

What is Health?

Health, how to achieve it, maintain it, and how to pay for it are constant hot topics in the news. But what is health? When I ask people this question in my health classes, they are stumped. It should be a simple question, but many have difficulty defining health and how you know when you “have” it. According to Dorland’s Medical Dictionary, health is “a state of optimal physical, mental and social well being and not merely the absence of disease and infirmity”. Looking at the first part of the definition, most people would agree that when you are healthy you are the best you can be physically (happy body), mentally (happy thoughts), and socially (happy relationships). The second part of the definition can be a bit more confusing, however.

What does it mean if health is “not merely the absence of disease and infirmity”? This implies that even if we do not have some kind of disease, we still may not be healthy. Just because we do not have diabetes, cancer or even a cold does not mean we can claim to be healthy. Some part of our bodies may still not be working correctly even if we are not sick.

We have bodies that are made to adapt. When we are able to adapt to our environment, either external or internal, we are able to be healthy. The difference between a living person and a dead person is their ability to adapt. Dead things are *acted upon* by the environment and living things *adapt to* the environment. So even though we may not have a cold or any other ailment, if we are not fully adapting to our environment, we will not be healthy.

Our bodies adapt constantly without us ever really noticing. Breathing can increase or decrease depending on oxygen levels, blood flow will do the same, as well as body temperature. When we develop a fever, it is our body adapting to an invading pathogen that needs destroyed. We heat up to kill the virus or bacterium that is causing a problem so that it will not overtake our system. Vomiting is another way that our bodies quickly adapt to a toxic situation. When we have eaten something that will cause harm, our stomachs will immediately get rid of it in the fastest way possible! While it is not pleasant to have a fever or to vomit, it is a sign that the body is being healthy and doing what it is supposed to do. It is adapting to a bad situation to make us healthy!

The brain controls how we adapt. It gathers information from the body and sends signals that determine what will be done. These messages and signals are sent back and forth between the body and the brain over the central nervous system. The spine protects the nervous system and allows communication to travel freely. However, if there is a misalignment in the spine the messages will not be able to get through as needed. This will create a lack of communication and the body will not be able to adapt the way that is needed. When we cannot adapt, then we are not healthy. It is important to keep the central nervous system free of interference and the spine free of misalignments.

Only when the body is able to adapt to the environment are we truly healthy. Having a healthy spine and nervous system allows the body to adapt the way that is needed. Even slight misalignments can cause big problems, and we get these misalignments throughout our lives since birth (birth is usually when the first damage is done because of the pulling and twisting on the head and spinal cord). It is important to take care of the nervous system and the only healthcare professional specifically trained in this is a doctor of chiropractic. Ask your chiropractor today for more information about keeping your entire family healthy. Also go to www.VibrantSpine.com or www.icpa4kids.org. Be healthy today!

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