Lesson Objectives

After reading this lesson, you should be able to

1. describe several lifestyle choices—other than priority healthy lifestyle choices—that contribute to fitness, health, and wellness;
2. describe factors associated with the physical environment that affect fitness, health, and wellness; and
3. describe factors associated with the social environment that affect fitness, health, and wellness.

Lesson Vocabulary

accelerometer, built environment, controllable risk factor, lifestyle, sleep apnea, uncontrollable risk factor

If you asked everyone you know, you would probably find that they would all like to have good health and wellness. But how many are aware of all the things they can do to achieve it? In this lesson, you’ll learn about healthy lifestyle choices and how they can help you achieve good fitness, health, and wellness. You’ll also learn about environmental and social factors that can influence your fitness, health, and wellness.

As you can see in figure 18.1, four major factors contribute to early death. Most early deaths result from unhealthy lifestyle choices. This means that these problems could be prevented if people changed the way they live. Making healthy lifestyle choices not only reduces the risk of disease and death from disease but also enhances wellness. For example, not smoking greatly reduces your risk of heart disease and cancer and also increases your quality of life. You can breathe better, you have a keener sense of smell, and you save the money you would have spent on tobacco and medical care.

Healthy Lifestyle Choices and Risk Factors

You know by now that the word lifestyle refers to the way you live. A healthy lifestyle is a way of living that helps you prevent illness and enhance wellness. Healthy lifestyle choices are ways that you can reduce controllable risk factors—the risk factors that you can act upon to change. Healthy lifestyle choices are in your control, and if you choose well you reduce your risk of many major health problems. For example, one controllable risk factor is sedentary living; simply by being active, you can reduce your health risks.

Other risk factors—such as age and sex—are not in your control and thus are called uncontrollable risk factors. Because you cannot do anything about these risk factors, focus instead on those that you can control. This chapter describes several healthy lifestyle choices over which you do have some control.
Making Healthy Lifestyle Choices

This book focuses on three priority lifestyle choices: regular physical activity, healthy eating, and stress management. These lifestyle choices are considered to be most important because they can improve the fitness, health, and wellness of virtually all people. However, they are not the only lifestyle choices you can make to promote fitness, health, and wellness. This lesson describes other lifestyle choices you can make to maximize your fitness, health, and wellness.

FIT FACT

Even though the dangers of tobacco use are well known, 17 percent of 12th graders, 11 percent of 10th graders, and 5 percent of 8th graders smoke. The good news is that smoking is less common than it used to be in all of these grades. Why? For one thing, social norms have changed, and smoking is less fashionable. In addition, public policies now often limit or prohibit smoking in public places, limit tobacco advertisements, and tax tobacco purchases.

FIT FACT

Using Technology

Investigate sleep-tracking devices and evaluate the pros and cons of using one. Check to see if activity-tracking devices cost more when they also include sleep-tracking functionality.

Adopt Good Personal Health Habits

In elementary school, you most likely learned about personal health habits, such as regular tooth brushing and flossing, good grooming (for example, hair and fingernail care), hand washing before meals and after bathroom use, and a healthy amount of sleep. But how many of these habits have you adopted? Practicing good health habits is one way you can prevent illness and promote optimal quality of life.

FITNESS TECHNOLOGY: Sleep Tracking

Considerable evidence indicates that insufficient sleep can lead to health problems. Teens need about nine hours of sleep each night, but 9 out of 10 teens report getting less than that, and 10 percent get less than six hours. But the number of sleep hours is not the only issue; your sleep patterns are also important. People who wake up numerous times, or toss and turn frequently during the night, are not getting restful sleep.

For years, scientists have used sophisticated machines to detect sleep apnea and other serious sleep disturbances. Now, accelerometers (such as those worn to count steps) called sleep trackers can be used to determine movement patterns during the night. Experts caution against overgeneralizing the results from a sleep tracker because it is possible that a person sleeps well most of the time but still has periodic restless nights. They also point out that sleep trackers do not sense different levels of sleep (light versus deep sleep). While sleep-tracking devices cannot directly determine the quality of sleep that a person gets, they can be used to screen for sleep problems in people who frequently feel tired or suspect that they have a problem.
For example, if you have an illness that could have been prevented by means of proper health habits, you’ll feel bad and will have at least a temporary reduction in your quality of living. Adopting good personal health habits is important throughout your life, and it can help you look and feel your best.

**Avoid Destructive Habits**

Just as adopting healthy habits contributes to good health, practicing destructive habits detracts from your fitness, health, and wellness. Examples include, among many others, smoking and other tobacco use, legal and illegal drug abuse, and alcohol abuse. These destructive habits can impair your fitness, detract from your performance of physical activities, and result in various diseases, lowered feelings of well-being, and reduced quality of life.

**FIT FACT**

Texting while driving is a major source of automobile accidents. In fact, doing so makes you 23 times more likely to crash. More generally, driver distraction is the cause of one out of every five fatal accidents in the United States (killing more than 3,000 people each year).

**Adopt Good Safety Practices**

Reports of injuries and deaths caused by motor vehicle accidents fill the news each day. Other common causes of death and injury include falls, poisonings, drownings, fires, bicycle accidents, and accidents in and around the home. Many of these injuries and deaths could have been prevented if simple safety rules had been followed. Therefore, one national health goal in the United States is to reduce the number of deaths and injuries resulting from accidents. For your part, you can make a number of healthy lifestyle choices to reduce your risk of accidents, including wearing a seat belt, wearing a helmet when riding a bike or doing in-line skating, making sure that poisons are properly labeled, installing and maintaining smoke detectors, practicing water safety, and keeping your home in good repair. And remember—being physically fit can also help you prevent accidents.

**Learn Cardiopulmonary Resuscitation (CPR)**

Cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR) is a first aid procedure that is performed when the heart or breathing has stopped, and it saves many lives each year. The procedure uses chest compressions to keep blood flowing, preventing brain damage and death until expert medical help arrives. CPR training is strongly recommended, and many schools and several national organizations offer CPR classes and certification. According to the National Institutes of Health, “Even if you haven’t had training you can do ‘hands-only’ CPR for a teen or an adult whose heart has stopped.” Hands-only CPR is not recommended for use with children.

The American Heart Association recommends “two steps to staying alive”: First, call 911 or direct someone else to call 911. Second, start chest compressions—push hard and fast at the center of the chest. The technique for chest compression is shown in figure 18.2. When two people are available, both mouth-to-mouth breathing and chest compression can be used.

CPR techniques and procedures are often revised based on new research and findings. For this reason, a regular check of the National Institutes of Health website for the latest information is recommended.
Learn the Heimlich Maneuver (Abdominal Thrusts)

The Heimlich maneuver (also called abdominal thrusts) is performed when an object blocks a person’s windpipe (air pathway). As shown in Figure 18.3, the person administering the maneuver stands behind the person who is choking with his or her arms around the person’s waist. The fist of one hand is placed just above the choking person’s navel, with the thumb side of the fist against the body. The other hand is held over the fist. Pulling upward and inward causes pressure to force the object from the windpipe. As with all first aid procedures, training in the Heimlich maneuver is highly recommended.

Learn Other First Aid Procedures

Even people who make healthy lifestyle choices and adopt good safety practices can have accidents. Because accidents can happen to anyone, all people should maintain a first aid kit and know how to administer first aid. In addition to learning how to perform CPR and the Heimlich maneuver, you should also learn how to apply pressure to prevent bleeding, how to clean and treat cuts and open wounds, how to use the RICE formula (rest, ice, compression, and elevation) to treat sprains and strains, and how to use other accepted first aid techniques.

FIT FACT

Among adults, the most common reasons for not seeing a doctor include excuses such as, “I’m too busy,” “It’s only a minor problem that will go away on its own,” “I can’t afford it,” and “I don’t like to go to doctors.” In reality, the best evidence suggests that putting off doctor visits for prevention and treatment can result in more time lost from work and more cost over the long run.

Seek and Follow Appropriate Medical Advice

Even if you make healthy lifestyle choices, you may occasionally become ill. In those cases, seek and follow appropriate medical advice. In fact, for best results, get regular medical and dental checkups to help you prevent problems before they even start. Consult your physician and dentist to determine how often you should be seen. Some people avoid seeking medical help, but as noted in the Fit Fact, this practice can be dangerous because early detection of health problems is often important to an ultimate cure.
Over the past 50 years, new methods of CPR have been developed, resulting in thousands of saved lives. Mouth-to-mouth resuscitation was first used in France in the 1700s, and medical doctors used chest compression to revive people in the late 1800s.

Later, “artificial respiration” was modified to use a back-pressure arm-lift method, which in turn was replaced by chest compression and mouth-to-mouth breathing in the 1960s. Later, one-person CPR alternated chest compression with mouth-to-mouth breathing. Doctors started using these procedures before they were recommended to the general public.

In recent years, CPR has changed considerably. As shown in figure 18.2, the hands-only method (chest compression) is now used for helping adults and teens in distress. This procedure is easier to do, and experts feel that it will be used more often as a result.

**Student Activity**

Do a search to determine which local organizations offer CPR classes. If possible, take a class and get certified.
example, people who live in polluted cities are at greater risk than those who live in the countryside, where the air is often cleaner. Similarly, people who work in a coal mine or an area in which smoking is allowed have a higher risk of illness than those who work in less polluted areas. Your work environment is sometimes referred to as your vocational environment, and it can have serious consequences for your health. If your job requires you to sit all day and your work environment doesn’t allow you to get up and move around frequently, you will have higher health risks.

You may not be able to change some physical environment factors, such as the place where you live. You can, however, take action to improve your environment. For example, you can avoid or minimize exposure to smoke-filled places, excessive exposure to the sun, and exposure to pollutants, such as weed killers and insecticides. To avoid excessive air pollution, exercise away from heavily traveled streets. You can also take certain steps to improve the physical environment—for example, recycling household materials and conserving water and electricity. You can also help people in your community who are making efforts to improve what is called the built environment—the physical characteristics of our neighborhoods. Improvements in the built environment—such as adding sidewalks and bike paths and improving street lighting and street crossings—have been shown to increase healthy physical activity such as walking and biking in neighborhoods.

“Earth provides enough to satisfy every [person’s] need, but not every [person’s] greed.” —Mahatma Gandhi, human rights leader

Social Environment

Your social environment refers to the settings in which your social interactions take place. Social interactions refer to your contacts, conversations, and activities with friends, teachers, work colleagues, and others in leisure-time situations. Researchers have shown that teens whose friends make unhealthy lifestyle choices are likely to try risky behavior such as abusing tobacco, drugs, or alcohol. In contrast, teens whose friends and family members make healthy lifestyle choices are more likely to practice healthy behaviors such as being physically active and eating well. With these two scenarios in mind, choosing supportive friends is important to your health and wellness.

Even if you make good choices, you, like most people, will probably be exposed to unhealthy social environments at some point in your life. If this does happen to you, consider using some of the self-management skills described in this book to help you make good choices in the heat of the moment. For example, learn to think critically, learn relapse prevention strategies, and practice ways to say no so that you can stick with your healthy behaviors. You do not need to be embarrassed or apologize for practicing healthy behaviors.

Lesson Review

1. What are several lifestyle choices—other than priority lifestyle choices—that contribute to fitness, health, and wellness? How do they affect fitness, health, and wellness?
2. What factors associated with the physical environment affect fitness, health, and wellness?
3. What factors associated with the social environment affect fitness, health, and wellness?