

FITNESS AND WELLNESS

COURSE OUTLINE

- **How would you like to have more energy, boost your immunity to disease, lose weight, reduce stress and just plain feel better?**
 - It may sound too good to be true.
 - But you can do all of these things if you incorporate wellness and fitness into your lifestyle.

- **Think about how you live. Do you take good care of yourself, and choose your diet with nutrition in mind?**
 - Positive steps like these can lead directly to feeling better and being healthier.

- **But there are bad habits that can adversely affect our health, like smoking, or allowing stress to build up in your life, that you need to watch out for.**
 - These are called "negative lifestyle factors".
 - They're "potholes" in the road to wellness.

- **Falling into bad habits like these increases our personal health risks.**

- **Having just one negative factor, such as smoking, is bad enough.**
 - When you add a second risky behavior, such as a bad diet, your problems can multiply quickly!

- **To get a true picture of our "wellness level", each of us needs to make a list of our own negative lifestyle factors, then work to eliminate them.**

- **Remember that battling any problems that you identify will often be a gradual process.**
 - Don't expect to shake all your bad habits, or build up good ones, overnight.
 - Instead, work to improve your behaviors a little at a time.

- **Once you get started, you'll begin to feel better, and decrease your chances of serious health problems as well.**

- **One important way to get healthy and stay that way is to eat right!**
 - Basically, all those things you've heard since grade school about needing to have "well balanced" meals are true.
 - Diet and nutrition are like the "guard rails" on the road to being fit and well.
 - Good habits keep you "on course".

- **So cut down on red meat and heavy milk products.**
 - They're full of saturated fats, which can set up "roadblocks" in your arteries and cause heart disease.
 - Eat more poultry, fish and low fat cheese instead.
 - Drink one or two percent milk.

- **Did you know that beans are both rich in protein and low in fat?**
 - Done up right, they can be a delicious substitute for red meat.
 - Give them a try!

- **You should also try to eat whole grain breads and cereals.**
 - These are rich in nutrients as well as fiber.

- **Fresh fruits and vegetables are also important.**

- **Maintaining a healthy diet can also help you to keep your weight down.**
 - Being overweight increases your chances of high blood pressure and heart disease.
 - Those are two health problems you can do without!

- **If you are carrying around too many pounds, put together a weight control plan.**
 - First, think about how you would like to look.
 - Envisioning the "future you" will give you something to shoot for.
 - It's a great way to stay motivated.

- **Schedule a physical with your doctor.**
 - Ask him what your proper weight should be.
 - Then discuss reasonable goals to set for yourself.
 - Losing one or two pounds a week is usually doable.

- **When that extra weight does come off, you want to keep it off.**
 - Stay away from crazy crash diets.
 - The pounds you lose on those programs often come right back.

- **Get a notebook and write down what you eat and when you eat it. It helps you see when you are:**
 - Taking in too much fatty food.
 - Snacking between meals, or before bed.
- **Work to eliminate these bad habits and replace them with good ones.**
- **While maintaining a nutritious diet is important to your health, it won't get you fit all by itself!**
 - You also need to exercise!
 - This will help burn off the calories you take in, tone up your muscles and increase your stamina.
- **There are other benefits to exercise as well. It can:**
 - Help to lower your blood pressure.
 - Dramatically lower your risk of heart disease and stroke.
- **Remember to begin every exercise session with stretching.**
 - This will keep you from straining a muscle or ligament.
 - Then do a few light warm ups.
- **Once you're loosened up, you can move on to some aerobic exercise.**
 - Ride a bike.
 - Go for a run.
 - Even fast walking will do it.
- **This gets your heart pumping faster, which helps to condition both it and your lungs.**
 - Consult a heart rate chart to find out how high you can safely get your rate, and try to get close to that level.
 - This will help you get the full benefit from your workout.
- **Be sure to pace yourself.**
 - Don't try to do too much right off the bat.
 - Build up gradually.
 - Before long you'll start seeing results!

- **An important key to wellness is managing stress.**
 - Unfortunately, stress is easy to find but hard to get rid of.
 - Many people see stress as a normal part of their job or home life, so they just accept it.

- **It's true that stress is normal, but only in small doses.**
 - Too much stress can make it hard for us to relax and think clearly.
 - It can create emotional problems.
 - It can even cause physical ailments, like high blood pressure, back and other muscle pain, and ulcers.

- **When stress threatens our health we need to "bleed it off" before it does serious damage.**

- **One way to do this is through deep breathing exercises.**
 - First, get comfortable.
 - Then simply inhale deeply through your nose.
 - Exhale slowly through your mouth.

- **Keep this up until you sense the stress beginning to "drain" out of you.**
 - Then continue for a while longer, until you feel calm and relaxed.

- **Stretching exercises work in much the same way.**
 - They're great for relieving tension as well as reducing stress.

- **Here's one for the upper back:**
 - Pull the wrist of one arm across to the opposite shoulder.
 - Hold it for a five count.
 - Then do the same with the other arm.

- **There is also one for your neck and shoulders:**
 - Carefully turn your head to one side.
 - Hold it there for a three count.
 - Then turn to the other side for another three.
 - Dip your chin down to your chest.
 - Then pull your head back.

- **Do these occasionally throughout the day, or when you start feeling tense.**
 - They really can help!

- **You can also fight stress by taking more time to get active and enjoy life!**
 - Go on outings with friends or family.
 - Take up a sport.
 - Do something active, just for you!
- **If you find your stress is hard to shake, remember you don't have to fight it by yourself.**
 - Seeing a professional counselor can help you build the skills you need to handle your stress successfully.
- **One health problem that often goes hand in hand with stress is high blood pressure.**
 - This condition is serious.
 - It can lead to stroke, kidney failure, even blindness.
- **The best way to fight high blood pressure is through early detection.**
 - So make sure you get regular check-ups.
- **If your blood pressure tests high, your doctor will probably ask you to make a few simple lifestyle changes, such as:**
 - Getting more exercise.
 - Using less salt on your food.
- **But remember, a less salty diet doesn't have to be bland!**
 - Getting a little creative in the kitchen can be fun as well as healthy.
 - Many heart-healthy cookbooks are available.
 - Choose one that interests you and get started!
- **All of us have heard about the hazards of smoking.**
 - It's one of the most dangerous of all the negative lifestyle factors.
- **Just take a look at the warning label on a pack of cigarettes. Smokers risk:**
 - Heart disease
 - Emphysema.
 - Lung and other cancers.
- **For women, smoking can increase the risk of problem pregnancies as well.**

- **So how can we stop smoking and get back on the road to wellness?**
 - It definitely requires some work.
 - Some people try to kick the habit all at once by going "cold turkey".
 - Most of us are better suited to tapering off a little at a time, until we reach a targeted "quit date".

- **The first step is to get a handle on when and why we smoke.**
 - Is it after meals, during breaks, in the car?
 - Write the times down, then work toward breaking these "links".

- **If having a morning cup of coffee makes you want a cigarette, drink something else, like juice or tea.**

- **Instead of having an after-dinner cigarette...**
 - Have a piece of chewing gum.
 - Take a walk around the block.
 - Play with the dog.

- **Before you know it, you'll be skipping a few "smokes" each day, and be well on the way to quitting altogether.**

- **If you stumble, don't give up. Even with an occasional "step backward" you can still reach your goal.**
 - Ask for help if you need it!
 - Find a supportive friend who's going through the same thing and work to quit together.

- **Using alcohol and drugs can also have serious negative health effects.**

- **Take a look at a warning label on a bottle of liquor or a can of beer.**
 - If it doesn't scare you, read it again.

- **The hazards of using alcohol are real. Drinking too much can:**
 - Lead to chronic liver and stomach problems.
 - Damage brain cells.
 - Affect your ability to reason and learn.

- **Remember, alcohol is toxic. The "buzz" you feel is actually a form of poisoning.**
 - That's why they call it "intoxication".
 - It's also where a hangover comes from.

- **If you're going to drink, you need to know your limit.**
 - An occasional drink or two every once in a while is probably okay.
 - Any more than that is generally too much.

- **One way to keep yourself from having "too many" is to change your "drinking behavior".**
 - When you're at a party and reach your limit, switch to juice, or club soda with a twist.
 - Don't let peer pressure change your mind!

- **Then there's drugs.**
 - "Illegal drugs" are illegal for a reason.
 - They may give you a temporary "high", but they will always have significant physical and mental side-effects.
 - The "good" feeling is "artificial" and short-lived, but the side effects can last forever.

- **Even prescription and over-the-counter drugs can be dangerous.**

- **With prescriptions, make sure to follow your doctor's instructions.**
 - Always read labels and printed directions.
 - Many drugs cause drowsiness, and some can interact dangerously with other medicines and alcohol.

- **Remember, if you have a problem with drugs or alcohol it affects the lives of everyone around you.**
 - So if someone tries to help, don't push them away.
 - Listen to what they have to say.

*** * * SUMMARY * * ***

- **Identify your negative lifestyle factors... and work to change them.**
- **Get organized by developing a plan of attack.**
- **Remember that a program of gradual change is usually best.**
- **Eat right, and get plenty of exercise.**
- **Manage stress. Don't let it manage you.**
- **Don't ignore the dangers that are associated with tobacco, alcohol and drugs. Get help if you need it.**
- **And finally, don't be discouraged if reaching your goals takes longer than you expect. Stick with it. Your efforts will pay off.**
- **You don't have to belong to some type of exclusive club to get on the road to fitness and wellness. With a little effort we can all live healthier, be more fit and feel better!**