



What is healthy living?

People have different understandings of what it means to have a healthy lifestyle and this also changes with age, socio-economic status, level of education and geographic location. In addition, our ideas of what healthy living entails evolves with time and there are fads that come and go, some of which are not supported by any evidence. In South Africa, a healthy lifestyle is considered to have the following elements:

Good nutrition



Physical activity



Controlling the use of tobacco products



Avoiding alcohol



Safe sexual behaviour



Minimise or eliminate excessive stress



How does smoking affect healthy living?

Of all bad lifestyle behaviours, smoking is the worst one of them all by far. It has been argued that there is good evidence to suggest that if you exercised, ate healthily and maintained normal weight but smoked, you are still worse off than people who did nothing else right but stayed away from cigarettes.



WHO

The World Health Organisation (WHO) defines health as a "state of complete physical, mental, and social well being, and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity". Therefore, minimising or eliminating excessive stress also contributes to a healthy lifestyle.



What are the effects of an unhealthy lifestyle?

Bad health choices come in different ways. Poor nutrition, smoking, and lack of exercise all lead to obesity and cardiovascular disease. These then cause metabolic abnormalities like diabetes and hypertension and they increase the risk of heart disease and strokes. Stress affects a number of bodily functions and it can lead to poor sleep, depression, chronic fatigue and body pains.



What can I do to practise healthy living?



Consume an overall healthy diet rich in fruits & vegetables



Choose wholegrain and high fibre foods.



Maintain a healthy body weight



Set a goal of at least 30 minutes of physical activity daily



Try to have fish at least twice a week



Limit intake of saturated fat, trans fat and cholesterol by choosing lean meats



Limit alcohol intake to not more than 1 drink per day for women and 2 drinks per day for men



Choose and prepare foods with little or no salt



Minimize intake of drinks and foods with added sugars.