

HEALTHFUL TIPS

HEALTH AND FITNESS TIPS FOR YOUR ENTIRE FAMILY

Volunteer your way to health

"Giving frees us from the familiar territory of our own needs by opening our mind to the unexplained worlds occupied by the needs of others." ~Barbara Bush

Volunteering positively impacts individuals, families. It helps to rebuild communities and solve serious social problems. Research indicates that there are also very real benefits to the volunteer. Consider adding volunteering to your list of healthful lifestyle habits. The physical, emotional, spiritual and personal benefits might just take you to the next level in your pursuit of optimal health.

Some benefits to volunteering include:

- Enhancement of social network—strong social support can lower health risks including heart disease, high blood pressure, social isolation and premature death
- Improved self-esteem
- Boosts the social psychological factors that healthy people have
- Improved sense of well being and sense of identity
- Increase in number of interpersonal relationships, often from diverse backgrounds
- Strengthened immune system
- Shortened surgery recovery time
- New skills learned or developed
- New interests and hobbies
- Enhanced sense of belonging to community
- Sense of achievement
- Boost career options
- New experiences and personal growth

To understand the full impact that the lifestyle habit of volunteering can have on your health, look at the findings of a study conducted for over a decade by Dr. James House from the University of Michigan. He found that regular volunteer work increases life expectancy more than any other activity. He also found that those that spent a lot of time in isolating activities (reading, watching TV or listening to the radio) had a higher-than-average mortality rate. He concluded that people need people to be healthy.

"People who do volunteer work are much less likely to suffer illness. The close interpersonal relationships and community involvement that occur with volunteer service are tailor-made to enhance the healing process."

The Healing Power of Service
by Edward V. Brown

Considerations for choosing volunteer work:

- Find causes or work for which you are passionate about making a difference
- Look for opportunities that compliment your skills and personality—for example if you love children and love to read, you may be a great as a reading tutor



- Look for opportunities to gain new skills—if you would like to increase your presentation skill, maybe teaching a class would be a good fit
- Combine your goals—if your goal is to become more fit, volunteer at your local YMCA or an seniors fitness program. To spend more quality time with your children, volunteer as a family.
- Look at community organizations to see what their volunteer needs are. Community organizations often in need of volunteers includes animal shelters, halfway houses, community theaters, day care centers, civic clubs, nursing homes, Meals on Wheels, homeless shelters, churches, museums, soup kitchens or food pantries, schools, prisons, parks, youth groups, shelters for battered women and children and many, many others.
- Use your vacation as a volunteering opportunity either in your community or across the world—just google vacation volunteer opportunities and check out the exciting options.

Give voice to your heart through your giving and volunteering. Check out <http://www.progressiveu.org/190000-10-tips-and-ideas-for-volunteering>.