Dignity Health™
Heart and Vascular Institute
of Greater Sacramento

Putting YOU First

Women often put others before themselves, and health matters are no exception.

But taking care of yourself isn't selfish. In fact, it's just the opposite. There's a reason that during pre-flight safety videos, they instruct you to put on your oxygen mask before helping those around you. In order to take care of the ones you love to the best of your ability, it's important to take care of yourself first.

Excuses for not living a healthy lifestyle are easy to find. Women often claim to not have time to eat right or exercise because they're too busy taking care of their children or elderly relatives.

HEARTCARING®
Our commitment to excellence in cardiovascular care.

Healthy living can lead to a better you. Adapting better lifestyle habits can shape up almost every aspect of your life. You'll look and feel better and you'll most likely be able to sleep better, providing you with more energy to get through your day.

Getting Started

Build a routine. Start healthy habits or rituals daily and stick to them. Small choices add up. Try taking the stairs instead of using the elevator. Reach for fresh fruits or vegetables instead of choosing pre-packaged foods. Don't try to do too much at once, because it may feel overwhelming and you may be more tempted to give up. Instead, tackle small goals. Try doing one new thing each day to improve your health, and soon you will see results.

Diet

What steps can you take to improve your diet? Start by monitoring your eating habits to make sure you're getting the most out of what you're putting into your body. Try these tips:

Eat slowly. Taking the time to chew your food properly can help you consume nearly 100 fewer calories per meal and prevent overeating. Eating slowly also helps ease digestion.

Drink more water. Drinking more water with a meal can also help you feel full and prevent overeating.

Plan your meals in advance. Mapping out meals can help you make better choices. Make a calendar and plan your meals weekly. This will help you see what you're eating daily and ensure you're getting a wide variety of nutrients.

Make mindful choices at restaurants. It's tempting to eat the entire large portions that are served at restaurants. Avoid overeating by skipping the bread basket. Research the menu online beforehand and review the nutritional information to decide ahead of time what your healthiest options are. Be the first to order at your table so you're not tempted by someone else's order.

Eat with a purpose. Think about what you're eating and ask yourself, "Is this helping my body?" Also watch your portions. Mindless eating leads to overeating. We often underestimate the amount of what we eat and drink. Tastes of a little bit of something here and there can add up quickly.

Exercise

- Is working out at a gym boring to you? Find something you like to do. If you enjoy what you're doing, you'll be more likely to exercise.
- Does something unexpected regularly come up when you are scheduled to exercise that prevents you from missing your workouts? Make appointments and stick to them. Treat your workout schedule as something just as important as a work appointment.
- Don't have time to work out with your kids around? Bring them with you. Walk around the park while the kids are on the jungle gym, or climb up and down a few flights of stairs while you're waiting for them to finish an activity. Try to incorporate activities that the entire family can participate in.
- Still don't have time? Squeeze activity in whenever you can. Take a walk on your lunch break or in place while you're on the phone. Get up and stretch while you're waiting at your desk or while waiting in the carpool. Seizing multiple tiny opportunities can have lasting effects.
- No energy to work out? Working out will give you more energy to take on what you need to do. Try working out in the morning to wake yourself up and get your daily dose of physical activity out of the way before you start the day.

Still need the extra push? Tell a friend.

Sometimes a verbal commitment can help you hold yourself accountable for your actions, so tell people you're looking to become healthier. Enlist friends to get on the healthy track with you, for support. Even if they're not interested in changing their ways, just by telling those around you about your goals to live better, it will give you a little more motivation. Motivating others around you to keep up with your health will help keep you on track.

Visit your doctor for regular checkups.

Regular checkups are important. Annual exams can help you detect problems before they start. Make and keep doctors' appointments, just like you would for someone you're looking after. Tell your doctor about your commitment and the steps you are making for a healthier lifestyle.

Taking care of yourself is important to keep up with the many demands we have on our lives, and to make sure we feel our best. Just like a machine, our bodies need maintenance to keep them running properly. Making time for exercise and nourishing your body with the right food aren't luxuries, they are necessities. A healthier lifestyle can lead to a happier, more productive you.

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