

# Healthcare

# Guide

SPRING 2023



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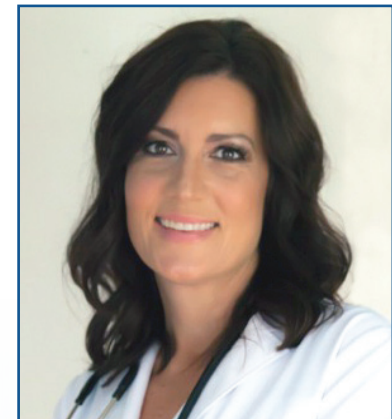
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# The effects of chronic stress on overall health

Stress poses a significant public health problem. Though work is often cited as a primary cause of stress, in 2022 socioeconomic issues contributed to a spike in stress levels, which serves as proof that there's no shortage of potential stressors.

According to the Stress in America Survey 2022 from the American Psychological Association, 81 percent of respondents indicated they were stressed out due to issues affecting the supply chain. Inflation proved even more troubling, as 87 percent of participants in the survey indicated they were stressed out by the rising cost in living. That's especially noteworthy, as it marked a nearly 30 percent increase from the year prior.

Stress is more than an inconvenience. Though the APA notes the human body is well-equipped to handle stress in small doses, chronic stress poses an entirely different problem, affecting various parts of the body.

## Musculoskeletal system

The APA reports that muscle tension is almost a reflex reaction to stress. However, muscle tension for long periods of time can trigger a host of problems, including tension-type headache and migraine headaches, which are each associated with chronic muscle tension in the shoulders, neck and head. The APA notes that work-related stress in particular has been linked to muscu-

loskeletal pain in the lower back and upper extremities.

## Respiratory system

Stress can present problems affecting the respiratory system as well. Shortness of breath and rapid breathing can occur when a person is feeling stress. Though the APA acknowledges this is often not a problem for people without respiratory disease, the group notes it can exacerbate breathing problems for people with preexisting respiratory conditions, including asthma and COPD.

## Cardiovascular system

Chronic stress can contribute to long-term problems affecting the heart and blood vessels, which the APA notes are the two elements of the cardiovascular system that work together to provide nourishment and oxygen to the body's organs. Chronic stress has many hallmarks, including a consistent and ongoing spike in heart rate. As a result, long-term ongoing stress increases a person's risk for an assortment of cardiovascular problems, including hypertension, heart attack and stroke.

## Gastrointestinal system

The APA notes that hundreds of millions of neurons in the gut are in constant communication with the brain.



**STOP THE STRESS.** *The human body is well-equipped to handle stress in small doses, but chronic stress poses an entirely different problem.*

This is why feelings of nervousness or anxiety often produce the sensation of butterflies in the stomach. When a person is dealing with chronic stress, that can affect communication between the gut and brain, potentially leading to pain, bloating and other discomfort in the gut.

Stress is a public health problem that affects people from all walks of life. Individuals feeling excess levels of stress are urged to speak to their physicians and visit [apa.org](http://apa.org) for information.

## The Franklin County Adult Health Clinic has a New Provider!

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## Who Says Being a Quitter is a Bad Thing - Stop Smoking

Cigarette smoking is the leading cause of preventable death and disability in the United States. The good news is that 7 out of 10 smokers want to quit smoking.

In North Carolina, cigarette smoking is responsible for 14,200 deaths each year - that is 1 of every 5 deaths in our state. For each death, 30 more people are sick or live with a disability because of tobacco use. In Franklin County, 21 percent of adults are smokers, which is a 3 percent higher average than North Carolina as a state. Approximately 25.2 percent of high school students in Franklin County are using tobacco products, compared to the North Carolina state average of 28.8 percent.

One out of every five smoking related deaths is caused by heart disease and cigarette smokers are two-to-four times more likely to get heart disease than people who do not smoke.

You can begin your journey to quit smoking today by using the acronym START.

**S** - Set a quit date.

Choose a date within the next 2 weeks, so you have enough time to prepare without losing your motivation to quit.

**T** - Tell family, friends, and co-workers that you plan to quit.



**BE A QUITTER.** There are many resources to help you quit smoking. One source is [QuitlineNC.com](http://QuitlineNC.com)

Let your friends and family in on your plan to quit smoking and tell them you need their support and encouragement to stop.

**A** - Anticipate and plan for the challenges you'll face while quitting.

You can help yourself make it through by preparing ahead for common challenges, such as nicotine withdrawal and cigarette cravings.

**R** - Remove cigarettes and tobacco from your home, car, and work.

Throw away all of your cigarettes and tobacco products (no emergency pack!), lighters, ashtrays, and matches. Shampoo your car, clean your drapes and carpet, wash your clothes, and steam your furniture.

**T** - Talk to your doctor about getting help to quit.

Your doctor can prescribe medication to help with withdrawal and suggest other alternatives. You can get many products over the counter at your local pharmacy or grocery store, including the nicotine patch, nicotine lozenges, and nicotine gum.

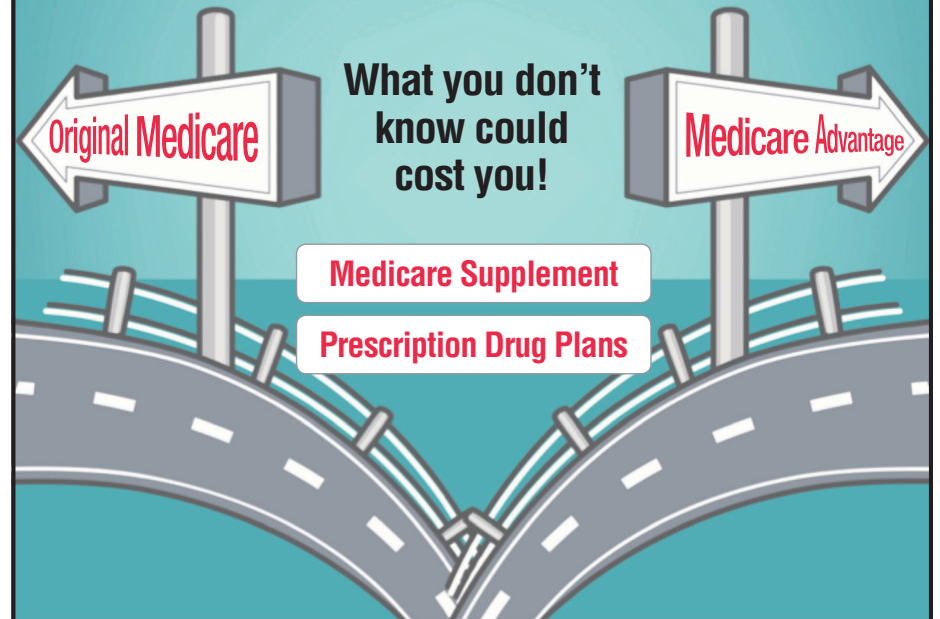
In addition, QuitlineNC provides free cessation services to any North Carolina resident that needs help quitting tobacco use. QuitlineNC is available 24/7 and is offered in several languages. You can begin your journey in quitting smoking today by calling QuitlineNC at 1-800-QUIT-NOW, or 1-800-784-8669.

Your health matters – quit smoking today!

*Article Courtesy Franklin County Health Department*

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# Unique ways to reduce cancer risk every day

The human toll cancer takes is significant, both on the lives it claims and on the friends and family of those victims. Estimates from the International Agency for Research on Cancer indicated 10 million individuals across the globe lost their lives to cancer (excluding nonmelanoma skin cancer) in 2020. New research indicates those numbers could be on the rise.

A study published in the journal *The Lancet* in 2020 found that deaths from cancer are now more common in some high- and middle-income countries than deaths from cardiovascular disease. Authors of the study, which examined incidences of cancer among adults between the ages of 35 and 70 in 21 countries across five continents, concluded that cancer is like to become the leading cause of death in middle-age.

Though cancer is a formidable disease, many cases of cancer are preventable. In fact, the things people do every day can go a long way toward lowering their cancer risk by a significant margin. Certain behaviors, like avoiding smoking, are widely known to reduce cancer risk. But some lesser known actions

also can help individuals lower their risk.

- **Quit when you hear the click at the gas station.** The Air Pollution Control District of Santa Barbara County in California notes that gasoline vapors include a variety of toxic substances, including benzene. Benzene is an air pollutant that adversely affects the central nervous system, the respiratory tract and the immune system. Modern automobiles now click when the gas tank is full and it's vital that drivers avoid adding any more gas after they hear that click. Drivers may be accustomed to topping off after the click, but doing so can affect the vapor recovery system in a car. That system is designed to keep toxic chemicals like benzene out of the air. Topping off can needlessly expose drivers and their passengers to benzene, which the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services considers a carcinogen, or cancer-causing chemical.



*Drinking more water has tremendous health benefits.*

- **Grill wisely.** Millions of people anxiously await the return of warm weather so they can once again fire up their backyard grills. Various studies have suggested there's a link between well-done grilled meat and cancer. One study conducted by researchers at Vanderbilt University found that high intake of well-done meat increases exposure to heterocyclic amines (HCAs), a type of carcinogen that forms in cooked red meat. That

doesn't mean individuals should put away their grills, but a change in grilling habits could help lower cancer risk. For example, one study from researchers at Kansas State University found that adding antioxidant-rich spices such as rosemary and thyme to marinade and soaking meat for at least an hour before cooking can reduce HCAs by as much as 87 percent.

- **Drink more fluids.** Drinking more fluids is one of the easier things people can do every day to reduce their cancer risk. The American

Cancer Society recommends individuals consume eight cups of water per day, but millions likely fall far short of that amount. That's unfortunate, as research presented at the American Association for Cancer Research International Conference on Frontiers in Cancer Prevention Research in 2011 found that high fluid intake was associated with a 24 percent reduced bladder cancer risk among men. In addition, a separate study funded by the Strauss Institute and published in 2020 in the *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health* found that women with breast cancer consumed less water and total fluids than women who did not have breast cancer. The researchers concluded more investigation into the link between drinking more water and reducing breast cancer risk is necessary, but noted that drinking water is harmless, convenient and beneficial to many aspects of health.

Though cancer could soon become the leading cause of death in various parts of the globe, many of those deaths can be prevented. And even the simplest measures can make a difference in cancer risk.



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# Keep your triglycerides under control

People who see their doctors for routine wellness exams typically undergo certain blood tests during that process. In addition to a complete blood count (CBC), doctors frequently request lipid panels that indicate cholesterol and triglyceride levels.

While cholesterol is a familiar term, triglycerides may be more of a mystery to the average Joe.

According to the Cleveland Clinic, triglycerides are lipids (waxy fats) that provide energy to the body. The body produces triglycerides and also gets them through food. Triglycerides are actual fats, while cholesterol is a waxy, odorless substance made by the liver. Since cholesterol cannot mix or dissolve in the blood, the liver puts cholesterol together with triglycerides to move the fatty mixture (lipoproteins) throughout the body.

When a person eats, any extra calories not used for energy are converted into tri-

glycerides, which are stored in fat cells. Later, hormones release these triglycerides as energy between meals. Individuals who regularly eat more calories than they burn, particularly from high-carbohydrate foods, may have high triglycerides.

According to the Mayo Clinic, high triglyceride levels may contribute to a hardening or thickening of the arteries, which is a condition known as arteriosclerosis.

For healthy adults, normal triglyceride levels should be under 150 mg/dL. Values of 151 to 200 mg/dL are considered borderline high, and anything over 201 is high or very high. In addition to arteriosclerosis, high triglyceride levels can raise the risk of cardiovascular disease and pancreatitis.

Overeating, having a family history of high cholesterol, drinking alcohol to excess, being overweight or obese, and having unmanaged diabetes can contribute to high

cholesterol levels. Smoking, the presence of thyroid disease and certain medications, like diuretics and hormones, also may raise the risk of developing high triglyceride levels.

Lifestyle changes similar to those recommended to manage high cholesterol can help people lower their triglyceride levels. These include eating a nutritious diet, doing aerobic exercises regularly and maintaining a moderate weight. Individuals should avoid

simple carbohydrates, such as those made with white flour, fructose, trans fats, and hydrogenated oils or fats.

Low triglyceride levels are not typically a cause for concern. But in these instances malnutrition or malabsorption could be the culprit.

Individuals should undergo routine health screenings to determine if high triglycerides are part of their lipid panels.



## Ten most common causes of cancer

Cancer is a leading cause of illness and death around the world. However, according to Otis Brawley, M.D., the former Chief Medical Officer at the American Cancer Society, two-thirds of cancer cases in the United States are linked to preventable causes. Here's a look at the leading causes of cancer, some of which are avoidable.

1. Tobacco use
2. Obesity or overweight

3. Lack of physical exercise
4. Poor diet
5. Exposure to UV radiation and other radiation
6. Overindulgence in alcohol
7. Air pollution
8. Age
9. Exposure to viruses like the human papillomavirus (HPV)
10. Inherited genes

## We are here to care for you!

The Franklin County Health Department promotes healthy environments and disease prevention activities in order to enhance the quality of life for the citizens of Franklin County.

### HOME HEALTH

Franklin County Health Department's Home Health Agency offers many services including:

- Skilled nursing
- Physical therapy
- Occupational therapy

A provider referral is required.

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919-496-2143

### CLINICAL SERVICES

Clinicians provide a range of services including:

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- Care Management for At Risk Children (CMARC)
- STD & Communicable Disease Clinic
- Family Planning Clinic / Woman Infant and Children (WIC)

**Clinic hours: Mon-Fri 8-5 (Appt. only)**  
**WIC hours: Mon-Fri 8-5**  
**919-496-2533**

### ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH

Environmental Health services provide inspections and enforcement of state health laws and rules. This includes:

- Restaurants
- Child Care Centers/Schools
- Hospitals/Lodging Facilities/ Nursing Homes

The department also offers fee-based, private drinking water (well) sampling for a variety of contaminants.

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# Four easy ways to show your heart some love

Your heart is one of the hardest working muscles in your body beating around the clock, only getting a break when you relax or sleep, therefore it's important you're doing all you can to keep it in good shape. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), one person dies every 34 seconds from heart disease, making this disease the leading cause of death for both men and women of most racial and ethnic groups in the U.S. Anyone can benefit from these simple tips to show your heart you care.

## Maintain a healthy diet

- Drink plenty of water and avoid sugary beverages, like sodas, bottled teas, alcohol, and fruit juices.

- Eat a lower-calorie, nutrient-rich diet,

including fruits/vegetables, whole grains, low-fat dairy products, skinless poultry/fish, nuts, and legumes.

- Limit intake of foods with saturated fat, trans fats, sodium, sugar, and red meat. If you choose to eat red meat, choose the leanest cut possible.

## Understand warning signs/symptoms of heart attacks

Some heart attacks are very sudden and intense, leaving little time to respond to symptoms. Others start slowly with mild pain/discomfort. Don't hesitate to call 9-1-1 if you or someone you're with experiences any of the following:

- Discomfort in your chest (may feel like uncomfortable pressure, squeezing, fullness or pain), which comes and goes or lasts more than a few minutes, or in other areas of the upper body, including pain/discomfort in one or both arms, back, neck, jaw, or stomach.

- Shortness of breath (with or without chest discomfort) and other possible signs, including breaking out in a cold sweat, nausea, or lightheadedness.

## Stay up-to-date on your numbers

Get your levels checked regularly to know your cholesterol and blood pressure numbers. Cholesterol is a substance that circulates in your blood and comes in two different types – LDL ("bad") and HDL ("good"). Blood pressure is the force of blood within your arteries, and the two different types are systolic pressure (the higher of the two numbers) and diastolic pressure (the lower of the two).

## Know your family heart health history

Risk factors for heart disease may be genetic, so knowing your family's history can help determine how healthy your heart is and measure your risk for heart

issues. When you act early and make your heart health a top priority, you can help reduce your risk for heart disease.

In the event of a heart-related emergency, call 9-1-1.

By Betsy Hunt, CNO, Maria Parham Health



## Make healthy food choices

To make sure you are eating healthy, your plate should have many different colors. You need a variety of vitamins, fiber, and minerals. Each food group has different nutrients good for your body. Here are some tips to help you stay healthy but also stay in budget.

### Increase your fiber intake

Eating fresh fruits, vegetables, whole grains, legumes, nuts, and seeds will help increase your fiber intake. To help, cut up raw vegetables for a quick snack. Or eat oatmeal with berries for a morning boost. Adding lentils or beans to salads gives added fiber, texture, and flavor. Have an apple, pear, or melon slice for a quick snack.

### Increase your calcium and vitamin D

Our bodies make vitamin D from sunshine, but some individuals need an extra boost. Though there are not many foods that have vitamin D, there are some fortified food and beverages to help. These include fortified dairy products, soy products, and some whole grain cereals. On top of that, having salmon once a week and including spinach, collard greens, and mushrooms to your meals increases calcium and vitamin D intake.

### Add more potassium

Most know that bananas are a good source of potassium, but it is not the only food item potassium. Foods like

beet greens, lima beans, pomegranate juice, orange juice, and dairy products also have potassium.

### Lower added sugar intake

Sugar is in many different foods, like maple syrup and honey. But there are also natural sugars in fruits and milk. It is good to avoid consuming too much sugar. To do so, drink water instead of sugar drinks. Teas and adding berries or cucumber gives water some flavor but also reduces sugar intake. Instead of the sugar snacks, stock up on fresh fruits and vegetables. At coffee shops, ask for low-fat/fat-free milk or milk substitutes.

### Replace saturated fats

Saturated fats are high in bad cholesterol. Red meats (beef or pork), whole milk, fatty cheeses (mozzarella), and butter are a good example of saturated fats. Unsaturated fats are much better. Foods like avocados, nuts, seeds, beans, and low-fat cheese (Swiss or low-fat cottage cheese). It is also good to cook with olive or sunflower oil instead of butter or margarine.

### Cut back on sodium

The main source of sodium is salt. To reduce the amount of sodium, read the Nutrition Facts label, buy fresh fruits and vegetables, and make meals with little to no salt.

Article Courtesy Franklin County Health Department



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# Is Your Infant Sleeping Safely?

Sudden infant death syndrome (SIDS) is when an infant under one year old dies unexplained and/or unexpectedly during their sleep; the cause of SIDS is unknown. Research shows that most babies who die from SIDS are born with brain defects and/or abnormalities though this is not the only contributor. Babies are only at risk of SIDS until they're 1 year old, normally SIDS deaths are present between 1-4 months of a child's life. With the help of the Infant Safe Sleep program, trained providers can try to reduce the number of SIDS deaths by giving caregivers tips and actions they can take to make sure their child is sleeping safely.

Other known risk factors that can cause SIDS:

- Baby sleeping on their stomach
- Getting too hot while they're sleeping
- If parent smoked during their pregnancy
- Sleeping with parents who have just smoked or drank alcohol, etc.

Are you wondering what a safe sleeping environment looks like for your child? To prevent SIDS consider these tips for safer sleeping habits:

- Room sharing: you want to make sure your baby has their own sleeping space, something that is not in your bed.
- You want to use a firm, level surface with only a fitted sheet.
- You want to remove everything from the sleeping area,

make sure there are no toys, blankets, or other objects in the crib.

- Use a wearable blanket for your child so you do not have to use a regular blanket, for example, a baby sleep sack.
- Place babies on their backs at all times when laying them down for a nap or bedtime.
- Do not let your child sleep alone or lay on a couch unattended, it is not safe.

For more information on SIDS and safe sleeping habits/tips please visit <https://safetosleep.nichd.nih.gov/>

Article Courtesy Franklin County Health Department



## Screen time and obesity

A 2021 study published in the International Journal of Eating Disorders found that, for each additional hour children spend on social media, they have a 62 percent greater risk of developing a binge-eating disorder one year later. The study echoes earlier efforts from researchers to determine the potential link between screen time and childhood obesity, the rate of which the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention reports has more than tripled in the United States since the 1970s. One group of researchers at the Royal College of Surgeons in Ireland analyzed more than 3,700 children who were not overweight or obese at the start of the study. Despite that, the researchers found that, for every extra hour of screen viewing children engaged in, kids were 16 percent more likely to become overweight or obese. The researchers behind that study urged parents to prevent excessive screen time and ensure children get sufficient sleep, a lack of which was linked to a 23 percent higher risk of becoming overweight or obese.

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# Living well with Parkinson's disease

Parkinson's disease is a progressive neurological condition that can affect patients' lives in many ways due to its physical symptoms, which typically begin gradually and then worsen over time. Symptoms of PD can include everything from involuntary movements called "tremors" to stiffness and difficulty balancing and walking. The National Institute on Aging says as the disease progresses, people may experience mental and memory issues and exhibit difficulty speaking.

Sometimes PD can affect a person's ability to engage in ordinary daily activities. Things that once came easily, such as dressing, eating and sleeping, may become more challenging. Living successfully after a Parkinson's diagnosis requires adjusting to changes as they come.

## Learn all you can

After a PD diagnosis, it's important patients learn as much as possible about the condition. Everyone experiences medical issues in different ways, so there is no uniform way that the human body responds to PD. However, there are some commonalities, and awareness of what may occur can remove some of the surprises.

## Choose your care team wisely

It certainly can take a village for you to manage PD. One of the first steps is finding competent doctors and allowing caring friends and family who have your best interests at heart to pitch in. As a person with PD, you'll need support. That can include medical teams who prescribe the best medications to help manage symp-

toms and therapists who can help you through frustrations. Friends and family may have to assist with certain tasks, including running errands and helping keep your home clean.

## Keep safety in mind

Speak with a doctor about situations when your safety can be compromised, particularly if you live alone. The Parkinson's Foundation reports that, as the disease progresses, people with PD may experience "freezing" episodes. Freezing is a temporary situation where you will not be able to move. These episodes cause increased risk of falling. Episodes may only last a few seconds, but they are a potentially dangerous symptom of PD.

Additional safety concerns may involve walking without assistive devices or knowing



**KEEP GOING.** Living successfully after a Parkinson's diagnosis requires adjusting to changes as they come.

when to give up driving. It's also good to get a medical alert band so, in the case of an emergency, first responders will be aware you have PD.

## Plan ahead

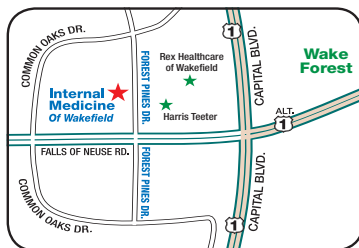
While it may initially seem you will need to stick closer to home, this isn't always the case. Ask your neurologist to provide names of caregivers in areas where you would like

to travel for business or vacation. Also, the Parkinson's Foundation Helpline (800-4PD-INFO) can help you locate local resources, such as exercise classes, activities and support groups.

Parkinson's disease can be challenging, but most people learn ways to manage its symptoms so they can continue to live fulfilling lives.



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# Kids can set the pace for long-term health

Long-term health is not something that many young people routinely consider. After all, it's easy to feel invincible during one's childhood and adolescence. But the steps that young people take early on can affect their health as they get older.

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, establishing healthy behaviors during childhood and adolescence is more beneficial to long-term health than trying to change poor behaviors in adulthood. The following are some ways young people can set the course for healthy outcomes throughout life.

## **Prioritize healthy foods**

According to the childhood recreation group Mountain Kids, habits and actions

performed subconsciously are hard to break because repeat habits trigger dopamine in the brain, causing pleasurable feelings that reinforce the behavior. So grabbing a slice of cake after school for a snack becomes rote. Instead, stocking the refrigerator and pantry with sliced fruits and vegetables, low-fat yogurt, lean protein like hummus and whole wheat dipping crackers can set the course for more responsible eating behaviors.

## **Eat meals and shop together**

Kids can learn what healthy eating and portion control looks like if it is modeled by their parents. Children should be involved with reading nutrition labels and understanding the ingredients that comprise the foods they commonly eat. When dining out,

choose restaurants that utilize menus that indicate the caloric content of meals. Children will learn to recognize and embrace nutritious foods and that can continue into adulthood.

Eating as a family also benefits mental health. Stanford Children's Health says eating together as a family can encourage children's confidence in themselves and improve communication. Children who regularly converse and interact with their parents may be less likely to engage in substance abuse or act out at school.

## **Increase physical activity**

The CDC says 21 percent of adolescents aged 12 to 19 are obese, and two in five students have a chronic health condition. A sedentary lifestyle may be one contributor to these statistics. At home and in school, adults can encourage physical activity as an effective means to prevent obesity. The Department of Health and Human Service recommends that children and adolescents age six and older get at least one hour a day of moderate or vigorous aerobic activity, such as running or biking. Muscle- and bone-strengthening activities also are recommended. Kids who learn early on to



appreciate physical activity reap long-term benefits that extend well into adulthood.

## **Avoid tobacco**

Tobacco and nicotine vaping products can contribute to many negative health conditions. Youngsters who avoid these products throughout their lives may improve longevity and reduce their risk for various illnesses.

Children who learn healthy behaviors at a young age are more likely to continue those good habits into adulthood, which ultimately benefits their long-term health.

## *Benefits of breastfeeding*

Breastfeeding has many nutritional benefits. Breast milk is constantly changing to support the needs of your growing baby. The early milk (colostrum) is easy for babies to digest and provides antibodies and nutrition to the baby. Because breastmilk is easy to digest, less cramping and gas results in less crying. Mothers also benefit from breastfeeding after giving birth. Early breastfeeding helps contract the mother's uterus and slow bleeding after birth, reduces the costs of food for the baby, and increases the time before the next pregnancy.

At Franklin County Health Department, we offer support and resources for mothers who are interested in learning more about breastfeeding. Here are some breastfeeding basic tips:

- Beginning at birth, you should feed your baby every one to three hours.
- As your baby grows and gets older, feeding times and frequency will change. Consult your lactation consultant or doctor to learn what your baby's nutritional needs are.
- Your baby's eating patterns may also change from day to day. Just follow your baby's lead, and that will help you build your milk supply.
- Exclusively breastfeeding is recommended for the first 6 months. After that, breastfeeding should continue with complementary foods for 1 year or more.

Breastfeeding takes practice, time, and

support. So be patient with yourself and your baby as you both learn how to make it work. Find support from friends, family, and your healthcare team. Remember to take it day by day. It gets much easier after the first days and weeks!

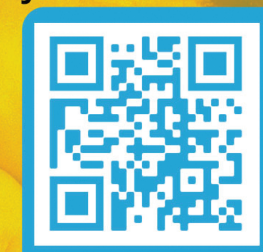
*Article Courtesy Franklin Co. Health Dept.*

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