



## Living Your Best Life

### Your health is important.

Because the Youens and Duchicela Clinic believes this, the following is brought to you in an effort to provide wellness information that you can use to help manage and maintain your health.

This week, the focus is on preventative care, with tips from Dr. Robert Youens, a member of the American Academy of Family Physicians.

Most individuals have two general health goals: Live as long as possible with an excellent quality of life and have the end of life be as comfortable and as short as possible. But how can individuals achieve this?

Quality health care for individuals includes two fundamental elements: appropriate treatment for current illness, and appropriate preventive care to lessen future health decline.

### To improve length and quality of life, individuals must be aware of modifiable risk factors.

These factors—which are easy to list but hard to follow for most people—include

**ENGAGING IN REGULAR EXERCISE** (which includes 30 min. of moderate intensity physical activity daily)

**AVOIDING EXCESS WEIGHT GAIN**

**QUITTING SMOKING**

**DRINKING ALCOHOL ONLY IN MODERATE AMOUNTS** (which includes 1 drink\* per day for women, 2 drinks\* per day for men) \*1 drink = 1 beer or 5 oz. wine or 1.5 oz. hard liquor



According to a 2004 article published in the Journal of the American Medical Association, over one-third of the deaths in the United States are attributable to not following these recommendations.

In addition to improving risk factors, individuals should follow periodic screening test guidelines recommended by the United States Preventive Services Task Force. These tests are known to statistically improve life expectancy and include blood pressure and cholesterol checks, PAP smears, mammograms, and colon cancer screenings (which can include an easy, take home stool test obtained from a doctor rather than a colonoscopy). Ask your physician, however, for a more detailed adult preventative care timeline or if you have symptoms that may require an additional test.

Of note is that the current guidelines do not include screening for prostate cancer or carotid artery disease, as there is no evidence that doing so increases life expectancy. Some evidence actually suggests the evaluation of false positive results may cause more harm than good.

The most difficult aspects of the recommended screening tests are to be motivated enough to go to the doctor to get them done and to be smart enough not to waste time and money on screening tests offered that have no proven value and in some cases are potentially dangerous.

Not addressing modifiable risk factors and not following recommended preventive health screens can lead to a shortened life with many years of progressive disability prior to the end.

Dr. Youens reminds readers, "We have no control over whom our parents were and the good or bad genes they may have given us that will affect our lives, but we do control our behavior. Proper health behavior can extend and improve the quality of your life."

**While there is no "secret" to help one lose weight, quit smoking, or alter another risk factor, hard work, determination and will power can help one accomplish these goals.**

*The information provided here is not to be used as a substitute for medical attention. Remember that, should you have specific medical questions or desire more information, contact your doctor.*