

Episode 42 –

Before You Take That Pill...Give Healthy Habits a Try

Why do I talk so much about healthy living, about healthy habits, and why do you hear so many of the same themes that run throughout my content, the material I put out, the podcast, the blog, the same reason I created the Fit Life Program even? It's because I've seen first hand what healthy living can do and more importantly and unfortunately more frequently, I've seen what happens when we neglect some of the basic things that can prevent deadly diseases, and even for those things that won't necessarily kill you, but make your quality of life difficult, a lot of it is preventable or treatable without medication by simply improving your habits. Hey, I'm Coach T. This is The TD Fitness Podcast episode number 42.

Welcome to The TD Fitness Podcast, giving you ways to live a healthy lifestyle without giving up the things that make life worth living and now your host, certified health coach and personal trainer, Coach T.

I have friends who appear to be healthy. They don't look like they carry excess weight. They have a fairly good diet, they exercise fairly often frequently, but these same friends are talking about taking pills for weight loss or taking anxiety medication, for example. Before I get too far in this, let me explicitly state that medication can and does work in a number of instances. That's why doctors prescribed medication, but what I want to relay here is that there may be other things that you can do first before medicating. We're often triggered to medicate because that seems like an easier solution. Part of the problem is this, I feel like the system, whether you're talking to healthcare system, the advertising campaigns and system, even public opinion, we're all caged to think and promote that waiting to treat is a better option than working to prevent, working to prevent, insert whatever poor health condition you want right there, but the reality is that an ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure even as early as the 19th century.

British statesman, Edward Stanley said that those who think they have not time for bodily exercise will sooner or later have to find time for illness. Over 100 years ago, the same concept run true. Right? What I offer here in this episode is that healthy habits have preventative properties when it comes to your risk for disease and those same healthy habits can be effective treatment methods as well. What if we lived healthier to address some of these conditions?

My goal for you in this episode is that you seek first to address your symptoms by assessing and changing your lifestyle habits for the better, and I'm going to take a slightly different approach because as I started out, I said that a lot of the themes in my episodes are recurring because I feel like there are so many things that are at the bedrock at the foundation of healthy living and a healthy lifestyle, but instead of talking about why healthy living is good for you, I want to look at individual conditions and talk about how these can be managed or prevented through avenues that don't include medication and that do include healthy eating, exercise and a positive mindset.

I want to start with anxiety and depression. Let me reiterate that some of these conditions and disorders have other factors that play a very large part in your risk for having them. Things like family history, for example, past and current mental trauma, stressful lifestyles, a host of other things. Again, the point here is simply to show how healthy habits can help in ways that you may not have thought of. When it

comes to anxiety disorders, they are actually the most common mental illness in the United States affecting just under 20% of the population every year. People with an anxiety disorder are three to five times more likely to go to the doctor and again, they can develop from a complex set of risk factors including genetics, personality, life events, even your brain chemistry. What's interesting is the link between anxiety and depression because nearly half of those diagnosed with depression are also diagnosed with an anxiety disorder.

Now, what I want to relay is that physical activity can have a positive effect here. Physical activity boosts your energy level. It has a way of helping you to manage stress and release tension. It can promote optimism through those feel good endorphins that are released when you exercise. Exercise has been shown to actually counter anxiety and depression. What I think is particularly interesting here though is that exercise can provide a way to share an activity with family and friends. Nutrition can do the same thing or a good meal with family and friends can do the same thing, and so many times, some of the symptoms that come along with anxiety and depression are due to feelings of isolation, feelings of loneliness. Exercise and eating together as a family, those can all be ways to share an activities together and counter some of those negative effects. Okay?

The next one I want to hit and I'm going to hit a few of these just briefly because there are a lot I want to touch on. Arthritis, arthritis affects more than one in four people in the United States, the leading cause of work disability and one of the most chronic, most common chronic conditions in the United States, but physical activity again can reduce pain. It can improve function, improve your mood as we already said, and improve a quality of life for those of us with arthritis. Physical activity is also important for the management of other chronic conditions that are common among adults with arthritis, things like diabetes, things like heart disease and obesity. They can all improve with a little bit of exercise. Better health, better well-being.

Cancer. Did you know that you can actually reduce your risk of getting cancer by making healthy choices like keeping a healthy weight, avoiding smoking and tobacco and limiting the amount of alcohol you drink and protecting your skin because skin cancer is one of the leading forms of cancer. High cholesterol. Your life choices absolutely influence your risk for high cholesterol. For a long time, it was thought that eating foods that were high in cholesterol actually led to high levels of cholesterol in the body, but now we know that it's eating diets that are high in saturated fats and trans fats that actually contribute more to high cholesterol and those related conditions just like heart disease. Physical activity can help you keep the weight off, which can lead to lower levels of cholesterol. Obesity is linked to high triglyceride levels, higher levels of that bad cholesterol and lower levels of the good cholesterol.

Obesity can also lead to heart disease and high blood pressure, diabetes. Speaking of diabetes, yes, we'll talk about that too. Diabetes, which is essentially a disease that affects how your body metabolizes food or how your body turns food into energy. Okay? Let me talk about pre-diabetes. If you're not yet at the diabetic threshold but you have high levels of blood sugar or even those with type two diabetes, your risk increases for pre-diabetes and type two diabetes if you're overweight or if you exercise less than three times a week. Again, we hear exercise and diet. A common theme in all of these conditions. Heart disease. In the United States, the most common type of heart disease is coronary artery disease, which can lead to heart attack. It's a pre-cursor to a heart attack. If you want to reduce your risk of coronary artery disease, you can do it through lifestyle changes before attempting medication.

You're at a higher risk if you have an unhealthy diet. Diets, again, high in saturated fats, trans fats and cholesterol have been linked to heart disease in related conditions, also too much salt, too much sodium

in the diet can raise your blood pressure levels. Right? Physical inactivity. Not getting enough physical activity and exercise can lead to heart disease. It also increases the chance of those other things that go along with it. Obesity, high blood pressure, high cholesterol, diabetes. Obesity basically when you're carrying excess body fat, right? Obesity is linked to those higher levels of bad cholesterol and triglyceride levels as well. You see how all of these things are intertwined? None of them really comes in singleton.

In addition to heart disease, obesity can also lead to high blood pressure and diabetes. In episode number 36, I talked about alcohol consumption. The title of that was Alcohol Consumption, The Good, The Bad and The Bubbly. Drinking too much alcohol can raise blood pressure levels and your risk for heart disease as well and also it increases, guess what? The levels of triglycerides, which is a form of cholesterol and tobacco use. Tobacco use increases the risk for heart disease and heart attack. Cigarettes smoking, nothing good can come from that. Right? Again, when we turn a physical activity, which helps to improve your circulation, that reduces the risk of heart disease. It helps you keep your weight under control. It helps in the battle to quit smoking. There have been studies that show that and it improves your cholesterol. Again, physical activity comes in and can actually help with some of those symptoms or some of those pre-cursors and things that come along with heart disease. Hypertension, high blood pressure, right? The leading causes, meaning cause for death for Americans. It's often called the silent killer because it doesn't really have warning signs or symptoms.

You may not know that you have high blood pressure unless you know how to take your blood pressure or you go to the doctor and they take your blood pressure, but high blood pressure increases the risk for heart disease and strokes. If you think back to episode number 19 where I did the popular diets of 2018, the DASH diet came in number one. It's been number one for years. DASH is the dietary approach to stop hypertension. It's essentially a way to eat smarter. It provides just your basic healthy eating diet, and it's not rocket science, it's pretty straight forward, but the dash diet is so effective because it was designed to counter high blood pressure, hypertension. Again, the dietary approach to stop hypertension, the DASH diet. Check that out, episode number 19. I'll link to in the show notes. Metabolic syndrome. Metabolic syndrome is not a disease in itself, instead it is a group of diseases or a group of risk factors, I should say that includes high blood pressure, high blood sugar, high cholesterol, abdominal fat or carrying excess weight around the mid-section.

Any one of these things is not good. When they're combined, man, you have a recipe for a disaster. The good news is that metabolic syndrome can be controlled and guess how? Largely through changes to your lifestyle. Ways to treat it, you make lifestyle changes, things like exercise, eating a healthy diet, losing weight, quitting smoking, all of these things are recurring and they come up in countering so many of these diseases and disorders. Overweight and obesity is another one. We've talked about it already in conjunction with heart disease. More than a third of the United States' adults are obese. My favorite quote from the CDC website, the Centers for Disease Control, it says, "The key to achieving and maintaining a healthy weight isn't short term dietary changes. It's about a lifestyle that includes healthy eating and regular physical activity."

That sounds like something that I would have said in a podcast or on the website, right? That's exactly what we're talking about. It's not just short term dietary changes. It's not just a little bit of exercise. It's not taking a pill. It's about a lifestyle that includes healthy eating and regular physical activity. Then, another one I added to the list of these chronic conditions, and that is chronic pain, stiffness, tightness.

I'll even throw in pulling muscles because so many of us walk around in a state of pain, but we don't even realize it because overtime, it's just gotten a little bit worse, a little bit worse overtime,

incrementally and we don't notice those slight changes, but if you were to compare how you feel today to how you felt maybe 10 or 15 years ago when you're a little bit younger when your muscles didn't need as much care and feeding and recovery time, then I think you'd notice a pretty big difference, but things like stretching, things like taking part in activities, getting enough rest, making sure you're properly hydrated, those are all things that contribute to helping with that pain, that stiffness, the tightness and pulling muscles.

Physical activity consists of a mental aspect and a physical aspect. It helps to lay or prevent chronic diseases and illnesses. It can boost your mental wellness, and regular activity can relieve tension. It can release that tension and help with the anxiety and depression, even anger can help you blow off some steam and that feel good sensation that I mentioned, the endorphins are released into your blood stream. It provides a good feeling. I'm the type of person that when I go to exercise, I feel so much better afterward and that is commonly true among most people because exercise does have positive effects, immediately effects. It also improves your physical wellness though reducing some of those risk factors that we've already talked about. If you're the type of person that sits for most of the day, then you increase your risk of disease but becoming more active can help you lower that risk. As a whole, physical activity, good nutrition, they served to enhance or prolong your optimal health.

Without physical activity, the body slows and it starts to break down. You lose strength. You lose stamina. You don't function as well. One of the other things that I think is important to mention about physical activity and this relates to one of the episodes I did early on, episode number 17, I believe it was. That was the one for parents, countering childhood obesity, but having good exercise habits particularly if you're the head of the household or if you're a parent or if you're in a position to influence other people, performing physical activity and eating well, that established good heart healthy habits in your children and that can help counter those conditions of childhood obesity and childhood diabetes, those things that absolutely should not be taken place, but because of the situation we're in today, they are in alarming rate. Exercise is good not only for you, but it's also good for your family for them to see that you take the time to exercise, that you think it's important enough to put into your schedule.

Now, before I conclude this episode, what I'd like to do is just go through some of the habits that I have been practicing and I try to practice on a pre-regular basis and I've done this a couple of times before, but I want to do it kind of in this vein of disease prevention. My habits that ... I used this to Fit Life Program too, right? Some of the habits that I track from time to time are my water consumption, trying to get 100 ounces of water a day. Again, water is going to serve to hydrate you, number one, but it's also so good for your movement and muscles because it keeps the potty lubricated for lack of a better term. That's a simplistic way to think about it, but water is essential to so many bodily functions that we have to make sure that we get enough of it.

The next thing is sleep. Optimally, I want to get seven and a half hours of sleep per night, but minimally, I shoot for six hours of sleep per night. I will be honest and tell you that I'm not even close to that over the past few weeks, so that is something that I need to work on, but that rest and recovery period is important for bodily function as well. These are things that are important to help prevent disease. When it comes diet, I'm still doing the fasting 14 hours a day on five days a week, and that seems to be working well because as I mentioned in the previous episode, it helps me to be more cognizant of what and when I eat. I also try to make sure I get in five servings of fruits or vegetables every day, okay? Again, it goes back to the healthy diet and the disease prevention. Exercise four days a week.

I am pretty good with that one. Sometimes it's hard with busy schedules, but I'm listening to so many of the things that we've gone through already in this episode, you know that exercise is important in countering just about every single one of those things that we mentioned. Stretching to counter the constant stiffness, the tightness. Making sure that you have adequate and proper range of motion because mobility has to proceed stability. That's a quote from Gray Cook in his Movement book, meaning you need to be able to move throughout the required ranges of motion before you start to exercise in a way that's going to challenge you significantly. You want to make sure that you're not going to do more harm than good because you have a limited range of motion.

Then finally, a one that always gets me and that's sweets. I try to limit that to one, maybe two servings a day. Things like sugary drinks like sodas or sugary desserts like cake or something like that. I try to limit those things because I know that number one, that typically replaces something that is healthier for me and my diet and number two, it's so easy to over indulge in those types of things. Those are some of the habits that I feel are important in my life. Now, they may be different for you and you may have different goals for accomplishing each one. Maybe you don't shoot for 100 ounces of water, for example. That's a lot of water particularly if you're a smaller female, for example. Maybe you don't try to get seven and a half hours of sleep per night. That can be a lot for some people depending on your schedule. Maybe exercising four days a week, you're just not quite there yet and that's fine too, but wherever you are, those always a way to improve on that.

Hopefully what you've taken away from all of these is yet another example of how healthy habits, healthy living, that can and should be your first attempt at alleviating pain and alleviating disease, but it starts again with healthy habits, doing those things consistently. All right? Let's not always be triggered to take medicine. Again, I differ to your physician, your doctor on your specific situation, but the point is that there are many benefits to be gained when it comes to practicing healthy habits.

Before I sign off, I want to remind you that the show notes are on the website at tdfitness.net/042. I want you to listen, watch, read, find all of the references there, you can because it's all there on the show notes page for episode number 42. Now, a quick word about the Fit Life Program, a tool that I think can help you implement so many of these healthy habits that we've talked about. Thanks for tuning in. Have a blessed one. Coach T out.

Why did I create the Fit Life Program? I wanted to pride something that wasn't just for weight loss, not just for feeling better, not even just for better health. I wanted a more complete solution and I also wanted to make it sustainable. It's not just about starting something or sticking with it for a month or two. Healthy living, which includes fitness, nutrition and a healthy mindset is about practicing healthy habits consistently, not all the time because no one is perfect, but practicing those healthy habits more than you are right now. That's how change begins, and that's how healthy living continues. Find out more at fitlifeprogram.com or tdfitness.net/fitlife.