

Better health possible in six weeks

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(U-WIRE) PROVO, Utah -- Basic changes in dietary living and increased exercise can decrease a person's risk for diabetes and heart disease in as little as six weeks, according to a recent study by Steven Aldana, a Brigham Young University professor of exercise science

"This is not a diet," he said. "This is not a short-term fad. It's something that people have to do long-term. The culprit of America's poor health is a poor lifestyle and the cure for most chronic diseases is a healthy lifestyle."

Aldana said exercising and eating better can improve overall health in as little as six weeks.

"Risks and body fat decrease dramatically, while blood pressure and cholesterol improve," he said.

Nationally, 22 percent of the population eats five servings or more of fruit and vegetable per day, according to Aldana's research. However, only six percent of BYU students are obtaining that daily balance. With 94 percent of BYU students lacking in their daily nutritional intake, health risks are continually increasing.

"The key is transitioning from a normal unhealthy college diet, to eating more grains, more fruits and vegetables, and eating less commercially fried food," Aldana said. "Today you can decide to make a choice.

"You can decide what you're going to have for lunch and for dinner. Most of our students are not obese, but as they graduate and go into the world with their same eating habits, they will be. Learn now for later," he said

A group of BYU students traveled to Capitol Hill in early March to ask their senators and local representatives to help resolve the issue of increasing poor health.

Students from Utah met with legislative aids for Senators Hatch and Bennett and Representatives Cannon and Matheson while students from California met with aids for Senators Boxer and Feinstein and Representative Doolittle, according to a press release by BYU's master's of public health program.

Steven Tuttle of Salt Lake City is a Masters of public health student who was among the BYU attendees at the 8th annual Health Education Advocacy Summit. Students attended a two-day conference about increased health awareness after which they spoke with legislative representatives in an attempt to increase funding to the Center for Disease Control.

"I learned that it's really not that difficult to approach a legislature and talk to them about issues that concern you," Tuttle said. "Now that I've had the experience, I'll have more confidence when I speak to them in the future."

By increasing funding to the CDC, the students hope to increase healthy choices in the schools by providing more choices of fruits and vegetables and less pizza and pop during lunch.

"The Culprit and the Cure," Aldana's latest book, addresses the why, what, and how of healthy living. Copies of the book are currently available from the BYU Bookstore, with a national release date of May 1, 2005.