

# Lifestyle Medicine

A pathway to improved  
health & wellbeing

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The use of lifestyle interventions in the treatment and management of disease has been put forward as a broad description of lifestyle medicine (LM) by the American College of lifestyle medicine. In 2011 a well-known Australian general practitioner and lifestyle change advocate, Dr Garry Egger added further explanation describing the practise of LM involving the “application of medical, behavioural, motivational, and environmental principles to the management of lifestyle related health problems in a clinical setting, including self-care and self-management”. Whilst in reality lifestyle medicine often focuses upon chronic diseases that may be heavily influenced by lifestyle choices the principles of LM can be extended to other chronic diseases including autoimmune diseases.

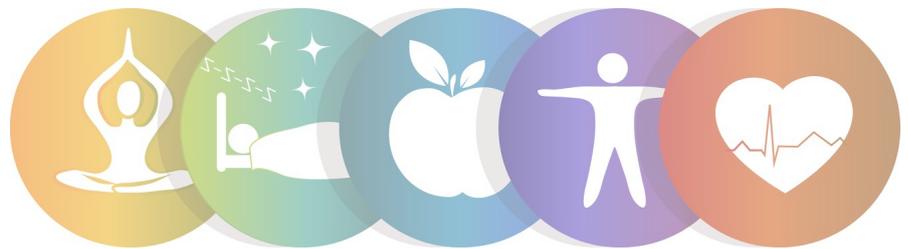
In future 2019 and 2020 ARChives we plan to theme editions with a focus on a single target area of LM and present information that can advise, support and help us all make changes to move towards improving health outcomes and well being through lifestyle changes. The focus areas we will address will start with stress, stress management and mental health, and end with the large topic of diet in 2020. Other ARChive editions will focus on activity, weight management, smoking and alcohol use, and sleep.

Throughout the ARChive editions we will tell you about the national guidelines and latest research around these areas. To add to these focus lifestyle areas we would also highlight some helpful strategies that can be adopted as part of self-management of your autoimmune symptoms.

But first let's present a snapshot of what LM is, what are its core components and how does it differ and work alongside other medical and lifestyle treatment therapies and practices.

LM provides evidence based guidelines and recommendations lifestyle habits and decisions that can influence overall health. Areas focused on include:

- Physical activity
- Nutrition
- Stress management
- Emotional well being
- Sleep
- Smoking
- Other substance cessation



LM has an emphasis on behavioural interventions to learn about available choices and in practice how you can be supported to adopt changes that may improve overall outcomes. LM prescribes lifestyle change as a treatment for the cause of an illness or symptom and works in the same way as pharmaceutical prescriptions. The prescription intervention whether as a treatment for improved physical activity or diet focuses on the specific disease or risk conditions and can involve coaching to improve personal lifestyle choices and encourages adoption of self-awareness and self-management techniques that work alongside your current medical management of your autoimmune illness.

LM occurs in many settings and can often involve many disciplines including general practice, speciality care, allied health and other rehabilitation services. LM is often a component part of national guidelines as both a strategy for prevention of disease and as a treatment. differs from, but works alongside conventional medicine in that conventional medicine is generally described as treating individual risk factors with the patient often being a passive recipient of care with shorter term treatments offered. In contrast LM focuses upon prevention of primary, secondary and tertiary disease and the patient is an active partner in care with a long term treatment focus requiring the patient to make sustainable lifestyle changes to support health and well being. (ref. American College of Lifestyle Medicine, American College of Preventative Medicine)

In conventional medicine the clinician is the primary person responsible for management with medications being a central point of the disease management plan. In LM the patient takes on the key role and responsibility for self-management through adopting lifestyle changes that support better help outcomes with the support of their other health team members. Medication is often still needed however this is alongside adoption of self-management and lifestyle management and appropriate change. (ref. Egger G Lifestyle Medicine 2nd Edition 2011)

The American College of Lifestyle medicine and the American College of Preventative Medicine through a consensus panel of experts formulated the following definition. Lifestyle medicine is the:

***Evidence-based practice of helping individuals and families adopt and sustain healthy behaviours that affect health and quality of life.***

This expert group also offered the following descriptors of important elements to a LM approach in stating that LM requires:

- Comprehensive lifestyle assessments including risk factors and personal change readiness
- Use of National guidelines
- Use of a team approach
- Establishment of effective relationships
- Making referrals to others when appropriate
- Use of information technology to maximise continuity of care.

LM has a unique role in the prevention and management of health as it focuses on behaviours and improvements that can be made to reduce adverse health outcomes. It has the individual as the primary, secondary and tertiary point of focus with support from a health team fully engaged with the individual to find the best possible health outcome. In autoimmune and other chronic diseases illness symptoms and need for constant management can overshadow other more pleasurable aspects of life. The adoption of a lifestyle medicine approach with directed self-management alongside other medical management provides a pathway to improved health and well being and allows us to find a way to reach our potential whilst living with an autoimmune illness.

***Living a life: not an illness.***

***Join us in future ARRChive editions as we explore further Lifestyle medicine.***