



TAKE CARE

BY RILEY M. LORIMER

*You only get one body.
Here are some tips for
taking care of yours.*

Elliot Grow had it made. The summer before his senior year of high school, he was an aspiring lacrosse player with a promising future, and it looked like he just might land a starting spot on his school's basketball team as well. But calamity struck for Elliot one day in June when he tore the meniscus cartilage in his knee during a recreational league basketball game.

Surgery came shortly thereafter, followed by three months of intense physical therapy. It was a lot of hard work, but Elliot persisted. Eventually he made it off the crutches and back onto the basketball court. Some people would probably complain about the months of lost training and the pain, but Elliot feels a sense of gratitude.

"I feel blessed that I am still able to do what I love. I love playing lacrosse. I love playing basketball. I don't take that for granted anymore. When I am out there, I play as hard as I can and I don't only play for me. My little brother had a brain tumor when he was three, so he can't do some of the things that I've been able to do. Now I play for him.

"Before my injury, I would have thought, 'My body is mine. I can do whatever I want with it,' " he says. "But after this surgery, I have realized that my body is a gift and I should take care of it the right way."

A Gift from the Lord

The body *is* a gift from Heavenly Father. Doctrine and Covenants 88:15 states that "the spirit and the body are the soul of man." The body and the spirit are meant to work in harmony with one another. We should, therefore, take good care of our physical bodies as well as our spirits.

Prophets have often counseled us to take care of our bodies. But what does "taking

care of your body" really mean? And how do you do it? Consider these ideas:

Be on the Move

Exercise is essential to a healthy lifestyle. Not only does it build muscle and help maintain healthy weight, but it can also act as a stress reliever. Dr. George Van Komen, a leading physician and doctor of internal medicine in Salt Lake City, Utah, says, "Most people find that exercise can become very enjoyable. And that's the only way you

continue with it." So, find a form (or several forms) of exercise that you enjoy, and stick to it!

For some teens, physical activity is already part of a daily routine, thanks to sports or just a fondness for exercise. But not everyone is an athlete, and that's perfectly all right.

What does Dr. Van Komen suggest? "You should do the type of exercise you enjoy for 30 minutes, four times a week. That's two hours of physical activity." And if you don't like running or active sports? "Walk. A good brisk walk is as good as anything. The heart doesn't care if you're playing soccer, running, or walking—just that you're exercising and getting your heart rate up. That's what's important." Whatever you do, get out and engage in physical activity. It will improve your health now and in the future.

Eat to Live

Equally important is giving your body the right fuel. Every day we are bombarded by different messages about nutrition. Everyone wants us to think that they have the answer to quick weight loss and better health. The truth is that there isn't a quick fix. Good nutrition is a lifestyle.



Elliot Grow (inset) with his younger brother, Spencer, have both experienced gratitude for their bodies even when working to overcome injury and disease.

Put in the time!



Take time for regular exercise. It's best if you choose something you like to do because you'll stick with it.

Eat well-balanced meals to maintain good nutrition.

"Having a well-balanced meal three times a day is the way to maintain normal weight and good nutrition,"

says Dr. Van Komen. He also says that you need to keep your nutrition plan simple, rather than stressing over everything. As with exercise, if you make your plans for good nutrition too complicated, you are less likely

to continue with them. So, what is a well-balanced meal? "A meal that has a fruit or vegetable and has some starch and a reasonable-sized piece of meat, fish, or chicken is balanced," says Dr. Van Komen.

As you try to eat healthily, beware of fad diets that advertise an easy way to get thin quickly. Very few of these diets are based on sound nutritional principles. And while some people may lose weight initially, it is often because these diets severely restrict the amount of food they eat. Few people actually maintain their initial weight loss from these diets. When considering nutrition, always remember the principles of judgment (see

D&C 59:16–20) and prudence (as set forth in the Word of Wisdom (see D&C 89:11).

Heed Wise Words

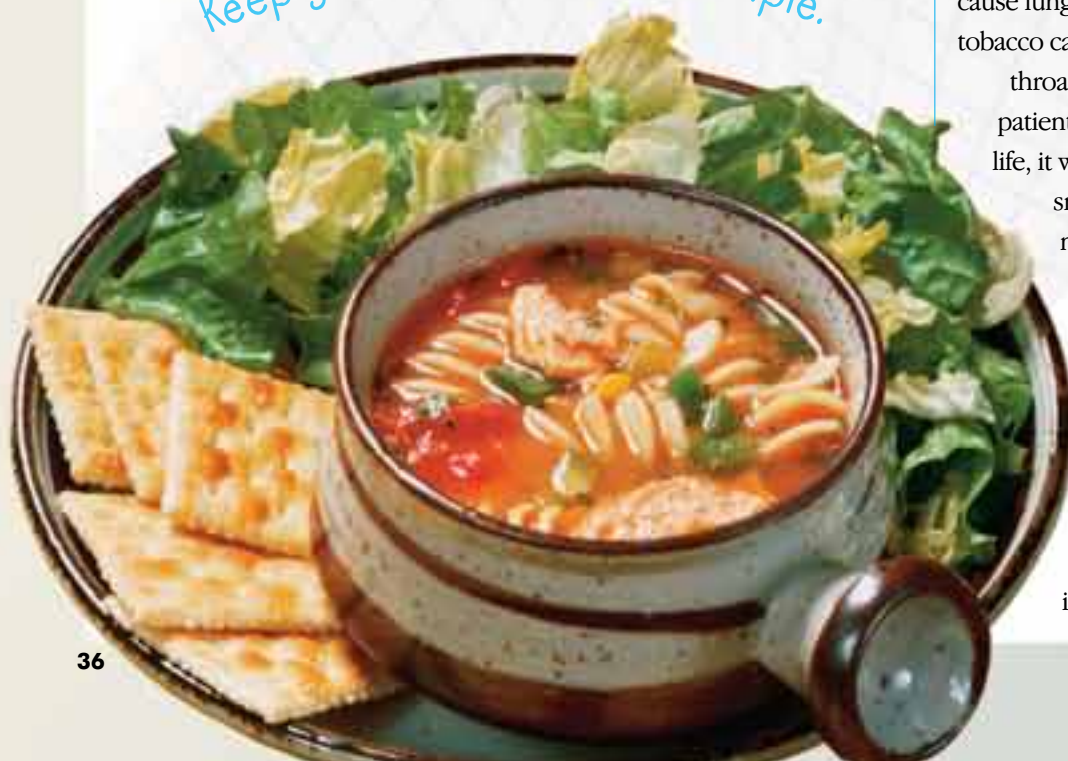
With many people around you—at school and in the media—who are doing drugs, smoking, and drinking, it can be very difficult to stand up for your beliefs and choose not to participate. But staying away from drugs and alcohol is vital in maintaining both your spiritual and physical well-being.

The Word of Wisdom prohibits Latter-day Saints from drinking any form of alcohol. Alcohol is addictive and habit-forming. When under the influence of alcohol, you lose your ability to reason clearly. When people drive drunk, they pose a great risk to themselves and others. Even if they never get behind a wheel while drunk, people who regularly consume alcohol are seriously endangering their own health. Drinking alcohol can lead to cancer, liver disease, and emotional problems. President Gordon B. Hinckley has counseled that you should "avoid alcohol as you would a loathsome disease" ("Why We Do Some of the Things We Do," *Ensign*, Nov. 1999, 54).

Tobacco is another addictive substance prohibited by the Word of Wisdom. Smoking can cause lung cancer and heart disease. Chewing tobacco can cause cancer of the mouth and throat. "If I could do one thing for my patients to help them live a long, healthy life, it would be to convince them not to smoke," said Dr. Van Komen. "There's no question that smoking is the one of the worst things someone can do for their health."

Drugs of all kinds—including hard drugs, abused prescription and over-the-counter drugs, and household chemicals—are dangerous to the body. Use of such drugs has become widespread, but it is crucial for you to resist this

Keep your nutrition plan simple.



trend. Some youth have excused their drug use by saying these things are not specifically listed in the Word of Wisdom. President Hinckley responded to them with this statement: "What a miserable excuse. There is likewise no mention of the hazards of diving into an empty swimming pool or of jumping off an overpass onto the freeway. . . .

Common sense would dictate against such behavior" ("The Scourge of Illicit Drugs," *Ensign*, Nov. 1989, 50). The use of drugs is offensive to the Lord because we are defiling the body He gave us.

Latter-day Saints are also told not to drink coffee and tea. Both drinks are addictive and should be avoided. Another bit of wisdom from a different part of the Doctrine and Covenants stresses the importance of proper sleep: "Cease to sleep longer than is needful; retire to thy bed early, that ye may not be weary; arise early, that your bodies and your minds may be invigorated" (D&C 88:124).

Stay Safe

One of the most important ways you can take care of your body is to keep it out of harm's way. This principle may seem simple, but it will do a great deal in assuring you a long and healthy life. In today's world, it is popular to take huge risks. People—and especially teenagers—do all sorts of dangerous things to get a thrill. Some teens participate in extreme sports without proper training or equipment and end up seriously injured. Others drive recklessly and hurt others, as well as themselves. Still others simply refuse to wear their seatbelts when riding in cars and sometimes wind up with permanent damage to their bodies as the result of an automobile accident.

President James E. Faust, Second Counselor in the First Presidency, has said that we sometimes follow "delirious voices that spawn the desire for a 'high.' I refer not

to a drug- or alcohol-induced high, but to the pursuing of dangerous, death-defying experiences for nothing more than a thrill. Life, even our own, is so precious that we are accountable to the Lord for it, and we should not trifle with it. Once gone, it cannot be called back" ("Voice of the Spirit," *Ensign*, June 2006, 4).

Your body and your life are gifts from Heavenly Father. Elder David A. Bednar of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles said, "Your body is not your own; it is on loan from God" ("Ye Are the Temple of God," *Ensign*, Sept. 2001, 18). Because the body is a gift from Heavenly Father, you have a responsibility to care for it well. Taking good care of your body doesn't just mean not jumping off cliffs; it involves abstaining from other things that pose a risk to your health, like unhealthy eating habits, drugs, and alcohol.

The leaders of the Church want you to be happy. President Hinckley has stated many times, "We want you to have fun" ("A Prophet's Counsel and Prayer for Youth," *New Era*, Jan. 2001, 14). At the same time, they care for your safety, health, and well-being. Use proper safety equipment. Get training, and take necessary precautions. Do not take unnecessary risks. And above all, follow the guidance of the Spirit and use common sense. As President Faust said, "Enough risks will come to you naturally without your seeking them out" ("On the Edge," *New Era*, Feb. 1997, 4).

Your Precious Body

Your body is an incredible gift from a Father who loves you. He allowed you to come to earth and receive your body so that you could experience this mortal life. You are responsible for caring for your body and treating it in a way that honors its Creator. So get some exercise, buckle your seatbelt, and eat your vegetables! **NE**

