

DISCOVER

BIBLE STUDY GUIDE

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The Secret of a Healthy Lifestyle



WHAT IF you could add 10 years to your life? Would you be interested? A long, healthy life is no accident. Genetics play a role, but it also depends on good health habits. Experts tell us that if you adopt some simple lifestyle principles, you may live up to a decade longer!

The November 2005 issue of *National Geographic* magazine featured the Loma Linda University Health Study of 34,000 California-based Seventh-day Adventists. This research project, funded by the U.S. National Institutes of Health, was designed to see if the Adventists' health-oriented lifestyle affected their life expectancy and their risk of major illnesses such as heart disease and cancer.

After following these research subjects for 10 years, the study's results were impressive. It found significantly lower rates of lung cancer, breast cancer, colorectal cancer, and coronary heart disease among the Adventists.

And what about their life expectancy? The *National Geographic* article summarized the findings this way: “The average Adventist lived four to 10 years longer than the average Californian. That makes the Adventists one of the nation’s most convincing cultures of longevity” (“Longevity: The Secrets of Long Life,” *National Geographic*, November 2005).

In this guide, we will take a look at eight simple health principles that can help you live a healthier, longer, and more productive life.

Modern thinking about health has come to understand something that the Bible stated long ago—human beings are more than just a physical body. The physical, mental, social, and spiritual parts of a person are interrelated and inseparable. In other words, what affects the mind affects the body. Our spiritual condition has an impact on our physical condition, and vice versa. What affects one aspect of our being also touches all the others. We are a whole person.

Thousands of years ago, God’s Word pointed out this vital connection, which has only recently been accepted into medical theory:

“A merry heart does good, like medicine, but a broken spirit dries the bones” (Proverbs 17:22).

According to the Apostle John, how closely related are the mind and body to our spiritual well-being?

“Beloved, I pray that you may prosper in all things and be in health, just as your soul prospers” (3 John 2).

The Word of God can save your life in more ways than one. It can serve as a fountain of health as well as a fountain of eternal life. So in this guide, we’ll look at several essential health principles. Since physical and mental health go hand-in-hand with

our spiritual well-being, Paul makes the following strong appeal to the Christian:

“Whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God” (1 Corinthians 10:31).

The gospel includes physical as well as spiritual restoration. The Creator wants us to “be in health” (3 John 2). He knows that a healthful lifestyle can help us be vibrant Christians. How can we build up and maintain good health? Here are some principles to follow if you really want to live longer, healthier, and happier.

1 | Pure Air

Pure, fresh air is essential to good health. During the day and while sleeping at night, proper ventilation in your home and workplace ensures that your blood will always distribute enough oxygen to every part of the body.

The kind of air you breathe is obviously important. Be careful that you’re not subjecting yourself to fumes, gases, or airborne bacteria from some hidden source. Taking deep breaths during an early morning walk is a great way to oxygenate your body—as long as you can walk where the air is clean.

Smoking not only pollutes the air, but it is also one of today’s big killers. Scientific research has established a causal relationship between tobacco and lung cancer, emphysema, heart disease, and other ills. The body’s addiction to the nicotine in cigarettes makes smoking one of the hardest habits to break. Currently, an estimated 6 million people die each year worldwide from tobacco-related diseases, including second-hand smoke. This number is expected to rise to 8 million by 2030.



“Take advantage of fresh, clean air. Use it wisely, and you will experience a new level of energy. . . . Breathe deeply, using your abdominal muscles. This will increase your energy and efficiency. You will feel years younger” (“8 Secrets to Better Health,” *Signs of the Times* Special Issue, 2012).

2 | Sunlight

Sunlight—in the right amounts—provides numerous physical benefits. According to the World Health Organization, five to 15 minutes of direct sunlight on your arms, hands, and face two or three times a week is enough to boost your vitamin D levels and obtain positive effects. You cannot have total health if you don’t get enough sunlight. Here are just a few of its benefits:

- ☼ **Sunlight kills germs and builds the immune system.** It increases the number of white blood cells in your blood, along with their effectiveness.
- ☼ **Sunlight calms the nerves and elevates mood.** It boosts the production of endorphins and serotonin in your brain.
- ☼ **Sunlight aids digestion.** It stimulates your appetite and improves your digestion, elimination, and metabolism.

- ☉ **Sunlight helps to lower cholesterol naturally.**
- ☉ **Sunlight increases relaxation and reduces stress.**

Sunlight is one of the greatest sleep inducers, especially when you combine it with any form of physical exercise.

A word of caution, however. For all its health benefits, sunlight can also be harmful. Too much exposure to the sun has been linked to an increased risk of skin cancer and can cause sunburn, damage to the eyes and skin, and acceleration of the aging process. Moderation is the key. If you're going to be outside, the U.S. Food and Drug Administration recommends wearing sunscreen with an SPF of 15 or higher, even on cloudy days, with reapplication every two hours.

3 | Rest

For most of us, life is busy and full of stress. This takes its toll on our bodies, and we've grown accustomed to look for a quick fix—a pill that will block the pain or relieve the symptoms, enabling us to maintain our fast-paced existence.

However, the body must have rest in order to repair itself. Often, the symptoms we're trying so hard to get rid of are really the body's efforts to fight disease, and the medications we take can only assist the body as it tries to restore itself. Fever, congestion, and fatigue are all evidence that the body is working hard to cure you. So let your body do its work. Take time to rest!

Rest is nature's best remedy for the abuse our minds and bodies are subjected to during the day. We must have time for recreation and rest to relieve the tensions of work and family responsibilities. When we don't get enough rest, we often experience anxiety, depression, and irritability. This can lead

to illness, which will force us to take the rest that the body was craving all along.

There's simply no substitute for a good night's sleep. No kind of medication or stimulation can make up for a lack of sleep. An article in *Sleep Health*, the journal of the National Sleep Foundation, recommends seven to nine hours of sleep nightly for adults ("National Sleep Foundation's Sleep Time Duration Recommendations," *Sleep Health*, March 2015).



Adequate rest is another one of God's natural keys to good health.

Recharging our spiritual batteries on a daily basis is also important for physical health. A Christian's daily time of meditation, Bible study, and prayer will help heal the body as well as the soul.

God knew that we would also need a regular break from our work cycle. That's why, at creation, He built into His original plan a weekly day of rest—the seventh-day Sabbath.

"Thus the heavens and the earth, and all the host of them, were finished. And on the seventh day God ended His work which He had done, and He rested on the seventh day from all His work which He had done. Then God blessed the seventh day and sanctified it, because in it He rested from all His work which God had created and made" (Genesis 2:1-3).

On this day, God invites us to share with Him the blessings of rest—restoring and rejuvenating ourselves physically, spiritually, and mentally. This day of rest is so important that God included it in the Ten Commandments:

“Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy. Six days you shall labor and do all your work, but the seventh day is the Sabbath of the Lord your God. In it you shall do no work” (Exodus 20:8-10).

4 | Exercise

The article “8 Secrets to Better Health” in *Signs of the Times* had this to say about exercise:

“God designed humans to be physically active. We can enjoy greater health and longer life through regular, systematic exercise. Studies show that inactivity increases the rate of degenerative diseases and conditions such as heart disease, cancer, osteoporosis, anxiety, and depression.”

Here are just a handful of the benefits of regular physical exercise, which:

- ▶ **Helps lower blood pressure**
- ▶ **Increases bone density**
- ▶ **Helps with weight loss**
- ▶ **Strengthens the immune system**
- ▶ **Improves circulation**
- ▶ **Increases strength and endurance**

According to the article:

“Physical activity improves the overall quality of life. It has been demonstrated that, in addition to physical benefits, exercise improves short-term memory, comprehension, and mental reaction time.”

If you aren't exercising regularly, make a plan to start doing so. Begin slowly and gradually increase as you gain endurance. It may be wise to consult your physician before starting. High blood pressure and cholesterol can sometimes prove harmful when starting an exercise program, even if they don't manifest symptoms. Of course, exercise is critically important if you have either of these conditions, and you will reap the benefits as—with your doctor's help—you ease into your new routine.



Your goal should be to engage in any type of aerobic exercise or recreation that is comparable to walking one mile in 15 minutes. Try to do this four or more times each week.

5 | Water

Since water is essential to every cell in the body, we should drink plenty of it. It is nature's solvent—the one perfect medium for cleansing both inside and out. Your body is about 70 percent water by weight and needs about two-and-a-half quarts of water per day to perform all its functions properly. You get water from the foods you eat and from the liquids you drink.

Good health is dependent on drinking adequate amounts of water. Drinking plenty of water helps to promote wellness by keeping your systems hydrated, in addition to assisting nature in resisting disease.

Water has existed since the beginning of creation and is an important factor in keeping our bodies running smoothly. To maintain health, our bodies need at least eight eight-ounce glasses

of water daily. It is best to avoid drinking water with meals so that the digestive juices in the stomach will not be diluted, delaying the emptying of the stomach.

Regular bathing or showering is absolutely essential for good health. The skin, the largest organ of the body, releases some of the body's chemical waste products through its pores. Water is nature's cleanser to remove these impurities.

6 | Proper Diet

At creation, God instructed Adam and Eve to eat a diet of nuts, grains, and fruits (Genesis 1:29). After Adam and Eve sinned, vegetables were added to their diet (Genesis 3:18). After the flood, the Creator added "clean" flesh foods to the diet (Genesis 7:2, 3; 9:1-6).



Because people on a vegetarian diet are healthier and live longer, many experts in nutrition and health urge us to consider returning to humanity's original diet of nuts, grains, and fruits with vegetables added.

The flesh of animals contains both saturated fat and cholesterol, which can increase the risk of high blood pressure, stroke, heart disease, cancer, obesity, diabetes, and other diseases. Today, many physicians and nutritionists advise those who do eat meat to consume only lean, well-cooked meat, and to do so sparingly.

Here are seven golden rules for good nutrition:

1. **Eat a plant-based diet.** You don't need to worry about getting adequate protein if you eat a wide variety of fruits, nuts, grains, and vegetables.

2. **Reduce fat and cholesterol consumption.** The easiest way to do this is to cut down on your consumption of meats, fried foods, unhealthy spreads, and dairy products.
3. **Eat less sugar.** Large amounts of sugar are lurking in many breakfast cereals, soft drinks, refined desserts, and even ketchups and salad dressings! The best way to avoid consuming massive amounts of sugar is to cut down on the number of prepared foods in your diet and eat foods in as natural a state as possible.
4. **Use less salt.**
5. **Eat more fruits, vegetables, and whole grains.** By eating a wide variety of these natural or “whole” foods, you will not only receive enough nutrients, but you will also get the needed fiber and bran to keep your digestive system healthy.
6. **Eat a substantial breakfast.** Recent research reveals that people who eat a good breakfast have better health, live longer, and are more mentally alert than those who do not.
7. **Avoid eating between meals.** Although “grazing” throughout the day has become popular and widespread, some of the most knowledgeable authorities suggest that our digestive systems do best if we allow at least five hours between meals.

Those who choose to eat meat as a part of their diet should eat only the meats that the Bible indicates are “clean,” or fit for humans to eat. When God gave people permission to eat meat after the flood (Genesis 7:2, 3; 9:1-6), He specifically indicated which animals were clean and could be eaten, and which animals were unclean.

In Leviticus 11 and Deuteronomy 14, you will find the lists of birds, animals, and fish God pronounced unfit for food. According to these chapters, clean fish must have both fins and scales.

Scavenger birds are prohibited. Clean animals must have a divided (split) hoof and also chew the cud, like a cow. One example of an unclean animal is the pig.

“The swine is unclean for you, because it has cloven hooves, yet does not chew the cud; you shall not eat their flesh or touch their dead carcasses” (Deuteronomy 14:8).

Scientific research substantiates that God is indeed right in His warning against eating unclean meats. The health concerns are valid. Not only do some animals carry diseases, but the harmful effects of saturated fat from all sources—including meat—on the human body are well-documented.

God wants you to live a happy, healthy, and productive life. Why? Because He cares about you.

7 | Avoid Harmful Things

What warnings does the Bible give about alcoholic beverages?

“Who has woe? Who has sorrow? Who has contentions? Who has complaints? Who has wounds without cause? Who has redness of eyes? Those who linger long at the wine” (Proverbs 23:29, 30).

“Nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners will inherit the kingdom of God” (1 Corinthians 6:10).

Alcohol is a known brain and intestinal toxin. Recently-released data indicates that there is no completely safe level when it comes to drinking alcohol. In April 2011, the *British Medical Journal* reported on a growing body of research by the European Prospective Investigation Into Cancer and Nutrition, which has

found that even occasional social drinking increases the risk of cancer and death from all causes.

Whether we realize it or not, even moderate alcohol consumption, to some degree, impairs reason, conscience, and judgment. In addition, alcohol affects:

- ▶ ***The immune system.*** It decreases the ability of the white blood cells to fight disease.
- ▶ ***The endocrine system.*** Only two or three alcoholic drinks per day increase the risk of miscarriages, stillbirths, and premature births.
- ▶ ***The circulatory system.*** The use of alcohol increases the risk of coronary heart disease, raises the risk for hypoglycemia, and elevates blood fats and blood pressure, thus increasing hypertension.
- ▶ ***The digestive system.*** Alcohol irritates the stomach and can cause gastric bleeding.

Alcohol abuse is the third highest cause of death in the United States, killing about 88,000 people per year. Alcohol kills more American teenagers (4,700 yearly) than all illegal drugs combined. Drunk driving costs amount to \$132 billion annually in the United States. As you can see, the effects are negatively life-changing for many people.

8 | Trust in Divine Power

These seven principles outline the elements of a healthful lifestyle, but they are incomplete without an eighth vital principle—trust in divine power. A person haunted by fear or guilt will find it hard to benefit fully from the health practices we’ve just described. But a person enjoying a positive faith in God will find that everything works together for abundant living.

Remember our ultimate source of well-being:

“Bless the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all His benefits: who forgives all your iniquities, who heals all your diseases, who redeems your life from destruction, who crowns you with lovingkindness and tender mercies” (Psalm 103:2-4).

According to a report published in 2016, a 10-year study of more than 75,000 middle-aged women found that those who attended church once a week had a 26 percent lower risk of dying during that time period than women who never attended church.

Even those who attended church less frequently had a somewhat lower risk of death. Researchers cautioned against

making too much of the findings, but the study does indicate a link between church attendance and longevity.

Earlier studies have reported similar findings for men, and have suggested that churchgoers have a reduced incidence of heart attack, hardening of the arteries, high blood pressure, and other diseases.

Health is more than just the absence of disease. It results from the harmonious development of the physical, mental, social, and spiritual parts of our nature. Trust in divine power is the keystone for a truly healthy and happy life.

Applying the Bible’s perspective to our lives does make a difference—in all kinds of practical ways; it offers convincing evidence that Christianity is the most practical, reasonable religion in all the world. It changes people—their thinking and their actions—and creates a new lifestyle. Because of the close

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WordSearch

If you want to go deeper into this study topic, complete this section.

1. On what basis does God claim ownership of our bodies and how we treat them? (1 Corinthians 6:19, 20)

2. According to the Apostle Paul, what is our responsibility regarding our physical bodies and their relationship to God? (Romans 12:1, 2)

3. What did God promise He would do for His people, Israel, if they followed His instructions? (Exodus 15:26)

4. If we faithfully follow God, how will our physical strength and well-being be affected? (Isaiah 40:29-31)

5. In addition to salvation, what physical blessing does God promise to those who love Him? (Psalm 91:16)



relationship between the mind, body, and spiritual life, Christians who live by the Word of God will want to follow the principles of a healthful lifestyle as they prepare for Jesus' Second Coming (John 10:10; 1 John 3:1-3).

Christ not only wants us to be ready to meet Him when He returns, but He also wants to improve the quality of our present lives. We can cooperate with Him in doing that by following His basic health principles.

Jesus promises to deliver us from every destructive habit through His “power that works in us” (Ephesians 3:20). If you need help in overcoming a body-destroying habit such as using tobacco or alcohol, here is a prayer for you:

Dear Father in heaven, I want to live as Jesus lived, a life in holiness and purity. Thank You for Your promise of the power to overcome and for eternal life. By Your strength and grace help me surrender every harmful thing in my life. Please give me strength to have the willpower to overcome my bad habits, so I can truly live for You. I ask this in Jesus' name, Amen.

My Decision

- I want to be ready to meet Jesus when He comes. To this end, I choose to stop my harmful habits and follow the simple health principles He has given in His Word.

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