

Planning for the New Year

As we approach the final days of 2010 and look toward the new year, most men are making plans to earn more money, expand the house or buy a new car. May I suggest that you also make plans to improve your health.

The following are six suggestions for promoting good health in the coming year.

Avoid tobacco, alcohol and drugs

The Jamaica Health and Lifestyle Study (JHLS, 2007 - 2008) reported that 65 per cent of Jamaicans drink alcohol. Avoid these addictive drugs in your quest for good health. If you have tried quitting but find it difficult, visit a health provider.

Eat a healthy diet

The JHLS revealed that 99 per cent of Jamaicans eat below the recommended quantities of fruits and vegetables. Jamaicans still consume high levels of fat and too many calories. So, I recommend eating more fruits and vegetables in the natural form and having less meat. For the new year, try and have meals which are boiled, baked or grilled. Avoid fried or stewed foods.

Increase physical activity

In general, men are more physically active than women, but about half the population have a low level of physical activity, according to the JHLS. Low levels of physical activity were associated with having a chronic disease. So for the new year, men who live sedentary lives should seek opportunities to walk, skip, jog, bicycle, swim or some other method of increasing physical fitness.

Prevent injuries

According to the Jamaica Health and Lifestyle Study, 12 per cent of Jamaicans have suffered serious injuries over the last five years. Most violent injuries are due to involvement in fights. Promote an injury-free year by seeking to reduce conflict in relationships. A good New Year's resolution to reduce the risk of serious injury from road collisions would be to wear seat belts whether you are a driver, or a front or back-seat passenger.

Avoid sexually transmitted infections

Men who have more than one sexual partner and have unprotected intercourse are at high risk for STIs. Men are more likely to have multiple sexual partners and they report a greater frequency of sexual activity. So men should definitely use a condom during intercourse to avoid STIs.

Visit your health provider

Fifty per cent of Jamaicans have a parent or grandparent with hypertension. One in three Jamaicans has a close relative with diabetes, while 20 per cent have a close relative with stroke or cancer. So make an appointment to have a health check for screening and health promotion.

Best wishes for 2011!