Americans have always been a generous people, willing to give to others in need. In these challenging times, that spirit of service has been abundantly evident and has made a real difference in many lives. As we observe National Donate Life Month, we reflect on an important opportunity to aid others—bestowing the gift of life through organ and tissue donation.

More than 110,000 individuals are now on the national waiting list for organ transplants, and the list continues to grow. Each year, the number of Americans needing life-saving donations has far outstripped the number of available donors. As a result, people lose their lives each day while waiting (Obama, 2011). It can be hard to think about death and it can be especially hard to think about donating your organs and tissues. However, your decision to be a donor can save lives. Understanding organ donation may make you feel better so here are some answers from Mayo Clinic about common organ donation myths.

Myth: If I agree to donate my organs, the hospital staff won’t work as hard to save my life.

Fact: When you go to the hospital for treatment, doctors focus on saving your life—not somebody else’s. You’ll be seen by a doctor whose specialty most closely matches your particular emergency. The doctor in charge of your care has nothing to do with transplantation.

Myth: Maybe I won’t really be dead when they sign my death certificate.

Fact: Although it’s a popular topic in the tabloids, in reality, people don’t start to wiggle their toes after they’re declared dead. In fact, people who have agreed to organ donation are given more tests (at no charge to their families) to determine that they’re truly dead than are those who haven’t agreed to organ donation.

Myth: An open-casket funeral isn’t an option for people who have donated organs or tissues.

Fact: Organ and tissue donation doesn’t interfere with having an open-casket funeral. The donor’s body is clothed for burial, so there are no visible signs of organ or tissue donation. For bone donation, a rod is inserted where bone is removed. With skin donation, a very thin layer of skin similar to a sunburn peel is taken from the donor’s back. Because the donor is clothed and lying on his or her back in the casket, no one can see any difference.

Myth: I’m not in the best of health. Nobody would want my organs or tissues.

Fact: Very few medication conditions automatically disqualify you from donating organs. The decision to use an organ is based on strict medical criteria. It may turn out that certain organs are not suitable for transplantation, but other organs and tissues may be fine. Don’t disqualify yourself prematurely.

By donating your organs after you die, you can save or improve as many as 50 lives. It is easy to become a donor. You can register at www.organdonor.gov (Mayo Clinic, 2010).
Fast Food

Can fast food be part of a healthy lifestyle? Many people think that they can never have fast food if they want to be healthy. That may not necessarily be true. An occasional stop for fast food can fit into a healthy diet plan. The key is to choose wisely when ordering.

- **Keep portion sizes small:** If the fast-food restaurant offers several sandwich sizes, pick the smallest. Choose a small or children’s size hamburger and french fries.
- **Choose a healthier side dish:** Take advantage of the healthy side dishes offered at many fast food restaurants. Try a side salad with low fat dressing, a baked potato, a fruit bowl, or fruit and yogurt instead of french fries. You can also try apple or orange slices, steamed rice, corn or baked potato chips.
- **Go for the greens:** choose a salad as your entrée and add some grilled chicken, shrimp or vegetables with low fat dressing on the side. Watch out for high calorie salads, such as those with deep fried shells or those topped with breaded chicken or other fried toppings. Skip the extras such as cheese, bacon bits and croutons. If you don’t get the dressing, you can find salads for around 300 calories at most fast food chains.
- **Opt for grilled items:** Fried and breaded foods, such as crispy chicken sandwiches and breaded fish, are high in fat and calories. Try grilled or roasted lean meats—such as turkey or chicken breast, lean ham, or lean roast beef.
- **Watch what you drink:** Many beverages are high in calories. For example, a large regular soda (32 oz.) has about 300 calories. Try water, unsweetened iced tea, sparkling water or mineral water. Skip the shakes and other ice cream drinks. Large shakes can contain more than 800 calories and all of your saturated fat allotment for the day.
- **Have it your way:** Ask for healthier options for substitutes. Ask for reduced-fat mayonnaise or mustard on your sandwich. Request salsa instead of cheese. Remember to get portion sizes of condiments as well (Mayo Clinic, 2010).

“Two-thirds of U.S. adults are now overweight, and the obesity rate has increased 50% since 1960… this is partially because restaurants and packaged food marketers are loading our meals with empty calories… the food industry spends $30 billion a year on advertising—70% of it pitching convenience foods, candy, soda, and desserts. Even the teens working behind the counter are coached to get you to upsize your meal. (And for an average 17% more money, you get yourself 55% more calories!)” (Zinczenko & Goulding, 2008).

There is nothing wrong with choosing fast foods once in a while as long as we choose wisely.
10 Tips for Better Sleep

It can be hard to get enough sleep on a daily basis. Work, household responsibilities and childcare as well as many other things can make sleep difficult. You may not be able to control or eliminate all of the factors that interfere with your sleep, but you can create an environment and adopt habits that encourage a more restful night. Try some of the following ideas if you have trouble falling asleep or staying asleep:

- Go to bed and get up at about the same time every day, even on the weekends.
- Don’t eat or drink large amounts before bedtime.
- Avoid nicotine, caffeine and alcohol in the evening.
- Exercise regularly.
- Make your bedroom cool, dark, quiet and comfortable.
- Sleep primarily at night. Limit naps to about a half-hour in midafternoon.
- Choose a comfortable mattress and pillow.
- Start a relaxing bedtime routine.
- Go to bed when you’re tired and turn out the lights. If you don’t fall asleep within 15-20 minutes, get up and do something else.
- Use sleeping pills only as a last resort (Mayo Clinic, 2009).

Stress Management

“Stress is a normal psychological and physical reaction to the ever increasing demands of life” (Mayo Clinic, 2011). Your brain has an alarm system for your protection. When our brain perceives a threat, it signals your body to release a burst of hormones to respond to the situation. This is called the “fight or flight” response. Once the threat is gone, your body returns to a normal state. However, because of the constant stress in today’s society, that response system rarely stops.

Stress management becomes very important since many of us are in constant stress mode. Without stress management your body is on high alert too much and these high levels of stress can lead to serious health problems. Don’t wait until stress begins to negatively effect your life.; start practicing stress management techniques today.

The first step in managing stress is deciding to make a change in how you deal with stress. The next step is figuring out what triggers your stress. Triggers can include job pressures, relationship or financial issues, commuting, arranging childcare, being overcommitted at work, and many other things. Any change in your life can be stressful, even positive change. Once you’ve determined what triggers your stress, you can come up with specific strategies to handle them. Try coming up with ways to reduce irritation when you can’t avoid a stressful situation. Try consulting friends and family to see what type of stress relief techniques have worked for them. Other techniques include tai chi, yoga, meditation or being in nature.

You will never get rid of all of the stress in your life, but you can manage it over time which increases your ability to cope with life’s challenges. Relaxation is an essential part of stress management. Make sure to make it a priority in your life as it is “essential to maintaining your health and well-being and repairing the toll that stress takes on your mind and body” (Mayo Clinic, 2011).
In the spotlight this month is Muriel Kangas, Secretary for the School of Education. Muriel was nominated by a co-worker. This is what her co-worker had to say about her “she is so dedicated to her health and wellness and she is always encouraging others to join in on wellness activities. She is part of the wellness group that walks around Whitman all the time.” Muriel is also part of the incentive program, the Campus Trekkers program and the Satellite Fitness classes in Whitman. Thank you for your hard work toward health and wellness and for your encouragement to others, Muriel!

- NMU Employee Wellness

In honor of National Nutrition Month, Employee Wellness held a healthy recipe challenge. The recipes were judged on the use of colorful foods as well as the nutritional value. The winner was Michelle Inman with her recipe for Bacon Jack and Jalapeno Quesadillas. She will receive a copy of the book, “Cook This Not That,” by David Zinczenko & Matt Goulding. Congratulations Michelle! Look for the recipe in the Wednesday Wellness Tip next week!

REFERENCES:


