



Get Healthy – In Trouble If You Don't!

Do the right thing now to avoid complications later

You've probably heard it from a health expert a hundred times – you need to do something, or else... Although everyone is different, the medical conditions many will eventually suffer from are the same for all. Heart disease, diabetes, respiratory problems, cancer, and others can be genetically inherited; but plenty of people without a family history of a particular ailment can still end up with it anyway, simply thanks to complacency. The warnings are real enough; unfortunately they often fall on deaf ears. Maybe we don't care if our lifespan could be shorter by five years, not at this moment when we aren't even close to retirement; so we carry on having fun, putting off changes that would make a difference because they are inconvenient and the consequences too far in the future to matter. Anyway, we reason, that's only the opinion of a complete stranger, and what would they know? Much later, we might reconsider and will probably wish for those lost years back if we are still enjoying life; but it will be a different story for those having to endure the time left to them from a wheelchair or a hospital bed. Kidding ourselves that it will never happen to us is a mistake we will have to pay for, unless we do something to prevent it – NOW!

Whether you realise it at present or not, there's a good chance you are one of those people who are heading towards major health problems before too long. If you care enough about your continued well-being, an important starting point is a visit to your medical practitioner. During the consultation be honest about how you are feeling, especially if your concerns are psychological matters such as anxiety, stress and sleeping disorders. Ask for a thorough physical which includes blood pressure and weight, following through with any tests that may be recommended. These might be to check for levels of cholesterol, triglycerides, the presence of cancer and any other risk factors which your doctor thinks you may be susceptible to. In some instances x-rays may be thought necessary, or ultrasounds for soft-tissue problems. The likely outcome of these examinations will be:

- 1) There is evidence of an anomaly which needs further investigation. You will probably be referred to a specialist for further tests. Try not to be too upset. Many conditions can be treated successfully when diagnosed in the early stages. Whatever you do, don't shut your eyes to the fact that you need help. Bite the bullet and get it now, or you will surely regret it later.
- 2) There is the possibility of something serious that requires confirmation before steps need to be taken to remedy it. This is not a scare tactic, just the advice of an expert who wants to be certain. Again, don't leave finding out. You have to know where you stand.
- 3) No existing medical conditions showed up; however, based on your age, weight and current lifestyle, you may be at risk of one or more problems occurring if you carry on the way you are going. This is probably as good as it gets for most of us; unfortunately, we usually slide the prediction onto the back burner until it comes true.
- 4) The words everyone wants to hear – you are a picture of health. Don't change what you are already doing and you should live to a ripe old age.

Aside from the real nasties hiding inside, we have a pretty fair idea about our physical and mental state. We don't need a medical consultant to tell us to quit smoking, cut down on the alcohol, stop eating junk-food and find ways to reduce stress – we already know that. The trouble is, we refuse to listen, even to ourselves. This is usually because the remedy for the problem is a lot harder to implement than just accepting second-best and doing nothing. It is distinctly possible that we haven't got this way overnight; and rather than ruining years of personal neglect, we should be considering two things: looking ahead to how we are likely to become if steps are not taken to stop the rot; and finding the positive motivation to fix something that needs fixing.

Any change at all will mean sacrifices. Habits, especially the ones known to be the root of the problem, must first be admitted to, and second trimmed back to the point where they are no longer a threat or can be cut out entirely. As well as overindulgence of certain food and drink, exercise comes under this umbrella too. Think about those times when you know you should be getting out for a walk or going to the gym; but you talk yourself out of doing either for some reason – you are tired after a long day; your favourite soapie is on in half an hour; the gym's always packed on a Friday; and if no excuse comes to mind, you just confess you can't be bothered and flop into an easy-chair. The fact is, exercise is hard; sitting on your butt isn't! Here's an attitude you must change. Refuse to and you will have no cause to complain when the consequences eventually hit home. They may be serious like some already mentioned; or they may not sound much more than a nuisance you'll be able to handle, when or if they present themselves. Like arthritis – everyone expects aching joints as they get older. Believe me, it can be far worse than that. Regular exercise of the right sort won't necessarily stop it altogether, but it can help retard the speed of development and minimise the pain that goes with it. Who wouldn't find time to slot in half an hour of exercise a day to avoid that kind of suffering?

Quite a few readers will, by now, have clicked off in disgust. I realise I'm not saying the words they want to hear; but I am distressed by the way people in general are mistreating themselves. Obesity is on the rise like never before; youngsters are being weaned off a healthy lifestyle by drugs; cancer in all its forms is a major concern; and the ones who seem to care the least are those at risk. I know it means a disruption to the normal routine. You'll have to put in extra effort and learn to say no more times than you ever have in the past. Friends may not understand, family even. Change could cost money; but I won't ask what price you put on your life – you've heard that one too. All I will say is: you deserve better than you have been giving yourself, in particular the prospect of a continuing healthy, happy life on this wonder-filled planet.

Please, please take notice. Don't wait for another New Year which may be too late – make that resolution now. Do it for the ones you love, as an example to others; but more importantly for yourself.

Next issue: Self-Esteem comes from Self-Awareness – be happy when you look in the mirror

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