



## 6 Tips to Live Better, Feel Stronger, and Age Gracefully!

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### 1. Stay hydrated.

Recommendation: 1.5 - 2.5 L of water per day, depending on current hydration and activity habits.

Proper water intake and hydration is crucial for maintaining body temperature regulation, joint lubrication, immune function, and digestive health, among many other things. When these aspects of your life are optimal and under control, it becomes much easier to be able to exercise efficiently and effectively, and help you feel your best while doing it.

Humans regulate their body temperature through mechanisms like sweating, breathing, and shivering. If someone becomes dehydrated, their sweating rate is reduced because they no longer have enough fluid to expel, which predisposes them to overheating. Similarly, a lot of heat is evaporated through our skin by means of blood flow to the skin. If we become dehydrated, our blood flow rate is reduced, thus diminishing the ability to lose heat. Thermoregulation is important to monitor during exercise, as it prevents us from overheating and helps us achieve a better workout.

The composition of the fluid around your joints, called synovial fluid, is primarily water. Having a healthy amount of this fluid around your joints reduces joint stiffness and helps the joint move easier with less friction. This will help you feel better with movement on a daily basis, as well as eliminate any discomfort in your joints during your workout routine.

Water is an important component in maintaining good digestive health. Adequate water intake aids in proper digestion and absorption of nutrients from the foods we ingest. As such,

studies have demonstrated that, as water intake increases, the incidence of functional dyspepsia (indigestion) and constipation are markedly reduced.

Take this as a short and sweet summary of *some* of the amazing benefits that staying well-hydrated does for your body. There are many, many other reasons for why hydration should be on the top of your list of concerns, such as to maintain mood and brain function, metabolic function, and exercise performance.

Tip! Get a really big water bottle! The one pictured here holds about 1.9 L of water. For those aiming to get in at least 2 L per day, this is a great move. It's called the 64 oz TAL Ranger Pro water bottle. You can purchase it on Amazon or at Walmart! You'd only have to drink one of these guys each day.

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## 2. Sleep well.

**Recommendation:** 7 to 9 hours of consistent, good quality sleep on a regular basis for adults aged 18+

An adequate amount of sleep each night is another important component of maintaining optimal health as we age for many reasons, including cognitive health and exercise performance. Many would argue that the secret to living a long, functional life is to keep moving (more on that in the next point!). If that's true, what could hinder your ability to do so? Perhaps muscle aches and being tired all of the time. The purpose of sleep in the recovery process is to replenish our energy stores that were depleted during the day's activities. As such, having adequate sleep and rest is essential to improving your energy levels and exercise routine.

Those who begin their exercise regime already sleep- and energy-deprived are more likely to get exhausted faster once they begin. This is also the case when going through the

motions of your day-to-day routine, such as walking the dog, going to work, doing laundry and yard work, etc. While some individuals may be able to push through the tiredness and sluggishness, it's unlikely that they will be physically able to perform to normal standards and get exhausted faster. The same amount of work may feel a lot harder than it normally does and you may not be able to go as long as you normally would without needing a break. In exercising terms, being sleep deprived causes a reduced endurance capacity and an increased rate of perceived exertion.

How do all of these effects relate to sleep? As mentioned previously, the purpose of sleep in recovery is to replenish and restore energy lost throughout the day and also repair worked muscles. While it's important to keep moving, laying down for a solid 8-hour sleep also does wonders for muscle repair. When we sleep, blood flow is diverted to parts of the body that need repairing, rather than parts of the body that are working during the day, such as your digestive system, brain, and musculature involved in moving.

[Tips for a better sleep](#) - get into a sleep hygiene routine. About 1-2 hours before your bedtime, limit screens. The blue light on screens inhibits the natural release of melatonin, which is the hormone that makes you tired and is regulated by the light. Alternative suggestions include downloading a blue light filter on your phone or investing in some blue light filter glasses to wear close to bedtime. In addition, try creating a routine specific to you getting in bed. For example, go to the washroom, wash your face, brush your teeth, drink some water, dim the lights, hop into bed, and read for 10 minutes. Creating a routine like this is a signal to your body that you are preparing for sleep and will help you fall asleep faster!

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### 3. Move.

**Recommendation:** at least 150 minutes of moderate-to-vigorous activity per week, accumulated in at least 10-minute bouts.

Use it or lose it! This phrase is often used when referring to brain plasticity, or the ability to learn new things; if you don't continue to challenge your neural functioning, it will inevitably start to decline. The same phrase applies to moving your body; if, as you age, you start to become sedentary, it will progressively become more and more difficult for you to maintain your activities of daily living. There are many natural processes that occur as we age that favour a decline in health, however, maintaining movement has been demonstrated to be the best medicine for preventing these. Breaking down how movement is crucial to maintain as we age, it maintains mobility, flexibility, muscle mass, improves the immune system, reduces risk for heart disease, diabetes, and other chronic diseases, and elicits many, many, other benefits.

One side effect of aging is a decline in joint strength, along with progressively worsening joint fatigue and damage. Continuously moving joints maintains mobility and lubricates the joints, allowing them to continue to move pain-free and with ease. In addition, maintaining adequate joint and muscular mobility and flexibility helps you be better able to complete the simplest of daily tasks, such as bending over to tie your shoe, roll over to get out of bed, and reach overhead to grab something from the top shelf! Weight-bearing movement, such as walking, also strengthens bone, which reduces the risk of bone degenerative diseases (osteoporosis) and reduces the risk of fractures if a fall does occur. Continuing to build muscle mass as you age is also important for everything mentioned above - you need to have strong

and reactive muscles to be able to complete those tasks and catch your bodyweight if you do lose your balance.

Did you know that, on top of keeping your physical health in great condition, exercising also improves your immune health? Exercise releases a number of molecules that all come together to help your immune system deal with



harmful pathogens that enter our body. Over time, the chronic increases in those immune-helping molecules create enhanced *immunosurveillance*; the body is better able to detect inappropriate immune responses to foreign, potentially harmful, molecules. So, when a harmful bacteria or virus does get into your body, your immune system is better prepared to deal with them in a more timely fashion. In addition, although exercise causes acute inflammation to repair damaged musculature (what makes us big and strong... and why we need sleep!), these molecules lower systemic inflammation and improve blood flow. This is of particular importance to preventing and managing obesity and other chronic inflammatory diseases, such as Type 2 Diabetes, heart disease, and atherosclerosis.

**Tip!** Find little ways during your day to become more active, such as: parking farther away from the store or office entrance, taking the stairs instead of the elevator, stand up and walk around every half hour, take the long way to the washroom, etc.

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#### 4. Challenge yourself.

When you move, don't be afraid to make it hard. *All progress takes place outside of your comfort zone!* Challenging yourself leads to improvement. If you stick to the same old routine and never make it harder, improvements won't happen at a noticeable pace. As simple as that.

**Tips!** Walk those extra 5 minutes, pick up the pace; don't be afraid to sweat or lose your breath a little. Add another 2 reps, increase your weight 2.5 lbs; don't be afraid to feel the burn or struggle a bit extra. Try new exercises; don't be afraid to fail or look silly! Sometimes it's the weirdest exercises that you feel the most.



## 5. Eat a balanced diet.

A balanced diet is crucial for supplying your body with essential nutrients to maintain proper function and good health. Straying too far from a balanced diet can put individuals at risk for disease, infection, increased fatigue, and higher stress. For example, there are many diseases mainly linked to poor diet, such as hypertension (high blood pressure), Type 2 Diabetes, atherosclerosis (plaque buildup in the arteries), and other heart and metabolic diseases. When diet is balanced and fuels the body properly, many positive effects take place, including a mood boost and increased exercise performance. The 4 main components of a balanced diet are a balance of macronutrients, variety of food intake, consuming everything in moderation, and choosing wholesome foods.

A good balance of macronutrients means that your carbohydrate, fat, and protein consumption is in optimal ratios. Many diets promote extreme macronutrient imbalance, such as the ketogenic diet (high fat, very low carb), and high-carb diets (very low fat). These diets, although they may work in the short term, are not sustainable if you plan on sticking to a “diet” for the long haul. Instead, find a diet that works for you; one that won’t seem like much of a “diet” per se, but one that provides you with everything you need for balance.

Focusing on a variety of foods in your diet is another important aspect of eating balanced. If you eat the same thing every day, you’re more likely to get bored and start eating things you shouldn’t. (Come on, you’re telling me you eat a bland salad and you’re NOT craving something sweet or full of carbs after??). Again, you should enjoy the food you’re eating, not think of it as a mundane routine.

Building on the previous point, a well-balanced diet consumes everything in moderation. Don’t be afraid to stray from your diet and have that glass of wine or piece of cake. If you want it, have it. Just be mindful of your consumption and don’t overkill. The phrase “go big or go home” doesn’t apply to these foods!



Lastly, a well-balanced diet contains ample wholesome foods. Go for the good food rather than its processed sibling. Eating the whole fruit over the fruit juice contains the fibre necessary to slowly digest the fruit rather than just consuming its sugary counterpart that causes a radical spike in blood sugar. Another example is choosing whole grains (rye bread) over processed (white bread) for the same reason; the digestion is much better on your gut and for your health.

**Tip!** Have or hire someone to develop a meal plan if you're unsure about what next steps to take. This person can keep you accountable.

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## 6. Practice gratitude.

Practicing gratitude is a simple, yet overlooked, component that helps you live better. With everything going on these days, it is so easy to get caught up in the negativity, so taking time out of your day to focus on the positive has a huge impact on your mental health. You need to have good mental health to really dive into focusing on your physical health. Stressors of poor mental health make it so much more difficult to see healthy physical improvements. Practicing gratitude is strongly and consistently associated with greater happiness and is a great way to put daily life and challenges into perspective... Who wouldn't want that?

To practice gratitude in your daily life, try offering it to those who offer us challenges. Shift your perspective to see the challenges as an opportunity to grow and work on yourself as a human being. Everyone has their own way of expressing gratitude, so find the one that fits with your personality to offer to others. For example, it may be through notes, acts of service, or a simple smile.

**Tip!** If it's helpful to stay consistent with practicing gratitude, try starting a gratitude journal. Write down 3 things that you're grateful for each day.

