



8 Tools To Curb Lifestyle Diseases

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Lifestyle diseases are new kind of ailments that plague modern times. It is an absurd truth of our current social structure that we suffer from diseases that stem from the choices we make today. Lifestyle factors like overeating or undereating, chewing and smoking tobacco, alcohol and drug abuse as well as lack of exercise are thought to influence your susceptibility to many diseases, especially later in life.

Lifestyle diseases include insomnia, obesity, hypertension (high BP), asthma/breathing problems, heart attacks, diabetes, stress related conditions (including anxiety and depression), alcoholism, drug abuse and even cancer.

Reality Check

Research data from India report a major shift in disease pattern with lifestyle diseases like diabetes and hypertension killing more Indians than any communicable diseases like infections. World Health Organization (WHO) findings pointed out that out of 10 deaths in India, eight are due to non-communicable disease (NCDs).

Cancer Society Research UK has reported that over 40

per cent of all cancers are associated with lifestyle. In other words, a serious medical condition is caused by avoidable life choices.

Expert consensus suggests that stress levels in our community are directly proportional to the increasing demands on individuals. Mental stress is becoming a bigger problem than physical exertion. Several studies suggest that nearly 75 per cent of adult visits to family physicians are for stress related problems.

Causes

The consistent strain of an automated life that is forced on to us today, does not provide us with time for reasoning, introspection and harmonisation. Being in a competitive striving mode, we find solace by indulging in excesses whether it's the food we eat, alcohol we drink or the hours we work. Many exhibit behavioural patterns called action emotion complex (Rosenman and colleagues, 1970) wherein individuals are engaged in a relentless struggle to obtain an unlimited number of ill-defined things from their environment in the shortest period of time and if necessary,

against opposing effort of other things or persons in this same environment. The result is heightened stress which is a psychological and physical reaction to the demands of life.

Psychosomatic Aspects

Nowadays, people don't easily emote, meaning it is hard to express how we feel. Feelings are bottled up and there is a restriction on the manifestation of emotional problems, due to

cultural and societal factors, as well as the stigma associated with psychiatric difficulties. Drowning sorrows in alcohol is an age-old coping strategy across cultures.

Unsurprisingly, they emerge as bodily symptoms, popularly known as somatisation or psychosomatics manifestations. Psychosomatic is the word that combines the word mind (psyche) and body (soma). When this is associated with an illness, it simply means physical or bodily manifestation of an emotional or psychological state.

Solutions

"Your lifestyle - how you live, eat, emote, and think - determines your health. To prevent disease, you may have to change how you live" (Brian Carter). If by making small changes in our life choices we can cut our risk of serious health problems, then it's the least we can do. The best way to stay healthy is through living a healthy lifestyle. But a change in lifestyle cannot happen, overnight. A good starting point is commitment for change, discipline and reviewing progress. Here are eight simple tools that will surely help.

1 Restore Work Life Balance

We are all over worked; many feel underappreciated, and have little time for meaningful activities and interests. Draw a distinction between work and life and never carry work home! Spend quality time with yourself and your family.

2 Prioritise

Manage time effectively and prioritise habitually. You can't get everything done in one day and there are only 24 hours in a day! Accept it.

3 Learn To Say 'No'

It's almost stigmatizing to decline work. Saying 'No' to something opens doors for saying 'Yes' to more relevant and important things.

4 Slow Down

Life is too short. Take time to stop and enjoy things around you. Distance yourself from things that are causing you stress.

5 Yoga & Meditation

These are time-tested and proven to be effective in reducing stress and improving general physical/emotional wellbeing.

6 Regular Exercise

It is proven to reduce stress and improve resilience. In the UK, general practitioners are advised to formally prescribe exercise therapy and programs.



7 Healthy Diet

Avoid skipping meals. A timely diet and good digestion equates with healthy body and healthy mind.

8 Avoid Alcohol

It is one of the most toxic substances known to man, yet it is sold legally! If you must drink then drink mindfully and in prescribed limits.