

Take Care of Yourself in 7 Steps

Your body will thank you for it.



Life is filled with many possibilities. While the demands of everyday life may be many, it's important to keep your mind, body and spirit healthy.



Maintaining good health throughout life affects your overall well-being and can help you be prepared for a healthy pregnancy and baby when you're ready. There's no better time than now to take steps toward a healthy lifestyle. What steps can you take?

Be active for at least 30 minutes a day.

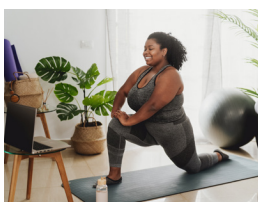
Regular physical activity is an important part of maintaining good health. It can make you feel better and reduce the risk of some chronic diseases.

TIPS

- Focus on moving more and having fun! Choose activities that you enjoy so you're more likely to make time for them.
- Mix up your activities so you don't get bored – take a brisk walk, plant a flower or vegetable garden or wash the car by hand. Find someone to encourage you and help you stay motivated!
- Start small. Begin with 10 minutes and increase the time gradually until you're doing 30 minutes every day.



Does 30 minutes of activity sound like a lot? Break it up and do 10 minutes at a time, three times a day.



AIM TO:

- Take a walk.
- Ride your bike.
- Dance to your favorite music.
- Choose the stairs instead of the elevator.
- Park farther away and walk.
- Clean the house or do yard work.

Did you know?

Exercise has many benefits – it can help reduce stress and improve your mood, help you sleep better, help you get to and maintain a healthy weight and help you have stronger muscles and bones.



You'll make many food choices every day. Choosing healthy foods and beverages more often gives your body the nutrients it needs. Follow a healthy eating plan and choose foods from all the food groups. Focus on variety!



Eat Healthy Foods and get to or maintain a healthy weight.

Are you wondering, can I have any of my favorite foods? Yes! It's okay to enjoy foods that may be higher in calories, fat or added sugar. Just enjoy them less often and balance them with healthy choices most of the time.

TIPS

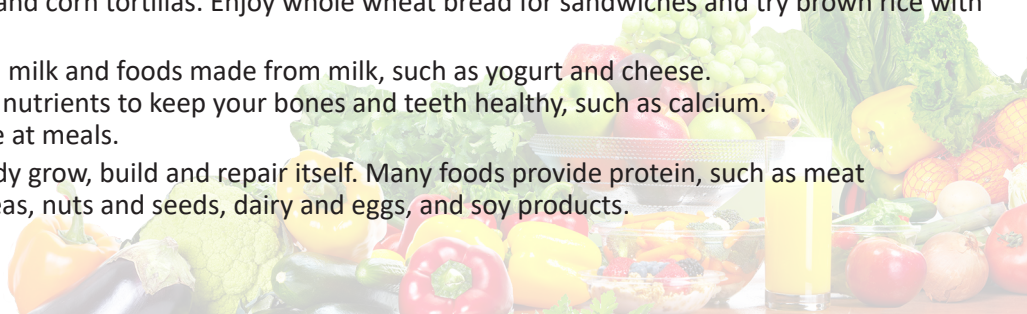
- Set realistic goals for yourself. For example, if you eat one vegetable per day, try increasing it to two vegetables most days.
- Rethink your drink. Our bodies are about 60% water so staying hydrated helps keep our body functioning properly. Add slices of fruit or vegetables, such as lemon, lime, watermelon or cucumber to water for a flavorful beverage without added sugar.
- Try to keep track of your progress toward increased physical activity and healthier eating. This can keep you motivated!
- Don't be hard on yourself, everyone has good and bad days.

AIM TO:

- Control portion sizes.
- Choose water instead of sweetened tea and soda.
- Eat more fruits and veggies.
- Choose whole grains more often.
- Move to low-fat or fat-free milk.
- Vary your protein foods.
Try beans and peas in meals.
- Cook at home more and limit fast food.

Did you know?

- **Fruits** – Fruits provide important nutrients to keep your body healthy, such as vitamin C, folate and potassium.
 - Buy a variety of fruits, including fresh, frozen and canned in water or 100% juice. Choose whole or cut-up fruit more often than juice to get more dietary fiber.
- **Vegetables** – Different vegetables contain different nutrients so it's important to eat a variety. Choose dark-green, red, orange, and starchy vegetables during the week.
- **Grains** - Whole grains provide vitamins, iron and fiber. Fiber is important to maintain healthy digestion.
 - Choose a variety of whole grain foods available in your WIC food package, such as brown rice, whole wheat bread, whole wheat pasta, and corn tortillas. Enjoy whole wheat bread for sandwiches and try brown rice with beans or stir-fry.
- **Dairy** – Dairy foods include fluid milk and foods made from milk, such as yogurt and cheese. Dairy foods provide important nutrients to keep your bones and teeth healthy, such as calcium.
 - Drink milk as your beverage at meals.
- **Protein** – Protein helps your body grow, build and repair itself. Many foods provide protein, such as meat and poultry, fish, beans and peas, nuts and seeds, dairy and eggs, and soy products.



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Reduce Stress in your life and get mentally healthy.

Part of your overall health and well-being is your mental health-how you think and feel about yourself and life, and how you handle stress. It's normal to experience times of stress. You may not feel happy all the time. Keeping a positive attitude about yourself and life can help you cope with life's ups and downs.

TIPS

- Try meditation or deep breathing.
- Be kind to yourself. Accept your strengths and flaws.
- Eat healthy meals and exercise regularly.

AIM TO:

- Get seven to nine hours of sleep every night.
- Talk to someone you trust if you feel anxious or sad.
- Schedule some down time for yourself.
- Ask your WIC nutritionist for a referral to a mental health professional if needed.

Did you know?

Sleep helps you feel rested, but it also helps you stay healthy. Getting enough sleep can help you concentrate better, maintain a healthy weight, get sick less often and lower your risk for serious health problems.



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Get regular checkups as recommended by your health care provider.

Seeing a doctor or other health care provider on a regular basis is a chance to think and talk about your overall health and well-being. It's a step you can take to help you stay healthy.

TIPS

- Find a health care provider you feel comfortable with and trust.
- Be open about your lifestyle choices, such as eating and exercise habits.
- Ask questions and share any concerns you have about your health and well-being.
- Talk about any plans or goals you have for changing your health behaviors.

AIM TO:

- Get tested for possible medical problems like sexually transmitted infections (STIs), diabetes or high blood pressure.
- Make sure your vaccinations are up to date.
- Talk with your health care provider about:
 - How to best manage any medical conditions.
 - How to get to and maintain a healthy weight.
 - Your family health history.

Did you know?



You can talk with your WIC nutritionist about getting a referral to a health care provider. Just ask!

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Stop smoking

**and/or using street drugs, or misusing prescription drugs.
Avoid drinking too much alcohol.**

These behaviors harm your health and could lead to birth defects if you do get pregnant.

TIPS

Quitting can be hard, but you can do it! Avoiding tobacco, drugs and alcohol is best in order to keep yourself healthy and lower your risk for some chronic diseases. Make a plan and set a date to quit. Talk with family and friends for support. Avoid triggers that might make you feel tempted to choose unhealthy behaviors.



AIM TO:

- Call 1-800-QUIT-NOW to get help quitting smoking.
- Call the Alcohol/Drug Council of NC at 1-800-688-4232 for help ending alcohol and drug use.
- For help, talk to your health care provider.

Did you know?

Vaping is the use of e-cigarettes, also called “e-cigs”, “vapes” or “mods”, to inhale and exhale an aerosol or vapor produced by the e-cigarette. E-cigarettes are considered to be tobacco products. They typically contain nicotine, which is known to have harmful health effects and could lead to birth defects if you do get pregnant. E-cigarettes also contain other chemicals that can be harmful to your health. Don’t start using e-cigarettes, and if you do use them, try to quit.

Choose an effective form of birth control and use it regularly until you're ready to become pregnant.

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Make sure you are as healthy as possible before becoming pregnant.

TIPS

- Start taking care of yourself now and choose healthy behaviors.
- Follow the steps in this brochure to get and stay healthy overall throughout life.
- Making healthy choices to get and stay healthy before a pregnancy happens can increase the chance you'll have a healthy pregnancy and baby.

AIM TO:

- Talk to your health care provider about the best birth control method for you.
- Use condoms to prevent sexually transmitted infections (STI).
- Make a plan for when and how many children you want to have. Tell your provider when you're ready to get pregnant.

Did you know?

A Reproductive Life Plan is a set of goals you can make about having or not having children. You may change your mind over time — that's okay. Having a Life Plan helps you make important choices in your life. If you are ready to consider your plan you can go to www.ncpreconceptionhealth.org.

7 **Take a multivitamin** with 400 mcg of folic acid every day.



We all need folic acid to help our body make new cells. Folic acid may help prevent certain birth defects of the brain and spine, so it's important for all women of reproductive age to get 400 mcg of folic acid daily.

TIPS

- Keep your bottle of multivitamins where you're likely to see it and remember to take it – near your toothbrush, on your kitchen or bathroom counter, on your dresser or near your car keys.
- Keep multivitamins out of reach of children.

AIM TO:

- Take a multivitamin as part of your daily routine.
- Eat a balanced diet that includes foods that are a natural source of folate or have folic acid added to them.

Did you know?

Folate is a B vitamin that is naturally found in some foods, such as dark-green leafy vegetables, some fruits such as oranges, beans and peas, and nuts. Folic acid is the form of folate that is added to some foods and found in multivitamins. Some foods that have folic acid added to them are enriched breads, some breakfast cereals and other grain products.



By taking good care of yourself, you'll be ready to take on the world. For more information on taking these steps, talk with your WIC nutritionist or health care provider.



**March of Dimes NC-Ready for Life
Preconception Health Campaign**
www.ncpreconceptionhealth.org
Email: ncpreconceptionhealth@marchofdimes.org
(919) 424-2146





WIC Serves:

Children up to 5 years of age

Infants

Pregnant women

Breastfeeding women who have had a baby in the last 12 months

Women who have had a baby in the last 6 months

The WIC Program promotes healthy habits and healthy families.

WIC provides basic nutritious foods to eligible pregnant, breastfeeding, and postpartum women, as well as infants and children. These foods are rich in protein, iron, calcium, fiber and vitamins.

Do you qualify? Find out! Contact your local WIC agency.

www.ncdhhs.gov/localWIC

For eligibility guidelines and a pre-screening tool visit:

**[www.ncdhhs.gov/divisions/child-and-family-well-being
/community-nutrition-services-section/wic/apply-wic](http://www.ncdhhs.gov/divisions/child-and-family-well-being/community-nutrition-services-section/wic/apply-wic)**



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