All areas of your lifestyle can contribute to your health and wellbeing, from the food you eat to the things you do and the way you feel.

Some lifestyle habits, such as smoking, physical inactivity and poor eating and drinking choices, are modifiable risk factors which are in your control. Understanding your risk factors can help you plan actions to improve your health and lifestyle habits, and reduce your chances of developing preventable health conditions now and in the future.

1. **Stop smoking**
The proven link to cancer, heart disease, stroke, infertility and other health problems makes it more important than ever to quit the habit. Talk to your GP or call 13QUIT — getting help will significantly improve your chance of giving up successfully.

2. **Get active**
The health benefits from at least 30 minutes of moderate exercise most days of the week are remarkable. It can keep you in a healthy weight range as well as improve your heart health, immune system, energy levels, muscle tone and strengthen your bones.

3. **Eat well**
A healthy, balanced diet of fruit and vegetables, low fat dairy products, lean protein, fibre and wholegrains gives your body the nutrients it needs to function at its best as well as protect you from illness. Avoid trans fats and keep a watch on your intake of saturated fats, sugar, salt and alcohol.

4. **Good quality sleep**
Make time for sleep, rest and relaxation. Most adults need around 7–8 hours every night. This is a time when the body grows, repairs and restores itself.

5. **Understand your personal health risks**
Your age, gender, stage of life, background, family history and whether you have any long-term health conditions are all factors that shape your personal health risks. They can give you important direction as to where you should start with the necessary preventative actions to help you live a longer and healthier life.

6. **Know your health vitals**
Early detection means early intervention — and early intervention can mean better health outcomes. Your blood pressure, cholesterol, blood glucose levels and weight — your vital health statistics — can be important signs that you need to take action or step up your efforts to improve your health.

7. **Find a GP you like and stick with them**
Your GP is in a vital position to help you identify your health risks for potentially serious illnesses, advise on any action needed and support you in managing those risks. They can help improve your management of long-term health conditions such as diabetes, reducing the risk of complications.
JOURNEY TO A HEALTHIER YOU

For many people, following these seven steps may mean making changes. While this can seem challenging, a good approach is to set some clear personal goals and develop an action plan. Here are some tips to help you set your health goals, get going, and stay on track!

Know what you want
Prioritise the changes you think you need to make, then choose one or two achievable goals that are meaningful and important to you.

Keep it real
Decide on small, practical changes (or ‘mini-goals’) that you can carry out comfortably to help you reach your ultimate goal.

Set deadlines
Come up with a reasonable time frame to reach your goal to help you track your progress.

Get it in writing
Having your goals clearly set out in writing will remind you of what you’re aiming for. And write down how you’ll benefit when you meet your goals so you can refer back to it to stay motivated.

Ask for help
Let your friends and family know what you’re aiming for so they can help support you.

Starting point
Check with your doctor before you start any new exercise programs or eating plans, particularly if you haven’t been exercising for a while, if you’re pregnant, or if you have any medical conditions.

FURTHER INFORMATION

The Australian Guide to Healthy Eating
Quitline
www.13quit.org.au

Sources:
Cancer Council. (www.cancercouncil.org.au)
The Harvard School of Public Health. (www.hsph.harvard.edu)
Quitnow. (www.quitnow.info.au)

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