

BE WELL

Are you Making Some of These Common Health Blunders?

By Debbie DeAngelo
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If you're health conscious at all, then you probably take some steps on a daily basis to look and feel your finest. Despite our best, or semi-best, efforts, we can still inadvertently be taking missteps that jeopardize our health and wellbeing. Pursuing your highest level of wellness is simple but not always easy.

Complicating the dedication and discipline needed to adhere to a healthy lifestyle is the confusing and often conflicting information with which we're constantly bombarded. It's tough to tease out the truth and discard the rest. In an age when access to information has never been easier, people report being more perplexed about medical matters.

Standard Snafus

Like me, you've probably listened to people recount their medical woes and experiences and wondered how they survived the ordeal. Or at least how they emerged relatively unscathed. As a nurse, I always try to gently educate them on how to handle that situation in a safer, more responsible way next time. Sometimes people don't realize they have options and at other times they simply make an unwise decision. In any case, there are some common mistakes from which we can all learn.

Driving yourself to the ER. We've all heard the story about someone with chest pain, difficulty breathing, or some other potentially deadly symptom while driving themselves or being driven to the emergency room. Let's think this one through. What would you or your loved one do should your heart stop en route? I understand that no one really wants to be transported to the ER in an ambulance. However, the first responders are trained in evaluating and treating you as well as notifying the ER staff of your status, so they can prepare for your arrival. No doubt about it ...this saves lives. If it turns out to be a false alarm, no problem. You get to live.

Distracted eating. If you've ever watched a movie while munching away on popcorn, only to reach into the bag and realize you ate it all without even knowing it, then you understand the hazards of distracted eating. Whether reading, watching television, or slaving away at our desks while eating, this sucks the joy and awareness out of what we're consuming. A large part of feeling satisfied by our meal is actually being mindful of the sight, taste and aroma of it. Take your time, chew every bite thoroughly, and pay attention to the act of eating.

Sleeping with your smart phone. Our indispensable cell phone can be in the bedroom without occupying space in the bed. The blue light can interfere with melatonin production and circadian rhythms, which in turn disrupts the sleep cycle. Also, the jury is still out on whether the non-ionizing radiation emitted poses a health threat. Even if using the alarm function, keep the phone at least six feet away. When listening to music as you drift off, use a Bluetooth speaker or earbuds.

Lacking health courtesy. When it comes to staying well and preventing the spread of infection, health courtesy is a must. Whether a cold, the flu, a stomach bug, or Covid, no one wants to be sick. Even if it's "just a cold," I assure you that the people around you are cursing the fact that you haven't stayed home. Consistently implementing common sense measures can prevent the transmission of most common infections. These include handwashing frequently with soap and water, coughing and sneezing into your sleeve or tissue, disinfecting communal surfaces at home and work routinely, refraining from touching your face, wearing a face mask when appropriate, and staying away from people and public places while sick.

Not challenging yourself. Complacency sets the stage for mental stagnation. It's important to challenge ourselves intellectually. Learning new activities and gaining knowledge in areas that are novel to us, is what keeps our brain cells fit and firing on all cylinders. Whenever things can be performed by rote, then it's become a habit and doesn't require much thought. Challenging our brain keeps it strong and high functioning. Consider taking up a new hobby, playing a musical instrument, or enrolling in dance lessons. This becomes especially important during the retirement stage.

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