

Healthy You

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 **Take Charge!**
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A PASSION FOR BETTER MEDICINE.™

 **Lehigh Valley Health Network**

Your 3-Step 'Wellness Tune-Up'

Boost your mind and body

You have a great car. Yet you know if you don't regularly check the oil, rotate the tires or change the spark plugs, it won't last as long as it should. The same is true about our bodies and minds—the more we maintain our wellness, the better we'll feel overall.

"Health and wellness actually have two different meanings," says Carol Michaels, a master certified health education specialist with Lehigh Valley Health Network. "Health is the absence of disease. Wellness is the conscious decision to make healthy choices."

The good news—you can do your own routine maintenance on your body. It's easy, and it keeps both your body and mind feeling young. Follow these three steps:



Pay attention to your "check engine light"—That means knowing yourself well enough to know when something isn't quite right with your body. For example, you know how you feel mentally on a daily basis. If you're typically calm, you should be concerned if you suddenly feel anxious.

It's also important to know your numbers, such as blood pressure and cholesterol. Regular screenings can tell you if those numbers change and if you need to take extra steps to get those numbers back in sync.



Find a good "mechanic"—In other words, find the right doctor for you and develop a good relationship. "A primary care doctor like a family physician or internist is a trusted resource who knows you," Michaels says. "Turn to your doctor when something is 'off' with your health." Prepare for your visits by writing down questions you'd like to ask your doctor, and stay up-to-date with your checkups.

One thing not to do—withhold important information—such as the number of alcoholic drinks you might have per week. Your doctor won't judge; he or she needs that information to give you the best care. "Your doctor can't read minds," Michaels says. "You need to be honest." If you tend to get anxious at appointments, have a loved one accompany you to take notes and advocate on your behalf.



Keep your "tires balanced"—In other words, balance what are known as the "dimensions of wellness"—physical, emotional, spiritual, social, environmental and intellectual.

"No one has all the dimensions in perfect balance at any one time," Michaels says. "But when something isn't in balance, wellness is about feeling empowered to seek help and having the coping skills to deal with challenges." To help keep your life in better balance, find activities that feed more than one dimension—for example, a walking club like First Strides® (see page 18) can help fuel your physical and social dimensions.

Next Step: Learn about the mind-body connection to wellness at this year's Mini Medical School. See page 18, visit lvhn.org/healthyyou or call 610-402-CARE.