

Daily Union Article

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Title: Two Changes That Can Save Your Life

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), chronic diseases are the leading causes of death and disability in the United States. These diseases and related conditions include heart disease, stroke, cancer, type 2 diabetes, obesity and arthritis and are among the most common, costly, and preventable of all health problems. The National Center for Chronic Disease Prevention and Health Promotion reports that chronic diseases are responsible for 7 of 10 deaths each year, and treating people with chronic diseases accounts for 86% of our nation's health care costs.

Many in America are affected by these diseases and conditions personally or through family members and friends. For those folks, you know how significant an impact it makes on your daily life. For those who haven't been affected yet, the odds are very high that they will at some point in your lifetime.

The statistics are alarming. The CDC offers the following snapshot of the prevalence of these chronic diseases:

- As of 2012, half of all adults had one or more chronic health conditions. One in four adults had two or more chronic health conditions.\*
- Seven of the top 10 causes of death in 2010 were chronic diseases. Two of these chronic diseases – heart disease and cancer – together accounted for nearly 48% of all deaths.\*
- Arthritis is the most common cause of disability. Of the 53 million adults with a doctor diagnosis of arthritis, more than 22 million say they have trouble with their usual activities because of arthritis.\*
- Obesity is a serious health concern with far reaching effects. During 2009-2010, more than one-third of adults, or about 78 million people, were obese. Nearly one of five youths aged 2-19 years was obese.\* In Geary County, the percentage of residents who qualify as obese stands at 31%, just slightly above the Kansas percentage of 30%.\*\*
- Diabetes is the leading cause of kidney failure, lower-limb amputations other than those caused by injury and new cases of blindness among adults. There are 21.3 million people in the US (population age 18 and over) with diagnosed with diabetes. The number of people who are believed to be pre-diabetic is alarming, as well.\* In Geary County, the prevalence of diabetes is 7% of the population.\*\* Area health professionals report that the pre-diabetic numbers for this area are of significant concern.

Sources:

\*Centers for Disease Control and Prevention: National Center for Chronic Disease Prevention and Health Promotion. Chronic Disease Overview.

\*\*Robert Wood Johnson Foundation. County Health Rankings & Roadmaps: Building a Culture of Health, County by County. Princeton, NJ. 2016

So, with all this information in mind, what can be done to lower the numbers? Fortunately, even with a diagnosis of one of these chronic diseases or conditions, you can continue a happy and productive life if you are willing to keep them monitored and are willing to make changes. Most of the chronic disease previously cited warrant changes in two areas of our lifestyle: 1) eating habits and, 2) level of physical activity

Managing your weight is key in preventing many chronic diseases. Americans tend to consume foods in larger quantities than the body needs. A smart first step to reducing or managing your risk for chronic disease to control the portion sizes of the amount of food you eat – such as 1 cup of fresh fruit or 6 ounces of meat. Try eating a half of bagel instead of the whole bagel or have a 3-ounce hamburger instead of the 6-ounce portion. If you are having trouble with portion control because your stomach is sending a strong message to increase your portion size, try these simple tricks:

- 1) Drink a large glass of water 10 minutes before your meal so you feel less hungry.
- 2) When you portion out your meat, fish, or poultry dish, make sure the piece you select is the size of a deck of playing cards. That is equivalent to the recommended 3-oz. portion.
- 3) Use small sized utensils to help you slow down your consumption and reduce the size of your bites. This way, it takes longer to eat your meal and allows your stomach the time it needs to send a message to your brain when you are full. It takes 20 minutes for your stomach to send this message.
- 4) Make your smaller portions look like more food by changing the size of your plate. Eat off a salad plate rather than a large dinner plate.
- 5) Listen to music while you eat instead of watching TV. Research shows that people tend to eat more while watching TV.
- 6) When you fill your plate, start with the vegetables and fruit. Fill it at least half way with these two choices before you add the meat and grain/pasta choices.

Your level of physical activity contributes to your risk of chronic disease or conditions. Physical activity is safe for almost everyone, but you want to check with your doctor anytime you make a significant change to your physical activity plan.

Regular exercise not only promotes a health body, it promotes a general feeling of wellness and has been proven to improve personal outlook and manage stress. The Physical Activity Guidelines for Americans define regular physical activity as at least 2½ hours a week of moderate-intensity activity, such as brisk walking. Brisk walking is a pace of three miles per hour or faster. A moderate-intensity activity makes you breather harder but does not overwork or overheat you.

By changing your eating habits and increasing physical activity, you can reduce your risk of chronic disease. For more information about health and wellness, contact me at the Geary County K-State Research and Extension office at 785-238-4161. Until next time, keep living resourcefully!