  - Chronic diseases are responsible for about 70% of all deaths in the U.S.
    - We are in the midst of a “syndemic” of chronic diseases and persistent infectious disease

## Major Modifiable Risk Factors



THE KEY LIFESTYLE RISKS FOR CHRONIC DISEASE



TOBACCO  
USE



POOR  
NUTRITION



LACK OF  
PHYSICAL ACTIVITY



EXCESSIVE  
ALCOHOL USE

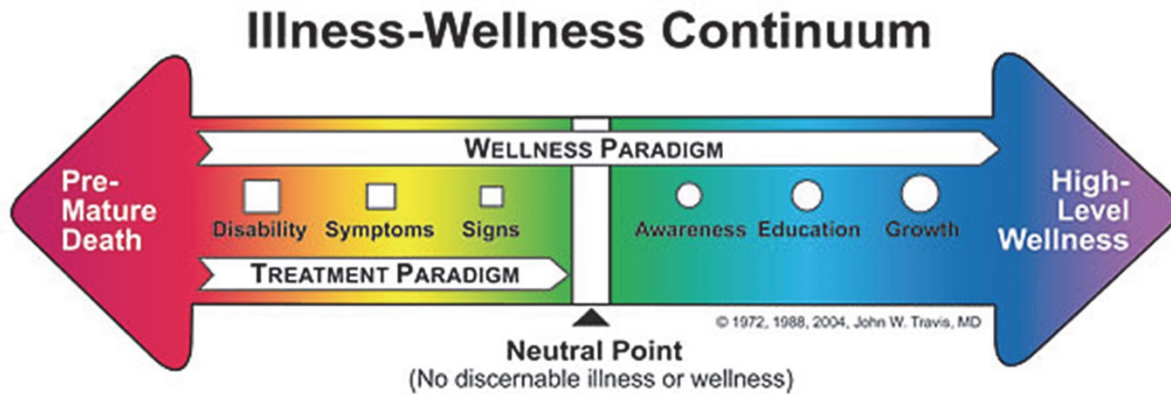
## Understanding Health

- The World Health Organization defines health as a state of complete **physical, mental and social well-being**, and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity.



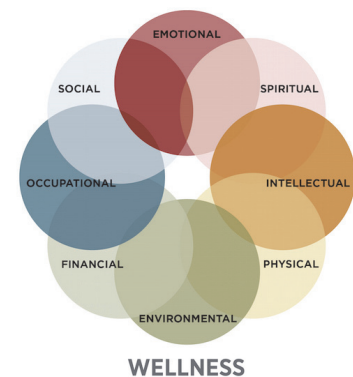
World Health  
Organization

# A Shift in Perspective

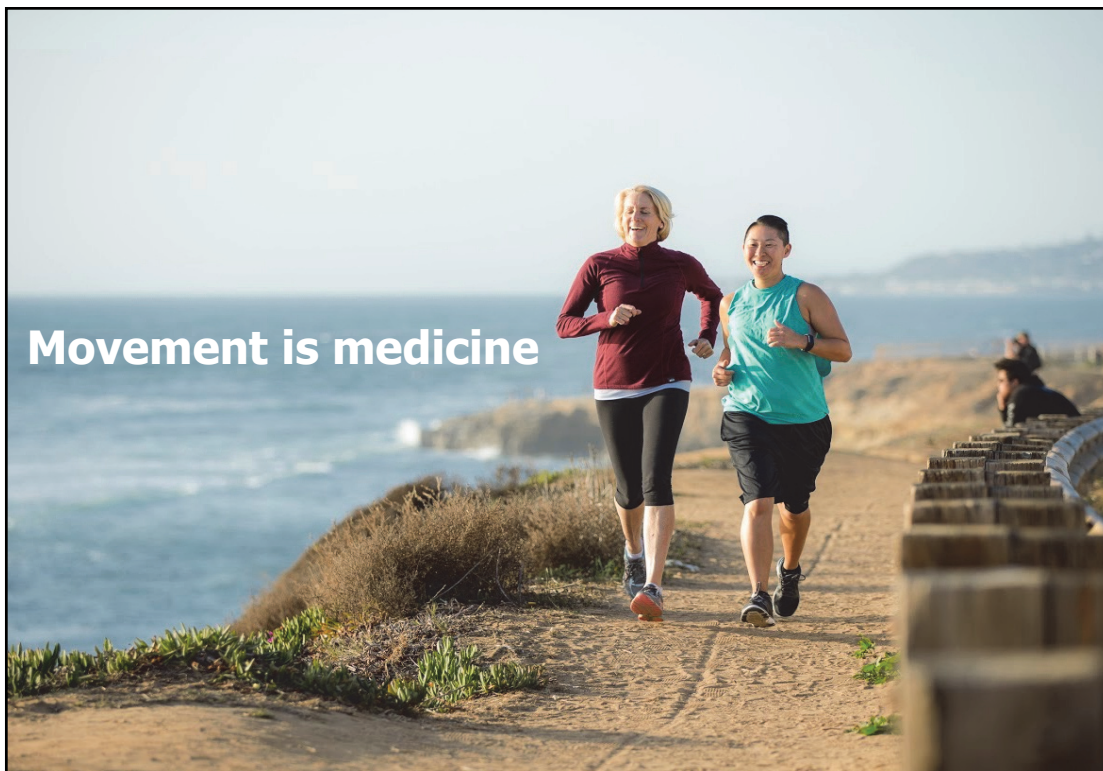


# Defining Wellness

- The Global Wellness Institute defines wellness as **the active pursuit of activities, choices and lifestyles that lead to a state of holistic health.**
  - While there are many definitions and models of wellness, all interpretations reflect the fact that wellness is multidimensional.



# The Six Pillars of Lifestyle Medicine

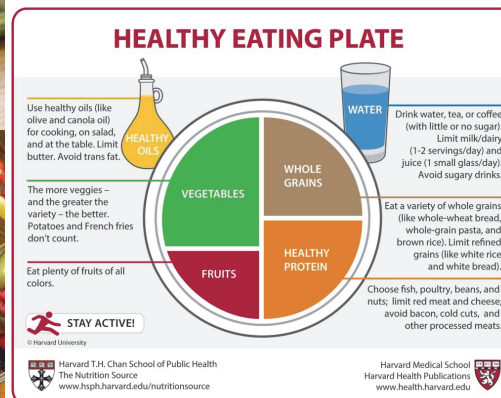


# Rx for Physical Activity

- Aim for at least 150 minutes of moderate intensity aerobic exercise per week
  - Exercise can be broken up into smaller bouts and accumulated throughout the day
  - Additional PA offers more extensive health benefits, including for weight loss and maintenance
- Perform muscle-strengthening activities at least 2-3 days per week
  - Can utilize specific equipment and/or your own bodyweight
- Add more movement to your day
  - Break up long periods of sedentary behavior
    - Stand more and sit less throughout the day
    - Creatively complete more steps



# Nourishing Your Health



## Rx for Nutrition

- Focus on whole foods
  - “Eat food, not too much, mostly plants.”
    - Set a foundation of eating a variety of minimally processed vegetables, fruits, whole grains, legumes, nuts and seeds
    - Think holistically about food as a “package” as opposed to individual nutrients
- Eat the rainbow
  - Incorporate a variety of plants of different colors
    - The assortment of colors provide different flavonoids and vitamins to optimize health and healing



## Sleep

- Poor sleep duration and quality negatively affects both mind and body
  - Metabolic health
    - Higher cortisol and glucose levels
    - Increased appetite and elevated BMI
  - Cardiovascular health
    - Elevated blood pressure
    - Increased risk of heart attack and CVD
  - Mental and emotional health
    - Increased anxiety and depression
    - Greater stress reactivity
    - Impaired learning, memory and alertness

## Rx for Sleep

- Aim for 7-9 hours of sleep per night
- Minimize exposure to light at night
  - Turn off all unnecessary lights at least 60-90 minutes before bedtime
    - Especially backlit devices (e.g., phone, TV, computer, etc.)
- Increase daytime light exposure
  - Spend as much time as practical outside and/or near windows with bright natural light
    - Spend at least 5-10 minutes outside under open sky as early in the morning as possible
    - Increase physical activity, particularly in late afternoon and early evening



## The Interplay Between Physical and Emotional Wellness

- Positive emotions drive healthy behaviors
  - Conversely, healthy behaviors also boost happiness (bidirectional relationship)
- Evidence to support link between emotional well-being and physical health and longevity





## Why Do Happier People Live Longer?

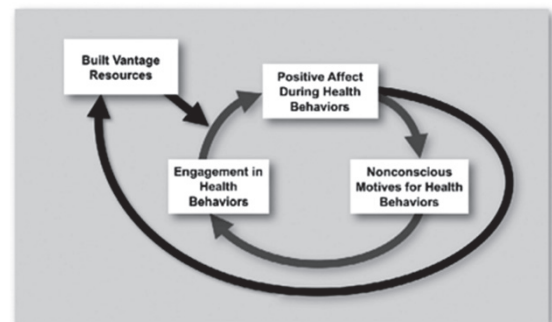
- Improved cardiovascular health
- Reduced inflammation
- Strengthened immune system
- Enhanced endocrine regulation
- Engagement in healthier behaviors

LIFESTYLE & LONGEVITY		
Behavior	Years (mean)	Years (range)
Exercise	3.0	2.1 - 4.5
Not smoking	6.8	2.3 - 11.5
Subjective well-being	7.6	6.0 - 9.0

(Cohen et al. 2003; Diener & Chan, 2011; Kim et al., 2016)

## Linking Happiness and Health Behaviors

- Habits of happier people
  - Exercise more frequently
  - Don't smoke
  - Eat healthy
  - Consume less alcohol
  - Regularly wear seatbelts





## The Power of Social Connection

- Strong social connections may be the single most important predictor for health, happiness and longevity
  - Lack of social connection as detrimental to health as obesity, smoking and high blood pressure
  - Strong social connection associated with:
    - Higher self-esteem
    - Increased resilience
    - Lower rates of anxiety and depression
    - Enhanced immune function



## Rx for Social Connection and Emotional Well-Being

- Connection begins from contentment within
  - Practice self-care and stress management strategies
- Nurture existing relationships and build new ones
  - Take care to connect with people you see frequently during the week
  - Be fully present with loved ones
  - Engage in prosocial behavior (e.g., volunteering)
- Apply positive psychology practices
  - Three good things
  - Awe-inspired walk
  - Random acts of kindness



## Key Takeaways

- Wellness is multidimensional
- Chronic diseases can be effectively prevented, treated and even reversed through positive lifestyle behaviors
- Regular exercise, healthful nutrition and quality sleep not only improve physical health, but also emotional, mental and social well-being.

# Thank You!



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