

Find Your Steps to **Good Health**

By Brooke Nicholls, RN, CDE

What are your health goals for 2015? Are you starting a new diet or joining a gym? What about trying meditation or learning a new hobby? Perhaps you're planning to get more sleep?

At One Community Health (formerly La Clínica del Cariño), our mission is to promote health and social justice for all members of our community. One way we seek to accomplish this is by engaging patients and community members in active learning and outreach that encourages the adoption of healthy habits. Our hope is that through education and connections with local resources, patients and community members will be able to prevent or better control chronic diseases and live healthier, happier and longer lives.

At One Community Health (OCH), we engage our community by partnering with The Next Door and Providence program to offer a 12-week education and outreach course called Promoviendo Pasos a la Salud (Promoting Steps to Wellness). In this course, community health workers (CHWs) facilitate support groups and promote healthy lifestyle habits to the communities of Wasco, Hood River, Klickitat and Skamania counties. Through funding from the Office of Rural Health Policy of the Health Resources and Services Administration, this program has served our community for eight

years. OCH promotes healthy lifestyle habits with our patients through the Salud Program. Here, registered nurses and CHWs provide education and care management related to diabetes, high blood pressure, weight management, stress reduction and basic nutrition. The Salud Program also offers intensive diabetes self-management education and recently received national accreditation from the American Academy of Diabetes Educators.

We serve a diverse population at OCH and recognize that one person's steps to good health may differ greatly from someone else's. We believe that health can be achieved at any size or age and that there are many different paths to achieving health and wellbeing. We teach lifestyle habits that are proven to lead to better health outcomes and work with individuals to develop personalized care plans that fit these healthy habits into their lives.

What are these core healthy habits? The following lifestyle habits have been shown to reduce the risk of heart disease, diabetes and high blood pressure and can be steps on your path to a healthier life:

Eat at least 5 portions of fruits and vegetables every day. You might try making half your plate vegetables or snacking on fruit. Perhaps you can make a warm, vegetable soup. Keep your plate colorful this winter with

apples, pears, winter squash, beans or kale.

Get at least 30 minutes of physical activity every day. For some, this may mean joining a gym. Others may enjoy a brisk 15-minute walk after each meal. Make it fun and find a partner!

Avoid smoking. If you are a smoker, talk to your provider about ways to cut back and quit. Resources are available in Oregon to help you stop smoking.

Keep alcohol to a moderate level. Research has shown that a glass of red wine or beer daily can have positive health benefits, including improving your heart health. However, drinking more than 1-2 glasses per day has the opposite effect and can increase your risk for heart disease and cancer. So enjoy a glass of Columbia Gorge Pinot Noir or an Oregon IPA, but keep it to 1 glass per day for women or 1-2 glasses per day for men.

Get plenty of sleep! Sleep is crucial for health and wellbeing. Aim for 6-8 hours every night. Try turning off the TV at night, creating

a relaxing bedtime routine and getting plenty of exercise. Talk to your healthcare provider about other ways to improve your sleep habits.

Keep your stress in check. Here is your excuse to stop, close your eyes and take a deep breath! Research has shown that stress increases your risk for obesity, heart disease and diabetes. Look for relaxing activities that you enjoy and make them a priority for your health. Be creative – we've had patients find stress relief through anything from hula hooping to knitting!

With these core health habits in mind, we hope that you will take steps toward a healthier lifestyle and find ways to create your own path to better health and wellbeing. Happy New Year from all of us at OCH, and may 2015 bring you health and joy!

For more information about OCH's Salud Program or Pasos a la Salud, please contact Brooke Nicholls, RN/CDE at 541-308-8340.





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