

WHAT IS WELLNESS?

Good health has traditionally been viewed as freedom from disease; thus, if you were not sick, you were considered healthy. This perspective is changing. While everyone agrees that the absence of illness is one part of being healthy, it doesn't indicate whether you are in a state of well-being.

A state of health is closely associated with your lifestyle. Each person has a responsibility to provide for such health essentials as good nutrition, proper weight control, exercise, and controlling of risk factors such as smoking, alcohol and drug abuse.

Research shows that Americans who take care of themselves and manage their lifestyles are healthier, more productive, have fewer absences from work, and make fewer demands for medical services. An article published in the Journal of the American Medical Association indicated that, in one study, the Awellness@ approach resulted in a 17 percent decline in total medical visits and a 35 percent decline in medical visits for minor illness. The subjects involved participated in a year-long self-care education program.

Since lifestyle has been found to be the single most important factor determining your pattern of general health, it is important that you be educated to take charge@ of your daily life and to set healthy lifestyle goals. The choices you make have a dominant influence on your health. The secret is not in medical care, but consistent self-care. While traditional medicine concentrates on alleviating or curing disease, the wellness approach encourages you to take personal responsibility for your well-being.

Wellness is not the mere absence of disease. It is a proactive, preventive approach designed to achieve optimum levels of health, social and emotional functioning. Wellness can also be defined as an active process through which you become aware of and make choices toward a more successful existence.

A wellness-oriented lifestyle encourages you to adopt habits and behaviors that promote better health and an improved quality of life. It also involves the recognition that you have physical, psychological, social, and spiritual needs, with each dimension being necessary for optimal levels of functioning.

Wellness is a positive approach to living - an approach that emphasizes the whole person. It is the integration of the body, mind, and spirit; and the appreciation that everything you do, think, feel, and believe has an impact on your state of health.