

Simple ways toward a healthy lifestyle

A New Year has begun. I decided to dedicate this month's article to simple ways to live a healthy life. You hear many times from friends and family about their New Year's resolutions.

Maybe they have joined a gym, maybe they are cutting "Carbs" from their diet, and maybe they tell you they have decided to lose 30 pounds. Well, the reality is that many fail and many discontinue what they have started in a couple of months.

I believe to live a healthy lifestyle and achieve the goals that you want to improve your health starts by taking smaller steps and do simple things first. Lack of movement and sedentary lifestyle is one of the major problems in our society today.

We drive everywhere, escalators and elevators have taken immobility to the extreme. TV with thousands of chan-

nels and many different video games – even on our phones – have made us sit and stay in one place. This has affected not just the adults but the children as Type II diabetes is becoming more prevalent in the younger generation.

When the weight gain comes it creates a vicious cycle. The more immobile, the more weight gain and the more weight gain, the more immobile. So, again – small steps – walk as much as you can.

Don't take the elevator for a few floors. Walk a couple of stations. Park your car far from your destination, this way you buy time by not circling around to find a spot near the entrance. Movement is a small step but a big factor in a healthy lifestyle.

Another factor is, of course, our diet. Unfortunately, we eat big portions these days. We should cut the portions and introduce healthy snacks such as fruits,

THE HEART BEAT

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vegetables, almonds, or walnuts.

Decreasing greasy and salty food from our diet and introducing more fiber is very important. Carbonated beverages can be replaced by water. A healthy diet that is realistic helps to reduce risk of heart disease, diabetes, and stroke.

Stress is another powerful factor that affects our health. It is hard to control it of course. We all say "who doesn't have stress?!" This is a tough one. Everyone is different and has different reasons for their stress. But, again, small steps make a huge difference. Whether it is being willing to compromise, or just saying NO, or practice time management at work or avoidance of the stress triggers, the bottom line is to reduce or get rid of it.

The other problem with stress aside from the effect of it on our health is the

unhealthy methods we take to cope with stress. These are smoking, drinking, overeating, isolation and staying sedentary such as watching TV, using drugs, non-adherence to prescription medications, and anger which creates a hostile environment.

These unhealthy measures which are all risk factors – especially for cardiovascular diseases – along with the body's response to stress such as elevated blood pressure, increased blood glucose and increased demand on the heart collectively create a pavement for cardiac events such as heart attack or stroke.

So let's take small and simple steps.

Let's create a healthy life to enjoy life.

I wish everyone a happy and healthy 2011 and for many years to come.