



GREAT SALT LAKE COUNCIL

BOY SCOUTS OF AMERICA®

Safety Spotlight

Personal Health Safety, Taking Care of “You!”

In many of our past Safety Spotlights we have focused on ways to keep Scouts and leaders safe during higher risk activities. However, do you know that accidents are only the fifth leading cause of death in the U.S.? The top four causes are; 1) Heart disease, 2) Cancer, 3) Chronic lower respiratory diseases, and 4) Stroke. At the beginning of the new-year, it is important to consider taking care of “you!” Most research about personal health centers on these five medication-free health improvement strategies.

1. Don't Smoke or Use Tobacco

Smoking or using tobacco is one of the most significant risk factors for developing heart disease and other health conditions. When it comes to disease prevention, no amount of smoking is safe.

In addition, the nicotine in cigarette smoke makes your heart work harder by narrowing your blood vessels and increasing your heart rate and blood pressure. Carbon monoxide in cigarette smoke replaces some of the oxygen in your blood. This increases your blood pressure by forcing your heart to work harder to supply enough oxygen.

The good news is that when you quit smoking, your risk of disease drops dramatically within just one year. No matter how long or how much you have smoked, you'll start reaping rewards as soon as you quit.

2. Exercise 30 Minutes Most Days of the Week

Getting some regular, daily exercise can reduce your risk of disease. When you combine physical activity with other lifestyle measures, such as maintaining a healthy weight, the payoff is even greater.

Physical activity helps you control your weight and can reduce your chances of developing other conditions that may put a strain on your heart, such as high blood pressure, high cholesterol, and diabetes. It also reduces stress, which may be a factor in heart disease.

Try getting at least 30 to 60 minutes of moderately intense physical activity most days of the week. However, even shorter amounts of exercise offer heart benefits; so if you can't meet those guidelines, don't give up.

3. Eat a Heart-Healthy Diet

Eating food rich in fruits, vegetables, whole grains, and low-fat dairy products while limiting certain fats is important. Healthy eating isn't all about cutting back, though. Most people need to

add more fruits and vegetables to their diet with a goal of five to ten servings a day. Eating that many fruits and vegetables cannot only help prevent disease, but also may help prevent cancer.

Limiting certain fats you eat is also important. Of the types of fat — saturated, polyunsaturated, monounsaturated, and trans fat — saturated fat and trans fat increase the risk of coronary artery disease by raising blood cholesterol levels. Major sources of saturated fat include: red meat, dairy products, and coconut and palm oils. Sources of trans fat include: deep-fried fast foods, bakery products, packaged snack foods, margarines, and crackers. Look at the label for the term "partially hydrogenated" to avoid trans fat.

4. Maintain a Healthy Weight

As you put on weight in adulthood, your weight gain is mostly fat rather than muscle. This excess weight can lead to conditions that increase your chances of disease such as high blood pressure, high cholesterol, and diabetes.

Men are considered overweight if their waist measurement is greater than 40 inches (101.6 cm) and women are overweight if their waist measurement is greater than 35 inches (88.9 cm).

Even a small weight loss can be beneficial. Reducing your weight by just 10 percent can decrease your blood pressure, lower your blood cholesterol level, and reduce your risk of diabetes.

According to the USDA, “In addition to helping you feel and look better, reaching a healthier body weight is good for your overall health and well being. If you are overweight or obese, you have a greater risk of developing many diseases including type 2 diabetes, heart disease, and some types of cancer.

The secret to success is making changes and sticking with them.”



A great resource for healthy eating strategies is ChooseMyPlate.gov.

5. Get Regular Health Screenings

High blood pressure and high cholesterol can damage your heart and blood vessels. Without testing for them, you probably won't know whether you have these conditions. Regular screening can tell you what your numbers are and whether you need to take action.