What is a healthy lifestyle, and how do I reach a healthy weight?

**Eating healthy foods:** Eat fruits, vegetables, and whole grains. Eat lean meats and low-fat dairy foods most of the time. Avoid eating too much sugar, fat, or fast foods. Occasional desserts and treats fine. The goal is moderation.

**Not smoking:** Weight gain is a big concern for many people who want to quit smoking but not everyone gains weight. It is more of a health risk to keep smoking than it is to gain a few extra pounds when you quit.

**Managing stress:** Many people find eating is a way to relieve stress. Put down the fork and spoon! Stress management may be the next step for you.

**Making some kind of physical activity part of your daily routine:** Be active. There are lots of ways to fit activity into your life. Keep moving!

**Drinking only moderate amounts of alcohol:** Limit to 2 drinks a day for men, 1 drink a day for women.

Change your thinking to gain success in obtaining and maintaining a healthy weight.

- Stop comparing yourself to others. Healthy bodies come in all shapes and sizes. Our culture focuses too much on the “thin is in” concept. Body size is not as important as being healthy.
- When you are full, stop eating. Pay attention to why you are eating and how much you are eating.
- Forget about dieting. Dieting almost never works over the long term.
- Decide to improve your health, not go on a diet. What are your goals - become more fit, lower your blood pressure, lower your blood sugar (if you have diabetes or pre-diabetes), lower your cholesterol, or raise your HDL (good cholesterol)?

How do you change your lifestyle?

Making any kind of change in the way you live your daily life leads you on the road to success. Have your own reasons for making a change, set goals you can reach, and measure how your health has improved.

Before you make lifestyle changes, ask your doctor to check your cholesterol levels, blood pressure, and blood sugar. Research shows that you can improve your health by losing as little as 5% to 10% of your weight.
Keep track of your weight?

Weigh yourself no more than once a week, unless your doctor tells you to do so more often because of a health problem. Try to weigh yourself on the same scale, at the same time of day, in about the same amount of clothing. Remember that many things can affect your weight. It is normal for your weight to go up and down by a few pounds from one day to the next. Try to look at the general trend of your weight, rather than the day-to-day changes. Aim to lose no more than 1 to 2 pounds a week. Weight loss of more than that often means that you are not getting enough nutrients to be healthy.

Have your cholesterol, blood pressure, and blood sugar checked again after you have lost 5% to 10% of your weight or in 3 to 6 months. Monitoring your blood sugar levels controls your diabetes, monitoring your cholesterol and triglyceride levels lowers your risk for heart disease, and monitoring your blood pressure lowers your risk for heart disease and stroke.

Remember, some days are better than others. Break up your 30 minute walk into two or three different times throughout your day if you find you are too busy to complete 30 minutes at one time. Listen to music or walk with a friend to prevent boredom. Exercise indoors while watching your favorite TV program when the weather is uncooperative. Last but not least, surround yourself with a support system – family, friends or a weight loss/management support group and you will travel on the path that leads to the road to success!

Visit the Lehigh County intranet site to schedule your appointment at the Wellness Centre.