

Topic 4 Lifestyle and health

Could you define or explain what the word “lifestyle” means?

What kind of activities might be included in one’s lifestyle? Think of at least three.

Now read the following paragraph and compare it with your ideas.

Our lifestyle is the way we live and the conditions we live in. We can include the kind of job we do, the activities we enjoy, the things we own, the place we live in. There is quite a close connection between our lifestyle and health. Our lives are full of stressful situations and various stressful events, e.g. major events such as divorce or the loss of a job, and even including disasters such as floods and hurricanes. But even daily hassles such as waiting in line at the supermarket can start a stress response.

Adapted from:

Gill, Nora. Communicative ESP Practice for Pre-Service Teachers. Olomouc: Palacký University, 2003, pp. 44

Better your lifestyle

„ I will go to the gym every day, I will only eat low-fat food, I will never smoke again...“
Two weeks into the new diet and fitness regime and most people will have fallen off the wagon by now. Setting unrealistic goals will make you more likely to fail, and having failed once it is all too easy to give up altogether.

The road to a healthier lifestyle can be broken down into steps, however, and small achievements can make a great deal of difference to your level of fitness.

- **If you can’t give up smoking, cut down.**

Every cigarette you do not smoke is an achievement and will help your body. If you do want to give up, there is no easy way, but there is help available. Patches, gum and inhalers can replace nicotine so you still get your fix, but break the habit of smoking. You should try to change your routine and keep busy, not to think of smoking.

- **Walk out, rather than work out.**

Research shows that those who go once or twice a week to the gym at the start of their fitness regime are likely to end up dispirited and burning fewer calories than people who stay moderately active on a daily basis. Even better news for the chronically lazy: last year researchers at Harvard Medical School surveyed 40,000 women; those who strolled for a total of one hour a week were said to have 50 per cent lower risk of heart disease than women who did no walking.

British doctors recommended at least 30 minutes of moderate activity most days to maintain fitness levels and protect your health. As well as helping to fight disease, it can affect your mood, your memory and your waistline.

- **Cut down on fat.**

Simply making a few healthy food swaps over the day can make a real difference. The vegetable portions on your dinner plate can be twice the size of your meat portion. Vegetables are chock full of vitamins, minerals, fibre and, typically, low in fat. More importantly, high-bulk, low-calorie veggies fill you up before they fill you out, crowding out the opportunity to overeat the higher fat meats at dinner.

- **Slot in small exercises throughout the day.**

For some people either the thought of doing a 30 minute brisk walk, or the practicalities of finding the time, is just too difficult. If this is the case, then consider accumulating this duration by shorter bouts of more frequent activity. Small steps to try: using the stairs rather than the escalators or lifts at work or in the shopping centre, parking your car in the parking bay furthest away from the entrance of the supermarket, walk over to speak to colleagues rather than emailing them, and give up using the remote control to change TV channels.

You can exercise even at work. There are plenty of exercise routines to do at your desk.

- **Sign up for a regular exercise class.**

An exercise class, preferably in something you enjoy, such as dance or one of the new combinations of martial arts and exercise, can be fun to attend, and that is half the battle. As well as getting fit you can make it a social occasion. If you can persuade a friend to sign up with you, the two of you can motivate each other. In the UK it's also possible to sign up to an internet exercise regime which will give you weekly instructions.

- **Drink more water.**

Our brain is 78 per cent water and two-thirds of our total body weight is water. Like plants, we wilt when dehydrated. Joint pain, stomach pain, ulcers, back pain, low energy, mental confusion, urinary tract infection, kidney damage, and cardiovascular disease can result from chronic dehydration.

- **Get more sleep.**

People who do not get enough sleep age faster than those who have a good night's rests.

Getting just four hours sleep a night for less than a week produces biological changes that resemble the effects of advanced ageing, according to research. Not only does sleep deprivation hasten the onset of conditions normally associated with the elderly, such as diabetes, high blood pressure, obesity and memory loss, it increases their severity. If you have to have late nights, make them infrequent and get up at your usual time rather than having a lie-in, which could disrupt your sleep patterns.

An average length of time spent sleeping is seven hours, 12 minutes. As a rule of thumb, if you feel awake and healthy the next day, you are getting enough.

- **Eat breakfast.**

„ Research has shown that people who skip breakfast have higher cholesterol levels, eat more fat and have a tendency to be fatter than those who don't,“ says Claire Mac Evilly, nutrition scientist from the British Nutrition Foundation.

So bear that in mind and start the day with complex carbohydrates like cereal and toast so you will not have the urge to snack.