

Looking to kick off your New Year's Resolution?

Here are a few ways Chesapeake Regional can help you get a new start.

Get in shape.

Chesapeake Regional's Lifestyle Center offers fitness memberships to adults ages 50 and older and those with certain risk factors. On-site personal trainers, nurses and dietitians will get you fit again. Join during the month of January and save. For more information, call 757-312-6132.

Quit smoking

The organization kicked off an anti-smoking campaign Jan. 1 in preparation of going smoke-free campus-wide July 1, 2009. All patients and staff are offered resources on how to quit through the hospital's Respiratory Therapy Department. For more information, visit www.chesapeake-regional.com.

Consider weight loss surgery.

Chesapeake Regional offers a comprehensive weight-loss program for those with morbid obesity. In fact, the program is a designated Center of Excellence in Bariatrics. Patients are provided with a comfortable setting and a program designed specifically for their individualized care. Bariatric surgery has been proven to reduce not only weight, but also to decrease such cardiac risk factors as diabetes. For more information, call the bariatric coordinator at 757-312-3000.

Eat well.

On-site nutrition counseling is available for those with diabetes and other health risk factors. All you need is a prescription from a physician. For more information, call 757-312-6105.

Check up on your health.

A yearly check-up and any necessary follow-ups are essential to a healthy life. To find a primary care physician, visit www.chesapeake-regional.com.

The New Year is here, and with it comes many health possibilities

If you're like most people, your New Year's resolutions include taking better care of yourself – and that's a good thing.

Fortunately, medical studies suggest that it's never too late to eat well, exercise more and reap the physical and mental benefits.

German researchers at the University of Heidelberg report that adults who started exercising still benefited. Study participants who began exercising at age 40 or older lowered their risk of heart disease by 55 percent. Spanish researchers also found that people can protect their hearts by eating healthy. Their study, published in the *Archives of Internal Medicine* in December, concluded that those who followed a Mediterranean diet decreased by almost 14 percent their chances of metabolic syndrome, a group of health problems that includes obesity, high cholesterol, high blood pressure and high glucose levels.

The Mediterranean Diet focuses on cereals, fruit, vegetables, fish, olive oil and mixed nuts.

Your brain might benefit from healthy habits just as much as your body. A November study conducted by Taiwanese researchers and published in the *Journal of Applied Physiology* found that middle-aged mice who exercised every day significantly slowed their loss of brain neurons.

Dr. Govindan Palat, a board-certified geropsychiatrist at Chesapeake Regional Medical Center, has long been a proponent of exercise for adults.

"What's good for the heart is good for the brain," he said.

Regular exercise helps keep blood pressure and diabetes under control, which can prevent small strokes, one of the main causes of dementia, Palat noted.

"Small strokes can lead to small blood vessel disease and non-Alzheimer's

dementia," he explained. "Eating right and regular exercise, all the things you associate with staying healthy, help prevent vascular dementia or lessen complications of dementia."

While Palat said Alzheimer's disease is largely genetic and may not be preventable, he believes that people who have the disease can stay healthier longer with exercise.

Dr. Charles Levy, a neurosurgeon at Chesapeake Regional Medical Center, noted that exercise helps people feel good and think clearly.

"There's no question that physical exercise has a number of benefits for health, particularly mental health," Levy said.

"One of the reasons people feel good after exercising is because the body releases endorphins, which make you feel better. Exercising can contribute to a person's ability to concentrate and make them more productive."

Depression, anxiety and stress can cause difficulty with higher executive function of the brain, Levy added, and exercise helps counter those conditions enormously.

Just don't do too much too fast.

The American College of Sports Medicine recommends 30 minutes of exercise five times a week, but Tiffany Markun, a cardiopulmonary specialist with Chesapeake Regional Medical Center's Lifestyle Center, cautions new exercisers:

"Don't start with that," she warned. "Do three workouts a week for 30 minutes. Rest between the workouts so you can allow time for delayed onset muscular soreness, the aches that creep up on you a day or so after exercise."

If you feel sore and planned to exercise but don't, you might get discouraged and not return, Markun said. If you've scheduled a day off, you won't feel frustrated and will be more likely to stay committed.

Two good starter exercises are walking and swimming.

"Walking you can do anywhere, and you only need a good pair of shoes," Markun said. "Swimming is great if you have bad joints, and you want to work a lot of muscle groups."

Eating better can be just as challenging as exercising more, but not impossible. People choose food for taste, convenience and cost, noted Babs Carlson, a registered dietitian with the Lifestyle Center.

"Health is way down on the list," she noted.

However, your heart and brain benefit from proper nutrition.

"For a healthy heart, you want to monitor blood pressure, blood sugar and blood cholesterol," she said, "and, if cholesterol is up, you can have plaque buildup on the brain."

Carlson approves of the Mediterranean Diet with olive oil, oily fish with Omega 3, vegetables and fruit, and encourages people to take care of their hearts by watching how much salt they eat.

She recommends no more than 2,300 milligrams of salt a day. Limiting processed foods is a good way to start.

To lose weight, look at what you drink and how many calories are in those drinks.

And eat breakfast.

"Metabolism goes up," Carlson said.

You might just help your brain, too.

"Studies have shown that children's math scores went up when they ate breakfast," Carlson said, "and adults' memorization improved."

For more information on exercising and eating right, contact the Lifestyle Center at (757) 312-6132 or go online to www.chesapeake-regional.com.



Students help with hospital's greetings

Chesapeake Regional sends good tidings to friends of the hospital with the help of B.M. Williams Primary School students. Each

year students in Valerie Daly's first- and second-grade art classes drew holiday scenes for an annual card creation contest. First-grader Elycia Edwards was selected as the winner after creating a snow-covered scene of the hospital. Her drawing was used on the organization's holiday greeting card. This is the fourth year B.M. Williams students have created the cards for Chesapeake Regional.

