



Seven steps to wellness

If you've been thinking about making some positive changes to improve your health, there's no excuse to put it off any longer. MBF has developed Seven Steps to Wellness to start you on your journey to a happier, healthier life.

We all know the importance of living a healthy lifestyle, but putting that knowledge into practice isn't always easy. There are lots of messages out there telling us what to do and what not to do, and it can be hard to know where to get started.

MBF recognised this challenge and developed the Seven Steps to Wellness to help you take control of your health. These steps represent the most important areas where you should begin to make positive change to improve your health and wellness.

1 Stop smoking: Firstly, this is the single most important thing you can do to lower your risk of heart disease.¹ Smoking also has proven links to cancer, chronic lung disease and a range of other conditions such as infertility.² If you want to stop smoking, you can greatly increase your chances of success by getting support.² Talk to your GP or call the national Quitline on 13QUIT.

2 Get active: You can gain remarkable health benefits with just 30 minutes of moderate exercise most days of the week. By getting active, you can maintain a healthy weight; improve your heart health, immune system, energy

levels and muscle tone; and strengthen your bones.³ The good news is that you can do this in small increments of 10 minutes at a time, so try taking the stairs instead of the lift or getting off the bus or train one stop early and walking the rest of the way. If you want more structured exercise, consider a gym or sports team.

3 Eat well: You should aim for 2 serves of fruit and 5 serves of vegetables each day. Try to introduce low fat dairy products, lean protein, fibre and whole grains, which will give your body the nutrients it needs to function at its best and protect you from illness. You should avoid trans fats and moderate your intake of saturated fats, sugar, salt and alcohol.^{3,4} You may find it easier than you think to eat well. If you need help, talk to your GP, who can provide advice or refer you to a nutritionist or dietitian.

4 Get good quality sleep: You should make time for rest and relaxation, and make sure you get good quality sleep. Experts recommend 7-8 hours sleep for adults and 9-10 hours sleep for teenagers every night. Sleep allows your body to grow, repair and restore itself while it gives your brain the 'down time' it needs to ensure you're in top form the next day.⁵



5 Know your health vitals: It is important to know your blood pressure, cholesterol and blood glucose levels, and your weight. These health vitals are important indicators of your current health and wellness, and predictors of future illness or disease. By regularly monitoring your health vitals, your GP is more likely to detect problems. This means you can take action early and have a better chance of overcoming any health problems.⁵

6 Understand your personal health risks: Your age, gender, stage of life, background, family history and whether you have a long-term health condition affect your personal health risks. If you understand your health risks, you are much better placed to take the necessary steps to live a longer and healthier life.³

7 Find a GP you like and stick with them: Visiting the same GP ensures that you get consistent, quality care and increases the chances of detecting potentially serious illnesses earlier. Your GP should know your full medical history and any medications you are taking, including natural medicines, vitamins and supplements. This will help them manage your health better, identify your personal health risks, advise on any action needed and support you in managing those risks. Seeing the same GP can also improve

the management of long-term health conditions such as diabetes, reducing the risk of complications.⁴

You can use these Seven Steps to Wellness to start your journey towards a healthier lifestyle. The first thing to do is to decide where you need to make change. Identify your bad habits and think about how you can make positive changes. Be realistic and don't try to do it all once. Slowly introduce these positive steps into your routine and seek help if you need it. Your GP is a great source of information and support, and can help you achieve your health and wellness goals.

Sources:

1. Heart Foundation, www.heartfoundation.org.au
2. Cancer Council, www.cancercouncil.org.au
3. US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, www.cdc.gov
4. The Harvard School of Public Health, www.hsph.harvard.edu
5. Better Health Channel, Victorian Government, www.betterhealth.vic.gov.au
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