

# An Optimal Lifestyle

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Years ago, our hospital's dietician explained why mac and cheese was always on the lunch cart but so little green veggies and salad. At the end of the day, the mac and cheese would be sold out and the greens would be thrown out. This demonstrates, in part, why we are having our health issues--we go for the comfort foods, what feels good in the moment, and not for what will help us in the long-term.

There's ample proof that prevention is better and cheaper than correction. However, the down side of prevention is that when it's working, we don't see it. Our bodies are so resilient that we can fall, eat, drink, and deprive ourselves for decades before problems start to arise.

However, our increasing rates of autism, diabetes, heart disease, cancers, depression and anxiety, starting earlier in life tell us that change is needed. Life expectancy is now decreasing for the first time in our modern civilization, and the cost and politics of our Health System continues to be a national problem. The USA comprises 20% of the planet's population, but consumes 80% of its pharmaceuticals and more than its share of the planet's resources.

## What is an Optimal Lifestyle?

The components of an optimal lifestyle are described in the center box. For most of us, some habits are close to optimal, but others need a major revision.

Most scientists agree that up to 80% of modern diseases can be modified, if not outright caused by lifestyle factors. While genetics play a role, our genes watch our lifestyle, and in response turn on and off specific processes that bring us toward or away from optimal health.

## Change: Knowledge, Motivation, Implementation, Sustainability

Most of us know what to do, but encounter obstacles that prevent us from starting, or get us off track after we have begun.

So why is lifestyle change so hard? Not only don't we see any immediate results, it means letting go of some comfortable things. It means putting significant time, money, energy and thought into things that initially are very uncomfortable. For most of us, we are willing to do that

for our planet and kids, but not for ourselves

Fear can mobilize many people. A diagnosis of heart disease, cancer, dementia or macular degeneration can provide enough mojo to make necessary changes to slow down, stop or even reverse progression of disease.

However, for some, fear causes paralysis or falling back to old habits and comforts. Unfounded or old beliefs and misinformation that have been absorbed from family and other authorities, commercials and the internet can be a substantial obstacle.

Motivation based on fear is limited, since improvement decreases fear and motivation. Also, for some, a lack of immediate improvement, or a hidden trigger or addiction can cause the abandonment of a plan.

Knowledge, inspiration and support when sufficient enable a sustainable approach. Lifestyle changes work slow and deep. They have no side effects other than their inconvenience. In reality it's just a trade-off of one inconvenience (not feeling well and taking chronic medications) for another.

Health and wealth are similar in that the earlier we begin to invest, and the more consistently we do so, the easier will be our later years. We have been gifted beautiful lives; lifestyle allows us to feel and do our best.

## \*IMPORTANT NOTES:

1. **This educational material may not be used to influence medical care without supervision by a licensed practitioner.**
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3. Dr. Cheikin's website has related articles such as "An Inconvenient Life", "What We Really Need" and others.

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## Optimal Lifestyle Components\*

**Psycho-Spiritual Work:** Mental and Spiritual processes and rituals that connect us to ourselves, our community, and our planet. These activities enhance the feelings of love, peace, purpose, community and justice.

**Nutrition:** Food and Supplements, and means to prepare such foods to support digestion, absorption, growth, repair, elimination and detoxification; and to reduce naturally harmful components of such foods.

**Sleep:** The ability to fall asleep, stay asleep, and wake refreshed. Proper quantity of 7.5 - 8.5 hours. Efficiency of sleep enables reliable physical and mental energy throughout the day.

**Water:** Water that is free of pollutants, that has a balance of minerals, and is of proper ph. The "structure" of the water (i.e. whether it's been stagnant or moving) is also relevant.

**Air:** Air that is free of pollutants (including electromagnetic fields), that has plenty of oxygen, proper moisture, temperature, and other components (such as the air at the ocean).

**Light:** Light that is balanced in wavelengths and is free of toxic and unnatural wavelengths. Correct dosage of light is important. **Blackness** during the night is equally important.

**Hygiene and Re-creation:** processes that **cleanse, detoxify**, and stimulate repair of the mind, body and spirit. Some are daily, others weekly (Sabbath), seasonally, and annually.

**Exercise:** activities that gently stress systems such as muscle (strengthening), heart and lungs (aerobics), soft tissues and organs (stretching and yoga), and nervous system (yoga, tai chi) to maintain and improve function.

**Stress Management:** while some stress is necessary (see exercise), methods to recognize and protect against excessive external and internal stressors. Techniques include recreation/detox (above), good sleep and food, yoga/meditation, service to others and prioritization/simplification (saying "No").

**Assessment, Intervention, Progression** Processes that measure, interpret, predict, and integrate information and guidance to adjust course for continuous improvement and sustainability. This can require external assessments (tests) and interventions (remedies, therapies).