

Living on WELL Street Blog: “Ignorance is Risk – Know Your Numbers”

By Michael White, Worksite Wellness Technical Assistant, We Choose Health

“If we are creating ourselves all the time, then it is never too late to begin creating the bodies we want instead of the ones we mistakenly assume we are stuck with.” – Deepak Chopra

What gets measured gets improved! Knowing critical health measurements is the first step in assessing our health status. Body Mass Index (or BMI - a weight to height ratio), Waist Circumference, Blood Pressure, Total Cholesterol, LDL (“L”ousy) Cholesterol, HDL (“H” = healthy) Cholesterol, Triglycerides and Fasting Glucose (blood sugar) are the numbers to know. Once known, appropriate actions can be taken to maintain and/or improve them. Regularly measuring these critical health numbers puts us in charge of our health and encourages a proactive approach to managing it. We minimize the likelihood of a medical surprise and maximize our vitality and longevity.

A recent application for life insurance made me appreciate the importance of knowing my numbers. The policy required that I undergo a physical examination. The blood work results showed that I had significantly improved my numbers over the past three years. Not only was it encouraging from a health perspective, but it also reduced the cost of the policy.

A similar physical exam, three years prior, was my wakeup call. My Total Cholesterol, HDL, LDL, Triglycerides and Fasting Glucose numbers were all outside their desired ranges. My doctor said that we should “keep an eye on things”. At the time, I had a very disciplined workout routine, but a sedentary job that allowed me to sit for hours on end. My diet mantra was “everything in moderation”, with little attention paid to the health value of what I was consuming.

Rather than waiting to see what surprises my doctor might reveal in future exams, I decided to “keep an eye on things”. I took control, made changes and tracked my progress. I learned what the “numbers” meant, how they affected my health and how I could improve them. I changed my eating habits and literally took “steps” to reduce long periods of sitting. Three years later, my Total Cholesterol is 14% lower, Triglycerides are 57% lower (from an all-time high five years ago) and Fasting Glucose is 41% lower.

While I am aging, one day at a time, I am happy to report that my body is not! Knowing my numbers motivates me to take action and practice healthy lifestyle behaviors that slow the aging process. Knowledge is power, especially when it comes to understanding what is best for our health and well-being. But, “knowledge without action is futile.” Knowing our numbers is not enough. Acting on our numbers affects the rest of our lives.

A worksite activity to encourage people to discover the benefits of knowing their numbers is available on the We Choose Health 365 website at: <http://wechoosehealth365.com/asp/public/Page.aspx?pid=15548>.

Live WELL!

Michael