

8 Steps TODAY for a Healthier You

Many people are ready to take action ‘tomorrow’ to incorporate more healthful habits into their life. Tomorrow never comes for many. Often people think that wide sweeping changes are needed when lots of small ones can make a big difference in the health and wellness department. Here are eight simple things you can do *today* to get the ball rolling:

1. Get up earlier.

I hear ‘I don’t have time to exercise’ or ‘I don’t have time to make lunches or cook from scratch’ more often than not. The fact is, time never magically appears, it has to be built into your schedule. One way to increase productive time is to get up 20-30 minutes earlier. This is sometimes all it takes to allow a little wiggle room in the day. You may fit in a short workout or prepare lunches or get dinner plans organized. You could even use the time to meditate to prioritize what needs to be done in the day ahead. In any case, 20 minutes at the start of the day is often more useful than 20 minutes staying up later, often in front of the TV (more on this one later).

2. Drink more water.

Proper hydration can be the difference between feeling sluggish, hungry or headache-y, and feeling your best. Try to make it a habit of drinking a glass of water upon rising. Try to reduce the caffeinated beverages in your diet, or at least match every ounce of caffeinated drink with two ounces of water. Don’t wait until you’re thirsty to drink. Keep the water flowing by having a water bottle with you through out the day.

3. Get rid of the junk.

Fill your tank with lean protein, fruits, vegetables and fiber rich foods. Empty your pantry of junk. If it’s in your pantry, you *know* at a weak moment it will be in your stomach. Temptation is so much easier to resist when it’s not there.

4. Snack more!

Snack. Six meals per day are better than three. Keeping blood sugar stable is your best bet at avoiding the ‘I’ll eat road kill’ scenario. Add some kind of protein with every snack and meal to avoid an insulin rush, lethargy and to control appetite.

5. Avoid the ‘after meal slump’.

Cut out processed and high carbohydrate foods. This goes along with the previous two items. Making wise food choices helps to reduce the need for a siesta after meals. If that low feeling hits, whether it’s between or after a meal, then doing some activity rather than reaching for caffeine and chocolate works every time.

6. Exercise.

You knew it was coming! Activity is a must. Find something that fits your lifestyle, interests, schedule, and budget and do it! This can look different for everyone but it is a universal necessity. Fit exercise into your schedule long before the day starts.

7. Lose fat, earn more money and have better sex!

Bet you weren't planning on reading that one! Research shows that men and women of normal weight earn more money than their overweight counterparts. Feeling better about your body affects self image which can in turn affect your sex life in a positive way.

8. Turn off the TV.

How much time do you spend in front of evening TV programs? At the very, least, multi- task in front of the TV by riding a stationary bike or using a treadmill. Or prepare meals with the TV on. If you've followed some of the other healthy guidelines, you'll want to get to bed earlier to enjoy better sex to get up earlier to begin another healthy day!

If all 8 of these things are a bit overwhelming, set a goal to try one thing a week. By the end of 8 weeks, you should be enjoying a healthier lifestyle. Small changes in behavior can pay large dividends in how you feel about yourself. Take ownership of your health and your body will repay you with fewer aches and pains, more energy and an overall elevated mood.

Then, just when you've got things under control, throw it all out the window for a day. It's good to live a disciplined life to a certain extent, but allow for some spontaneity and fun. If you're following a healthy lifestyle for the majority of the time, you can afford to fall off the wagon every once in a while. In fact, it's likely that if you do fall off the wagon, you'll miss how great you feel when you're taking good care of yourself and you'll want to resume your healthy lifestyle again.

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