

El Centro College Health Center

Tips For A Healthy And Safe Student Life

Good General Health/Wellness

Good general health and wellness are essential for a successful college career, as well as for a productive and beneficial life. Very often we fall into habits and routines that foster a tendency to take some basic necessities of life for granted. Health and wellness very often takes secondary importance to other more pressing issues of life. As individuals capable of accomplishing many great and wonderful things, it is important to appreciate that the continuing health of our mind, body and spirit requires regular healthful maintenance and wise choices that lead to holistic wellness and wellbeing.

In the pages that follow we hope to provide a concise but essential point of view about the benefits of forming good health habits and making wise life style choices that promote both wellness and safety.

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Daily Health Activities

Physical Hygiene

***Hygiene** is a term that refers to the steps you take to keep yourself clean and healthy. Maintaining a high level of personal hygiene will help increase self esteem and confidence and minimize disease and illness.

***It** is what keeps and promotes the health of people and the community.

*Good personal hygiene includes many good living habits:

***Dental hygiene** begins with brushing your teeth with toothpaste or baking soda at least two times daily (after each meal is great), flossing your teeth often, being careful to eat sugary foods in moderation and seeing your dentist for regular check-ups. Taking good care of your mouth and teeth will help you have pleasant breath, a nice smile and fewer cavities (dental caries).

***Rest** is what we do when we do nothing. It is essential for the restorative process that our bodies must have in order to function properly. It can range from getting at least 6 to 8 hours of good sleep each night (or within a 24 hour cycle) to taking several breaks of 15 to 30 minutes (or more) during the course of each work cycle or between classes.

***Hand washing** is the number one means of preventing the spread of infections. From colds/flu to diarrhea, frequent and timely washing of both hands breaks the opportunity for germs to get into the body. Washing the hands for at least 15 seconds thoroughly with soap and water after toileting is known to avert contraction and/or communication of many fecal borne diseases.

***Bathing** daily is essential to relieve the body of the accumulation of sweat, dirt and bacteria that make us (and sometimes those around us) uncomfortable. It helps to keep body odors under control. Moreover, bathing can be supported by the judicious application of anti-perspirants and fragrances once one is clean.

Exercise/Conditioning

***Physical activity** that is performed on several days of the week improves health and reduces risk of developing life threatening illness. People who are usually inactive will help their well-being by becoming even moderately active on a regular basis. *Moderate amounts of physical activity can include playing volleyball for 45 minutes, walking 1.75 miles in 35 minutes, playing basketball for 15-20 minutes, stair walking for 15 minutes, etc. (All of these are available here at our college). A moderate amount of physical activity is roughly the equivalent of physical activity that uses approximately 150 Calories (kcal) of energy per day or 1,000 Calories per week. *Once a person conditions themselves for a routine of daily activity they begin to reap the benefits of a reduction in the risk of dying prematurely from Metabolic Syndrome (heart disease, diabetes, high blood pressure, obesity, high cholesterol), developing colon cancer and chronic feelings of depression and anxiety.

Nutrition/Diet

***Food is essential** to life and health. Because it is ingested into the body, food has its nutritional value first and foremost in food hygiene. Poor personal cleansing and preparation of fresh foods in particular can lead to both morbidity and mortality. *Next in importance is what one eats and how it is prepared. It is not helpful to eat from all of the food groups if the manner in which the food is cooked robs it of nutrient value. This can happen especially in our “Fast Food” approach to college life. We must be mindful to make healthy choices in order to derive more than empty calories from the foods we eat. *Additionally, when and how frequent and much we eat plays an essential role in how our bodies manage nutrient intake. For instance, eating a good breakfast (that is low fat, but high cal) gives you the energy you need to make it through to lunch (especially if you don’t have anything in between). *Don’t skip breakfast. Have a small healthy mid morning snack of fruits or vegetables. Eat a balanced and hearty lunch. Have a light mid-afternoon snack and a light, but filling early dinner. And small, fruity/veggie bedtime snacks are also good.

Mental/Emotional Health

***Concentration and focus** are essential to the ability to study. Study drives academic success. *When we are in good physical condition and our emotions are calm and benevolent (absent of worry or concern), then we tend to be positive about things. * This in turn raises self-esteem, which makes us more able to concentrate and leads to academic success.

***Mental and emotional disturbances** are a part of life and can occur in anyone. *Mental illness strikes people in the prime of their lives (often during young adulthood). *Early recognition of problems helps to promote access to help in the form of intervention and treatment. * With proper treatment 70 to 90% of individuals enjoy significant reduction in symptoms and improved quality of life. *It is normal to feel sad or “blue” on occasion. *However, **prolonged sadness and unexplained crying spells** for two or more weeks may reflect a problem. *Having **daily irritability, anger, worry, agitation and anxiety** can be a symptom of a mood disorder. ***Loss of appetite or over eating, sleeping too much or too little** can all be signs of depression. *Daily burdens with **feelings of guilt, worthlessness and/or hopelessness** can signal depression. **Recurrent thoughts of death or suicide are serious signs of depression and require immediate attention.*

Spiritual Renewal

***Spiritual life** is a very individualized matter. Much has been written and discoursed about man’s spiritual connections with ‘a power greater than yourself’. We can all agree that, given the hard fact of our lives being subject to both morbidity and mortality, for one to apply consideration to something beyond him has great wisdom, merit and prudence. ***Spending time in contemplation, meditation and or prayer allows us to move beyond the realm of the mundane physical nature of our own existence.** Moreover, when we reach beyond our finite selves we are seeking to touch the face of God (whomever that is to you). Whatever you believe, it is well for your soul to regularly search for hope, for that which is unseen, for that which can not be grasped, but can infinitely be trusted. ***Make a habit of quietly seeking outside yourself each and every day.**