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AMA Suggests Resolutions for A Healthy New Year

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Events of The Past Year Should Make Us All Reflect on What Is Important - Good Health

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/ADVANCE/ CHICAGO, Dec. 20 /PRNewswire/ -- The **American Medical Association** released its annual suggested resolutions today for people who want to make 2002 a healthy and happy year for them and their families.

"This has been a year of intense change for America's patients and physicians," said AMA President Richard F. Corlin, MD. "The events surrounding September 11 have prompted the AMA to take unprecedented steps to educate America's patients and physicians about the threat of bioterrorism and antibiotic resistance. We also must remember the daily practices that let us take charge of our own health."

The AMA is offering these eight resolutions for 2002:

1. Help prevent children from smoking

In 2001, more than 1 million children began smoking, and more than 400,000 Americans died from a smoking-related illness. Tobacco products have been the leading preventable cause of death in the United States for decades, but Americans continue to be seduced by clever advertising and the glamorization of smoking in popular culture. Teach by example. If you use tobacco products, take whatever steps you must to stop. Help your children understand that beginning to smoke will only lead them to a life filled with disease followed by an early grave. Make the commitment today and you'll save your own life, protect your children's health and save your friends and family needless heartbreak.

2. Remind your family and friends that alcohol and drug abuse can be treated

In the aftermath of September 11, many states have experienced an increased demand for alcohol and drug abuse treatment. Talk openly with children and adolescents about healthy ways to handle stressful or depressing situations. Alcohol abuse continues to be a leading factor in teenage driving fatalities and suicides. Dependency of any kind often leads to a terrible spiral of physical and mental suffering, as well as dangerous or criminal behavior. The continued popularity of "rave" drugs among young Americans and the illegal use of prescription drugs continue to claim many lives. We also should remember that alcohol kills six times as many of our youth each year as all illicit drugs combined. If alcohol is causing any problem in your life, begin 2002 by seeking treatment. And, if you're not sure where to look, your physician is a valuable resource for information and support.

3. Make exercise part of your daily routine

Healthy living includes incorporating exercise into your daily routine. As reported in a recent *Journal of the American Medical Association*, the obesity rate among America's youth is increasing at an alarming rate. To help prevent the health risks associated with obesity, set aside 30 minutes a day for brisk activity, which includes walking. When you do exercise regularly, be careful not to overdo it, and take the proper precautions if you're taking any medication. Additional healthy steps include maintaining a well-balanced diet - low in fat, high in fiber - getting plenty of rest and spending **quality** time with family and friends. Before beginning any new exercise program, it is a good idea to consult with your physician.

4. Emphasize violence prevention and conflict resolution

The AMA encourages parents to talk to their children about the important issues of violence prevention and

The AMA encourages parents to talk to their children about the important issues of violence prevention and conflict resolution. Talk with your children about the violent images they may see in movies, television and video games. Encourage older children to act as role models for younger children by teaching them to settle arguments without force. Bullying is unacceptable, and violence always has consequences. Talk to your physician and learn how to recognize the warning signs that a child might be headed for violence or may be contemplating suicide. Also remember that verbal abuse can take its toll on children and loved ones. Find out what resources are available in your community to get help.

5. Look to your physician for immunization and antibiotic information

Good health is no accident. Parents should make sure their children receive immunizations from their physician on schedule so that you can provide the best available defense against many dangerous childhood diseases. For adults, remember that immunizations for flu are only meant to protect against flu. You also may want to consult with your physician about other vaccinations, including one to protect against pneumonia. The threat of bioterrorism has scared us all, but inappropriate use of antibiotics is a real danger because it can cause bacteria to become resistant to previously effective antibiotics. Trust your physician to make the right decision about whether you or a member of your family should take antibiotics.

6. Remember that the **Internet** cannot replace a physician's experience and training

Millions of Americans go to the **Internet** for health-related information, but people who use it to self-diagnose and self-medicate may be putting their lives at risk. Only your physician has the necessary experience and medical training to diagnose and treat medical conditions. If you have questions, trust your physician, not a chat room.

7. Help prevent future health problems with health screenings today

Further preventive **health care** steps you can take include age-appropriate exams and screenings. Some screening tests women should discuss with their physician include: cholesterol test; mammogram; Pap smear; colorectal exam, fecal occult blood test; urinalysis; and blood count. Healthy men under age 40 should get a physical exam at least every four years. After age 40, men should be screened annually for colon, rectal and prostate cancer. In addition, periodic screenings to evaluate blood pressure, cholesterol levels, vision and hearing are also recommended.

8. Practice effective stress management to maintain good health

Because of recent economic uncertainty, bioterrorist threats and the lingering effects of Sept. 11, now is a good time to make sure you can properly deal with stressful situations. In 2002, remember to make time for yourself - even a short break of five minutes can provide stress-relieving benefits. Parents can help their children by maintaining a fairly regular schedule for meals and bedtimes. Build and nurture a reliable network of caring friends. And if you have any concern about your stress level, seek the help of your physician.

"These resolutions are simply a few of the things you can do to make positive, healthy lifestyle changes in your life. In 2002, you can continue to look to the AMA and the AMA Web site for the latest public health information. And without question, you should continue to look to your physician to care for you and your family," said Dr. Corlin.

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