

Give It the Old College Try

Tips from your younger self for better health now
by Jaymi Curley

Drop that triple cheeseburger, pal. When you were 20, late nights, junk food and daredevil living were fine. But it's time to start taking better care of your health. A little preventive action can help smooth out the trip toward your golden years, so take a bit of advice from your college self—with a slight twist.

DO SOME SHOTS

Getting and keeping up with your adult vaccinations is important to prevent viruses that can develop into more serious illnesses as a man ages. Flu shots are recommended annually for men over the age of 50. Men over 60 should discuss with their doctors a one-time vaccination for herpes zoster, a virus that can cause shingles. They should also get a pneumonia vaccine.

TAKE YOUR EXAMS

Most doctors want to see you yearly for a general health exam, complete with blood tests and a urinalysis, to screen for various problems; to keep an eye on weight fluctuations; and to talk over any health concerns. Make the appointment.

COP A FEEL

Self-exams typically are associated with women and breast cancer. However, self checks should also be a regular part of a man's shower routine. Examine skin for early warning signs of skin cancer such as moles or freckles that seem discolored, have uneven edges or have changed size. Testicles should be examined for lumps, as should the area around the nipples. (Yes, men can get breast cancer, too).

BUTT OUT

Quit smoking. It will have the greatest impact on your long-term health. Smoking is a contributing factor for numerous serious diseases, including stroke, cancer and heart disease. By breaking the habit, you'll breathe easier, improve your circulation and make it easier to exercise.

RUN AROUND

Dust off that home gym or revive that languishing sports club membership. Regular exercise has been shown to help improve brain function, which can help

stave off memory challenges in later life. In addition, lifelong exercise has resulted in stronger bones and better balance in seniors, both key to prevent falls and bone breaks that may mean the difference between living well in your own home or a permanent relocation to an assisted living facility one day.

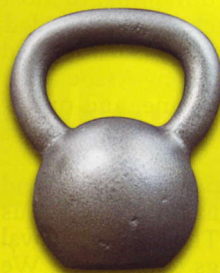
SLEEP IT OFF

The dreaded colonoscopy: It's no fun but it is one of the best ways to detect colon cancer at the earliest, most treatable stages. Get a baseline procedure at age 50, and then repeat every five to 10 years after. Rest for a few days after, and you'll be fine

WRAP IT UP

Even in later years, your sexual health requires vigilance. In 2008, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention reported that new cases of sexually transmitted diseases in men over 40 were up almost 50 percent since 1996. Seniors have been noted to flout safe-sex practices, with 50-year-olds six times less likely to use a condom than men in their 20s. Unless you are in a committed, monogamous relationship, always use a condom.

Jaymi still eats Hostess cupcakes but has recently started jogging. Mock...er, mark her health efforts at twitter.com/bookgirlz



more KETTLEBELL!

Kettlebells have been a popular exercise tool with Russian weightlifters for generations, and now they're catching on in the states. The round weights resemble cannonballs with thick grip-handles.

Even a beginning routine contains moves that burn body fat and work major muscles more efficiently than many simple weight routines. Beginners should seek out introductory classes, but after a bit of training, many people find that kettlebells become a permanent part of their home workout. -J. Curley