



*Mid-Life Healthy Lifestyle Assessment  
or “Checking Out What Condition Your Condition Is In”*

By Dr. Edward Nalband

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You have reached “mid-life.” You are in the age range of 45-50 years old, and assessing where you are health-wise, that is, “*checking out what condition your condition is in*” – how it got that way and how to improve on it!

If you are like most Americans, you have gained at least two pounds per year, with the highest weight gain between ages 25- 34.

You haven’t changed the portion size of your meals and snacks, and your activity has become less due to the multiple demands of work and family.

As a result, you’ve gained weight and may be part of the alarming CDC (Center for Disease Control) statistics for Massachusetts:

- 56.1% of Massachusetts adults are overweight or obese. (CDC BRFSS, 2005)

Frustrating and overwhelming – how *does* one get control of this insidious weight gain in order to resume a healthy mid-life – not to mention later-life? Is it possible?

According to a recently published clinical research study reported in the July 2007 American Journal of Medicine<sup>1</sup> if you adopt four lifestyle changes – even at age 45 or 50 - it is both possible and very beneficial.

What are those healthy lifestyles? They are simple and straightforward.

- 1) Don't smoke.
- 2) Eat 5 or more fruits and vegetables a day
- 3) Maintain weight that is neither underweight (BMI\* < 18.5) nor obese (BMI\* > 30).
- 4) Get regular exercise – such as walking, 2.5 hours a week, or, 30 minutes a day.

As simple as these may be, this study found that only 8.5% of middle-aged adults practice these healthy lifestyles. More importantly, after age 45, only 8.4% of Americans are likely to adopt these lifestyles going forward.

The researchers looked at 15,708 participants to see who had healthy lifestyle habits at their first visit and who adopted them during the study. The 10% who adopted these healthy life styles reaped significant health-wise benefits. After four years of follow up, *total mortality and cardiovascular disease events were lower for new adopters by 40% and 35% respectively.*

What if you heard about a new medicine that reduced heart disease and mortality 35-40%? Who wouldn't be calling their physician to get a prescription? We are willing to take a pill to achieve health benefits. We accept the cost of medicine along with the risk of those medications and their inconvenience. *And yet, we can get the same benefit, if not better, by adopting the lifestyle changes listed above.*

Exercise, as a part of our daily life has vanished. We are a “techno-culture” - so much of what we do and how we do it can be done via computer or phone. This cultural change has produced negative effects not only for us but for the children - we are now in the midst of a major obesity epidemic in children.

Here in Massachusetts:

- 26.8% of Massachusetts high-school students are overweight or at risk of overweight. (CDC YRBSS, 2005)
- 34.1% of low-income children between 2 and 5 years of age in Massachusetts are overweight or at risk of overweight. (CDC PedNSS, 2005)

“Mid-lifers” should be setting an example for younger adults and children by adopting the healthy lifestyles described above. It would be a “win-win” for everyone!!!

So remember:

- 1) *Don't smoke.*
- 2) *Eat 5 or more fruits and vegetables a day.*
- 3) *Maintain weight that is neither underweight (BMI\* < 18.5) or, obese (BMI > 30).*
- 4) *Get regular exercise.* For those of us middle-aged and older, walking has been shown in numerous research articles to lower blood pressure, prevent or improve diabetes, reduce cardiovascular disease and even improve mental health. There is no need to join a gym or buy expensive equipment – pick up a pair of comfortable shoes and off you go!

*Here's to your good health!*

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## References

1. King, D.E. et al *Turning back the clock: adopting a healthy lifestyle in middle age.* AMJ (2007) 120, 598-603.

2. \*What is BMI? It's a simple way to determine what the appropriate weight relative to your height. For more details, go to this website <http://www.nhlbisupport.com/bmi/> or see Dr. Boutwell's article by going to Health Resources and go to Articles.

**Need some ideas about how to get going with exercise? Try one of the following links:**

<http://www.revolutionhealth.com/healthy-living/fitness/workouts/quick-workouts/stay-fit-10-minutes>

[http://www.ehow.com/how\\_4743\\_fit-exercise-busy.html](http://www.ehow.com/how_4743_fit-exercise-busy.html)

[http://exercise.about.com/od/fittinginexercise/a/busy\\_exercise.htm](http://exercise.about.com/od/fittinginexercise/a/busy_exercise.htm)

<http://www.mommd.com/10waysfitness.shtml>

**Want to learn more about ways to get more fruits and vegetables? Try this site:**

<http://www.fruitsandveggiesmorematters.org/>