It’s Important to Be a Healthy Nurse

Do you follow the advice you give to your patients? When it comes to your health, the American Nurses Association (ANA) would really appreciate it if you did. Your spouse or significant other, children, family, and friends would probably love it too!

The ANA (n.d.) defines a healthy nurse as “one who actively focuses on creating and maintaining a balance and synergy of physical, intellectual, emotional, social, spiritual, personal, and professional wellbeing” (para. 3). “A healthy nurse lives life to the fullest capacity, across the wellness/illness continuum, as they become stronger role models, advocates, and educators, personally, for their families, their communities and work environments, and ultimately for their patients” (ANA, n.d.-a, para 2).

We all know the importance of being healthy, but imagine the power 3.6 million registered nurses, the most trusted professionals, have to make a difference (ANA, n.d.-a). By choosing nutritious foods and an active lifestyle, managing stress, living tobacco-free, getting preventive immunizations and screenings, and choosing protective measures such as wearing sunscreen and bicycle helmets, nurses can set an example on how to be healthy.

Being healthy involves many things, but not smoking, maintaining a healthy weight and getting the amount of sleep our bodies require are especially important.

WEIGHT

According to the ANA (n.d.-c), nutrition and fitness (or diet and exercise) are often the first things we think of when we talk about health and wellness. We tend to associate a healthy weight with restrictive (and often unpleasant) dieting. However, healthy weight is a lifestyle and can lead to improved overall health, increased energy, and improved self-esteem.

The ANA and other health professionals say that a healthy weight can be achieved by:

- Eating a balanced diet with whole grains, fresh fruits, and vegetables
- Reasonable portion sizes
- Enjoying sweets, fats, and alcohol in moderation
- Less snacking
- Drinking more water and less sugary drinks – including fruit juices
- Moving more and sitting less
- Less screen time

Maintaining a healthy weight is important for your overall health and can prevent and control many diseases and conditions such as heart disease, high blood pressure, gallstones, respiratory problems, certain cancers, and type 2 diabetes (ANA, n.d.-c).

While many focus on body mass index (BMI), it’s not the only thing to consider, as “other important health assessments such as skinfold thickness measurements, waist circumference, family history, and evaluation of nutrition and physical activity” (ANA, n.d.-c).

http://bourildesign.net/wise-health-quotes-every-men-women

So many people spend their health gaining wealth, and then have to spend their wealth to regain their health.

—A. J. Reb Materi

Need Help?

Contact Beth Smith, Librarian

Phone: Direct: 513-644-6020
OR 1-855-906-8773, ext. 2839
E-mail: bsmith@hondros.edu OR library@hondros.edu

Updated March 2018
Adequate sleep is essential to human health and a necessity for nurses; sleepy and distracted nurses can make mistakes. A healthy amount of sleep is considered to be at least seven to nine hours of restful sleep each night. The benefits of healthy sleep are well known: heightened alertness, better judgment, more stamina and energy, better concentration, greater motivation, improved learning, and better mood.

Most people acknowledge that when they are sleep deprived, they feel grumpy, tired, or irritable, but is there any physical harm? Yes; the National Institutes of Health report that inadequate sleep can lead to obesity, cardiovascular disease, hypertension, diabetes and mood disorders (as cited in ANA, n.d.-b). If a sleep disorder, such as insomnia, night terrors, sleep walking, sleep apnea, narcolepsy, bed wetting, teeth grinding, and Restless Leg Syndrome, is leaving you short on sleep, you should see your health care provider (ANA, n.d.-b).

Some of the ANA’s tips to improving your sleep include:

- Keep a consistent bedtime and routine
- Avoid alcohol and caffeine prior to bedtime
- Avoid nicotine
- Neither starve nor stuff yourself prior to bedtime
- Get comfortable with a supportive mattress and adequate pillows
- Engage in relaxing activities prior to bedtime such as prayer, warm bath, calming music, reading
- Ensure your room is dark, quiet (unless you prefer soft music or white noise), and a cool but comfortable temperature
- If you’re anxiety-prone, keep a pad of paper by bed to write down your worries, then let them go until morning
- Exercise earlier in the day to promote better sleep

If nothing else convinces you how important sleep is to functioning well, think about this—sleep deprivation is widely recognized as a form of torture and is used as an interrogation technique (ANA, n.d.-b). So, get enough sleep!

The ANA also encourages nurses to be healthy; consider your weight and sleep habits as two important components to staying well. Additionally, nurses should not smoke or disregard protective gear when outdoors or participating in sports or other activities. Furthermore, nurses have a professional and ethical obligation to be immunized to protect the health of the nurse and the health of her or his patients.

Nurses play a critical role in health care as role models for their patients, colleagues, and others. As a nursing student and future nurse, you are in a position to be an example, educator, and advocate of a healthy lifestyle. You need to take your health seriously if you want your patients to do so.

If your health and habits need some work, consider joining the Healthy Nurse Healthy Nation Grand Challenge by going to http://www.healthynursehealthynation.org/. Take the health assessment survey and get a heat map of your health risks. Pick your focus area(s) (activity, rest, nutrition, quality of life, and/or safety), make a health commitment, and participate in health challenges. Connect with others for support, advice, and share successes, then Repeat the survey annually to see how far you’ve come!

Stay healthy; stay strong!

References
