

Effects of diet and exercise on the human body



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How to Maintain a Healthy Body

How do we maintain a healthy body? To look at this we need to first decide what health means. The World Health Organisation (WHO) has defined health as “ a state of complete physical, mental and social well-being, and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity.”¹ If this is the case then having a healthy diet may not mean that we have a healthy body. We also need to take into account that how we look at health has changed dramatically over the years. For example in the 17th Century the major factor of health was things like the bubonic plague due to fleas on rats. Today we have to worry about things like obesity and swine flu. I am going to look at numerous factors which contribute to a healthy body. I am going to look at diet, exercise and social factors, all of which I believe can contribute to maintaining a healthy body.

Firstly I am going to look at the effects diet has on our body. For humans to survive we need food, however, we need certain types of food and we need to eat a balanced diet to have a healthy body. The foods we should be consuming to have a healthy balanced diet are; proteins, fats and oils, carbohydrates, minerals, vitamins, fibre and water. We need each of these food groups for a certain reason. For example we need protein to help our body repair itself, we need carbohydrates as these are broken down into simple sugars like glucose which is the primary source of energy for the brain, and we need iron to form red blood cells which carry oxygen round the body. If we eat less or more of these than we require this may cause problems for our body making us unhealthy. It is typically known that a diet high in fruit and vegetables is good for our body, however it is not widely

known that if we have a diet lacking in these that it can be very damaging to our body. The WHO estimates that 2.7 million deaths are attributed to a diet low in fruit and vegetables every year². If we have an unhealthy diet this can cause a number of chronic diseases including: high blood pressure, diabetes, obesity and cancer². Each of these diseases can affect a person's quality of life and also can reduce a person's life expectancy. If we have an unhealthy diet this can cause many problems both for now and in the future, for example, if we eat too much sugar this can give us tooth decay which means we have an unhealthy mouth, and if we have too much salt then over time this can build up and cause us to have high blood pressure which can be potentially fatal. The WHO classes anyone that is 30% or more overweight to be obese. If we are obese then this can greatly lower our life expectancy and also our quality of life. If someone is overweight they do not have a healthy body and are likely also to not have a healthy mind.

I now want to look at how exercise can help us to maintain a healthy body. There are many benefits of exercise both for our bodies and our mental health. The benefits of exercise on our bodies include; preventing heart disease, can reduce high blood pressure and can prevent diabetes. The benefits of exercise for our mental health include; helping to relieve stress, helping to reduce the symptoms of depression and helping to relieve sleeping problems. If someone is stressed or has had a bad day which has affected their mood then going out for a walk can be very beneficial to them. It has been proven that any aerobic exercise releases a mood altering substance called endorphins. Endorphins have been proven to improve our mood and also reduce levels of stress³.

Now I am going to look at how social factors can affect whether or not we have a healthy body. Social factors include; our social status, area we live, and outside influences. Social factors can play a large role in how we maintain our bodies. In today's society it can be quite expensive to live healthy, the price of fresh and healthy foods are often more expensive than cheap processed foods. If someone doesn't have a lot of money and doesn't earn a lot then they are more likely to go for the cheaper version which is what they can afford. This then affects their health as processed foods tend to have more of the things that are bad for us in them. Also if someone is classed as poor they are more likely to live in an area where there is more pollution and less focus on health. This may have a huge impact on whether they have a healthy body or not.

In conclusion having a healthy body can not be accomplished by merely eating healthy. There are many factors to consider when we are trying to maintain a healthy body. If we want to be healthy then we must take into account what health means; “ a state of complete physical, mental and social well-being, and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity. 1” Therefore we must have a healthy diet, exercise and make sure that we take care of our mental health. In today's society it is harder than ever to maintain a healthy body with all the outside influences like drugs and alcohol. However if we want to be healthy then we must at least try to lead a healthy lifestyle and take care of our bodies and minds as we only have one.

References

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