

OPTIMAL HEALTH UNIVERSITY™

Presented by Dr. Troy H. Peters

How to Develop a Wellness Attitude

Many individuals define wellness as being physically fit, or as the absence of disease. These notions, however, do not capture the full meaning of wellness.

Dr. Peters teaches patients that wellness begins with a state of mind, often referred to by chiropractors as “health-esteem” or a “wellness attitude.” Adopting this outlook is essential for achieving peak physical, emotional and spiritual health.



How can you develop a wellness attitude that will catapult you to optimal health? A successful attitude adjustment is surprisingly simple when you follow the formula Dr. Peters has outlined below.

Take Charge of Your Health

A winning wellness attitude means accepting responsibility for your health. Adopting a wellness attitude begins with a commitment to take charge of your health, and acknowledge that you are ultimately responsible for your own well-being. Dr. Peters focuses on helping patients do just that.

Self-efficacy is a term psychologists and other health-care professionals use to describe an individual's confidence that she or he has the ability to make

changes. A wealth of research links optimal health with self-efficacy — as well as with a strong belief that an individual has control over his or her life.

Chiropractic's integrative approach, which is supported by research, involves “a process of enabling people to increase control over and improve their health.” (*Disabil Rehabil* 2008;30:942-54.)

Get Educated

The chiropractic paradigm centers on wellness education. Education boosts individuals' self-efficacy and feelings of control, which fuels and sustains positive lifestyle changes.

One study found that “more than 40 percent of chiropractic patient visits were initiated for the purposes of health enhancement and/or disease prevention.” (*J Can Chiropr Assoc* 2008;52:175-84.)

And, using data from the National Health Interview Survey of 31,248 adults, researchers discovered that chiropractic patients “were more likely to be physically active ... and less likely to be obese ... than non-chiropractic patients.” (*J Manipulative Physiol Ther* 2009;32:414-22.)

This is due, at least in part, to the various forms of education chiropractors offer patients. In an analysis of 496

doctors of chiropractic, 582 chiropractic students and 45 chiropractic school faculty members, a substantial proportion demonstrated “a positive attitude toward providing clinical preventive services, particularly those related to physical activity and diet.” (*J Manipulative Physiol Ther* 2004;27:287-98.)

For example, one study of 73 chiropractors working with seniors found that “it was common to recommend stretching exercises (68.2%), aerobic exercises (55.6%), dietary advice (45.3%), and a host of other prevention strategies, including vitamins and relaxation.

The patients investigated in this study reported making only half the annual number of visits to medical providers (4.76 visits per year) compared with the national average (9 visits per year) for individuals age 65 years and over.” (*J Manipulative Physiol Ther* 2000;23:10-9.)

Doctors of chiropractic also promote healthful lifestyle behaviors early, teaching children and adolescents how to prevent illness down the road. According to research, habits established when young avert “common public health problems such as musculoskeletal disorders, cardiovascular disease, and depression.” (*J Manipulative Physiol Ther* 2009;32:603-5.)

Dr. Peters is committed to providing patients with ongoing, research-based wellness education, such as the *Optimal Health University™* topics each week.

Focus on Prevention

Developing a wellness attitude requires making prevention a priority.

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Rather than thinking about health only when you are sick or in pain, a prevention-oriented outlook wards off problems before they occur.

Just as you maintain visits to the dentist to prevent cavities even when your teeth are pain-free, wellness chiropractic care allows the doctor to detect and correct dysfunctional areas in the spine before they cause health problems.

These dysfunctional areas, called *vertebral subluxations*, occur when spinal bones (vertebrae) become restricted or slightly out of alignment. Vertebral subluxations have been shown to influence the nervous system and the immune response, and are linked with a myriad of health problems.

In addition, regular wellness care allows the doctor to provide ongoing education on late-breaking scientific evidence.

Research shows that “the nature of the chiropractic supportive or maintenance visit gives doctors a unique platform on which they can launch full-scale health promotion efforts on their patients.” (*J Chiropr Med* 2003;2:107-10.)

Make the Connection

A fundamental chiropractic principal is that the body, mind and spirit function as a complete unit. People with wellness attitudes understand this connection.

Having a wellness attitude means looking at the big picture of wellness. A vast array of studies show that physical, emotional and spiritual stress all influence health. The doctor encourages patients to examine all aspects of their well-being, and to consider that seemingly unrelated circumstances — such as emotional stress, social interaction and spiritual unrest — may influence health.

Look on the Bright Side

Optimism is a key component of a

wellness attitude. A plethora of studies indicate that looking on the bright side “is a significant predictor of positive physical health outcomes.” (*Ann Behav Med* 2009;37:239-56.) Optimistic individuals enjoy superior overall health — and cope with stressors such as illness in more productive ways (*Consult Pharm* 2008;23:112).

Research also demonstrates that optimism “is a key contributor to subjective well-being because it fosters self-esteem, relationship harmony, and positive perceptions of financial conditions.” (*Int J Aging Hum Dev* 2005;61:335-65.)

There are several theories why optimism may boost wellness. One suggests that optimism protects against the inflammatory effects of stress (*Brain Behav Immun* 2009;23:810-6).

Participants in one study completed an optimism assessment, then participated in a stressful situation. Their blood was then tested for levels of the stress hormone cortisol. Those who scored high on the optimism test secreted less cortisol than their more pessimistic counterparts (*Br J Health Psychol* 2005;10:467-84).

Another theory indicates that looking for the silver lining may bolster immunity. One experiment involved individuals being immunized for Typhoid. Some of the study participants received real Typhoid vaccines, while others received a placebo.

All the study subjects were tested for optimism and for blood markers of immune response called antibodies. Both groups demonstrated “a strong positive association between optimism and antibody responses.” (*Brain Behav Immun* 2009;23:810-6.)

Finally, researchers point out that, compared with pessimists, optimists tend to lead healthier lifestyles.

For instance, a study in Finland evaluated 8,690 31-year-old men and women. Compared with those who scored lowest on tests for optimism, those who scored highest ate more

fresh vegetables, salads, fruit and low-fat cheese.

In addition, pessimism was linked with obesity, infrequent consumption of foods rich in fiber and higher consumption of alcohol and tobacco. “Thus lack of optimism is associated with a cluster of unhealthy dietary and other habits,” conclude the study’s authors (*Appetite* 2005;45:169-76).

Be a Team-Player

Patients with wellness attitudes are active partners in their care. In this chiropractic office, the doctor serves as a wellness coach. Patients are considered vital team members.

Research shows that expecting patients to be partners in their care fosters wellness by “helping patients address the removable causes of morbidity, disability and premature mortality where they exist.” (*Chiropr Osteopat* 2006;14:23.)

While the traditional allopathic doctor-patient relationship often suffers from time constraints and vast inequalities in status, the opposite is true with regard to chiropractic. One study concludes that “with the hands-on nature of chiropractic care, a strong doctor-patient relationship is forged in which health and lifestyle recommendations may be comfortably and effectively discussed.” (*Clin Geriatr Med* 2004;20:223-35.)

If you aren’t currently receiving regular chiropractic care, don’t delay. Join our team. Take charge of your health today by scheduling a chiropractic evaluation.

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