

'Prevention: a helpful addition to our health toolkit'

Australian Nursing Journal June 2011

For many, it takes for us to be confronted by an adverse event which has serious implications for our health, or the news that we've developed an ailment, illness or condition before we choose to address the underlying factors which led to this occurring.

Health impairments are not uncommon however in many cases they can be prevented and an individual's health can be protected by taking a few simple steps to guard their most valuable asset, their HEALTH!

The old saying 'an ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure' has great merit and if considered, and acted on, this can be very effective in promoting an individual's health.

It's not just the physical component of health which can break down but also the mental, emotional and spiritual. Each of these is interconnected and if one component suffers it is likely to have an adverse effect on the others.

So, as a busy professional with a range of demands on your time, in and out of the workplace, what is it that you can do to prevent and protect you from ill health? Some ideas to consider:

Take a balanced diet. Proper nutrition is an area that suffers for many of us. We blame our work hours and conditions, which I agree are challenging. But this shouldn't make it impossible for us to eat a balanced diet. We are organised and caring people and we wouldn't hesitate in preparing something nutritious for those we care for. Do it for yourself.

Keep active. Research suggests that a little exercise on a regular basis will be of benefit. Try programming some exercise into your social calendar if it feels like a burden. Take the stairs at work instead of the lift, park a few blocks from your destination and walk that extra bit. Exercise doesn't have to be formal or a chore. Nor does it have to be costly. Parks, gardens and walking paths are free and accessible.

Get enough rest and relaxation. It's important to get good and regular sleep. Make time for it and value it. Relaxation and time out is also very important. We are generally busy in our work lives so give yourself permission to take downtime, read a book, see a movie or just put a line through a day in your diary.

Stay connected with those you value. We are social beings by nature and we are programmed to socialise. Research shows that those with strong social connections will have healthier and more productive lives. Make time to meet up with those people who are important to you on a regular basis. Sharing life's problems and challenges, telling stories and being there for others is very important for our emotional and mental wellbeing.

Your health will benefit from practising these, and other ideas. You are likely to become more positive, productive and influential in all areas of your life. This is unlikely to stop with you. Those around you will likely benefit from exposure to you. Your attitude can become infectious and those around you will also benefit from your healthy attitude.

Consider what you can do to prevent illness and what you can add to your health toolkit!

Contact the Nursing & Midwifery Health Program on 03 9415 7551.