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- *12 Secrets to Staying Young*

Keep your company informed with important health information

This e-newsletter is designed to benefit you and your employees, so please feel free to forward it to family, friends and co-workers!

As always, we hope you enjoy this edition and would like to hear from you with any questions, concerns, or suggestions. Send us an email at news@alliantservices.com.

Alliant's Health e-Newsletter is published monthly for our clients and their employees.

Your comments, story ideas, and suggestions are welcome. Please email them to:

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12 Secrets to Staying Young

The mythical fountain of youth discovered? No, even better! We've found proven ways to live a longer, fuller life with help from antiaging guru Henry S. Lodge, M.D., author of "Younger Next Year for Women" (Workman Publishing). Complete this checklist to see if a few new habits could add years — and fun — to your life.

1. How many hours per week do you exercise?

Ideal: At least 2.5

Why it matters: If you log two-plus hours of physical activity a week, you're up to 30 percent less likely to die in the next 20 years than if you do less or none at all. Exercise — even if it's frolicking in the surf or dancing to your favorite tunes — helps keep weight and blood pressure in check, lowering your risk for disease.

2. What is your body-mass index?

Ideal: Under 25

Why it matters: Active women whose BMI (a measure of body fat) falls between 18.5 and 22.9 may be 2.5 times more likely to age free of disease than overweight, sedentary women. Excess body fat secretes proteins and acids that can up your risk for cancer and more. A BMI below 23 is best, but less than 25 is good. Keep on movin'!

3. What is your waist circumference?

Ideal: Less than 35 inches

Why it matters: Having a middle less than 37.7 inches around cut women's mortality risk by 23 percent compared with larger waistlines. Less than 35 inches is optimal, so skip trans fats — they can boost belly bulge — and go for avocados and yogurt, which may shrink bloat and tummy fat.

4. What is your total cholesterol level?

Ideal: Less than 200 mg/dl

Why it matters: 240 mg/dl and your risk is twice that of someone with levels below 200. And watch your LDL ("bad") cholesterol: Above 160 is high and has been linked to increased rates of stroke and heart disease.



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5. How much fiber do you eat per day?

Ideal: 25 g

Why it matters: For every 10 grams of fiber you add to your diet, you cut your risk for coronary death by 17 percent, according to a report in *The American Journal of Clinical Nutrition*. Good sources: legumes (cup of lentils packs 7.8 g) and produce (1 cup of raspberries has 8 g).

6. How many hours of sleep do you get per night?

Ideal: 7 to 8

Why it matters: Snooze fewer than six hours a night and you may be 12 percent more likely to die earlier than if you logged six to eight. Getting less than seven hours disrupts hunger-regulating hormones, causing weight gain and related concerns.

7. What is your blood pressure?

Ideal: Under 120/80 mm/HG

Why it matters: Anything between 120/80 and 139/89 indicates prehypertension, which can often be reversed by adopting stress- and weight-management habits. A number above 140/90 signifies full-fledged hypertension (a heart stressor), and you should talk to a doc about regular monitoring.

8. Do you have a pet?

Ideal: Yes

Why it matters: Cat owners have a 40 percent lower risk of dying from a heart attack than nonowners. Both felines and canines can reduce loneliness and depression, emotions linked to early mortality. Not ready to adopt your own fur ball? Pet-sit for a pal or walk dogs for an animal shelter.

9. Do you take antioxidant supplements?

Ideal: No

Why it matters: Popping beta-carotene and vitamins A and E daily was associated with an up to 16 percent greater mortality risk in a review of 67 studies. Nutrient megadoses may interfere with the body's natural defense mechanisms, and supplements aren't subject to rigorous toxicology studies, as pharmaceuticals are. Aim to get your nutrients from an antioxidant-rich diet.

10. Do you wear a seat belt?

Ideal: Yes

Why it matters: When drivers and front-seat passengers click in, their risk for fatal injury drops by 45 percent, the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration reports. Nearly 7,000 car-accident fatalities might have been prevented in 2008 if the victims had been wearing seat belts. Buckle up!

11. How many alcoholic drinks do you have per day on average?

Ideal: About 1

Why it matters: Happy hour, indeed: Moderate alcohol intake has been shown to lower heart disease risk by reducing plaque buildup in arteries. But too much imbibing has been linked to breast cancer. Play it safe and stick to one a day (a 5-ounce glass of wine, a 12-ounce beer or 1.5 ounces of liquor).

12. Do you smoke?

Ideal: No

Why it matters: Cigarettes are the number-one preventable cause of mortality in the United States, responsible for one fifth of deaths annually. Smoking can lead to cancer, diabetes and lung disease — and did you know it also adds years to your looks?

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