

Wellness Tips

So you're thinking about taking better care of yourself. Good for you!!! Little changes can make a big difference in your health and wellness. In fact, so much of healthy living is made up of the small things we do daily, done consistently over time, that can add up to produce some big results.

This page will be devoted to simple and easy to understand wellness tips that are based on good science and generally accepted as true and helpful.

Double check with your doctor before embarking on any comprehensive lifestyle change.

Drink a Glass of Water First Thing in the Morning

- When it comes to daily productivity, hydration is crucial. The human brain is made up of 73% water so staying hydrated is especially essential for maintaining optimal brain activity.
- Hydration should be a daylong process and starting with a glass of water right away will aid in digestion, enhance skin health, boost alertness and increase your energy levels. Drink up!



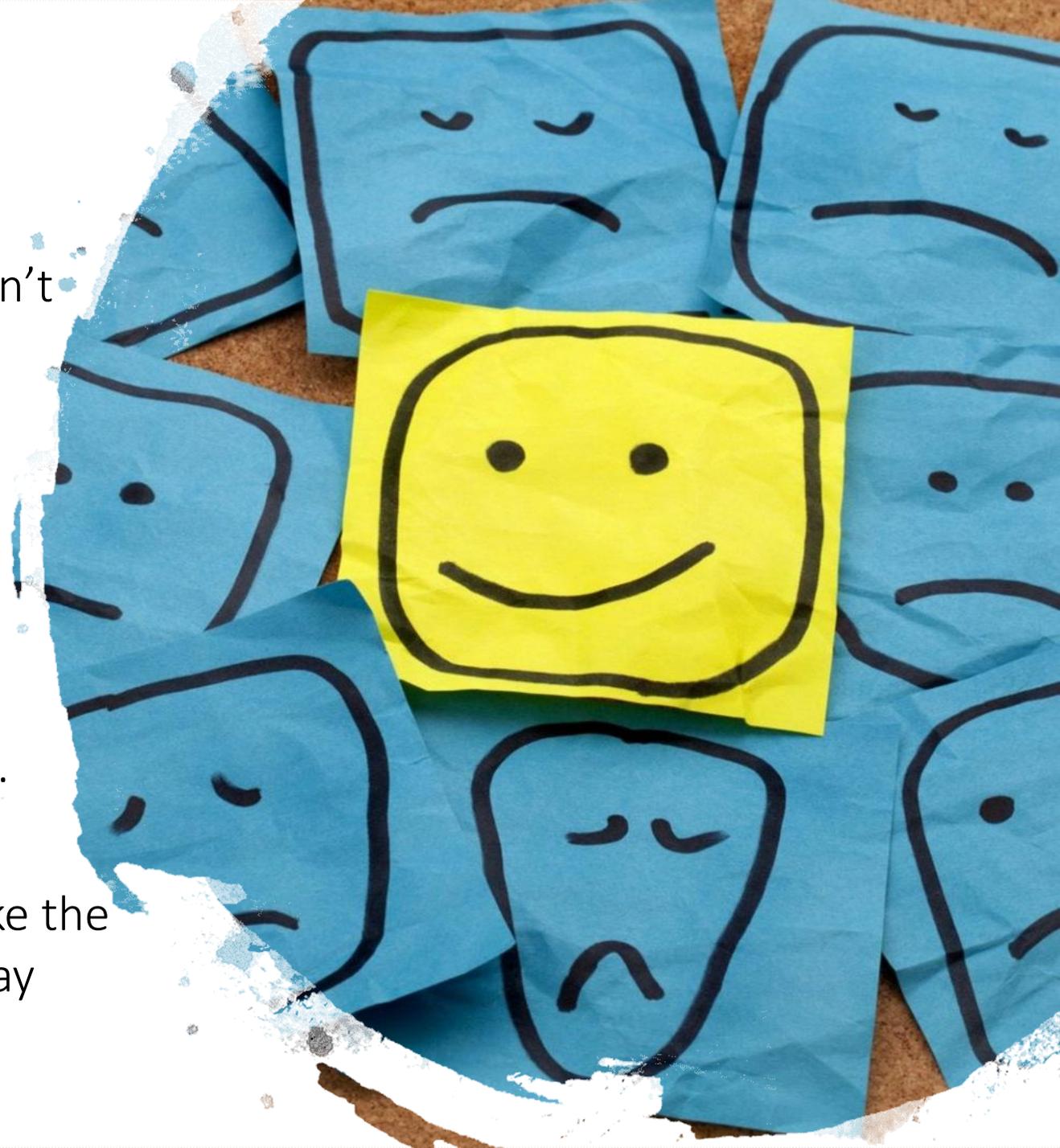
Eat Real/Whole Foods

- One of the best things you can do for yourself if you are trying to eat better is to eat more “real foods” or “whole foods” and limit the amount of heavily processed foods you eat.
- The easiest way is it to eat more fresh fruits and vegetable (organic when possible) and choose whole ingredients like beans and rice without seasonings and preservatives added. If you add the ingredients when preparing food yourself, then you know what’s in it.
- The only other way to know what is in your food is to read the label on the package. For the most part, if you can’t pronounce the ingredients listed, you probably shouldn’t put them in your body.



Work on Cultivating a Positive a Mindset

- As we all know, life can be challenging. We can't always control the hand we are dealt but we can try to control how we react to life's challenges.
- Actively cultivating a positive mindset by recognizing negative thought patterns and countering them with positive thoughts is actually possible. It just takes some practice.
- *Deciding* to have a positive attitude can make the difference between a good day and a bad day and your ability to handle life's stresses.



Don't Go on a "Diet"

- Diets are notoriously ineffective and rarely work in the long term. In fact, dieting often leads to future weight gain.
- Instead of going on a diet, try making small changes like cutting down your portions. Focus on nourishing your body instead of depriving it. When you feed your body good nutrition you tend to feel full longer because you have supplied your body with what it needs.
- Weight loss should follow as you transition to whole, nutritious foods and incorporate exercise into your life.



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Smile Often

- A smile spurs a powerful chemical reaction in the brain that can make you feel happier.
- Science has shown that the mere act of smiling can lift your mood, lower stress and possibly strengthen your immune system.

Make at Least Half of your Daily Food Intake Fruits and Vegetables

- Fruits and vegetables should make up half of your plate at any given meal—about 30 percent vegetables and 20 percent fruit. (Check with your doctor regarding fruit intake if you have Diabetes.) Choose a diverse selection of colors when possible to add variety in both flavor and nutrition.
- Supplement the produce you receive at IFC by shopping at discount stores like the 99¢ store. Most days they have a diverse supply of healthy fruits and vegetables that can help stretch your money and allow you to include more fruits and vegetables in your diet.



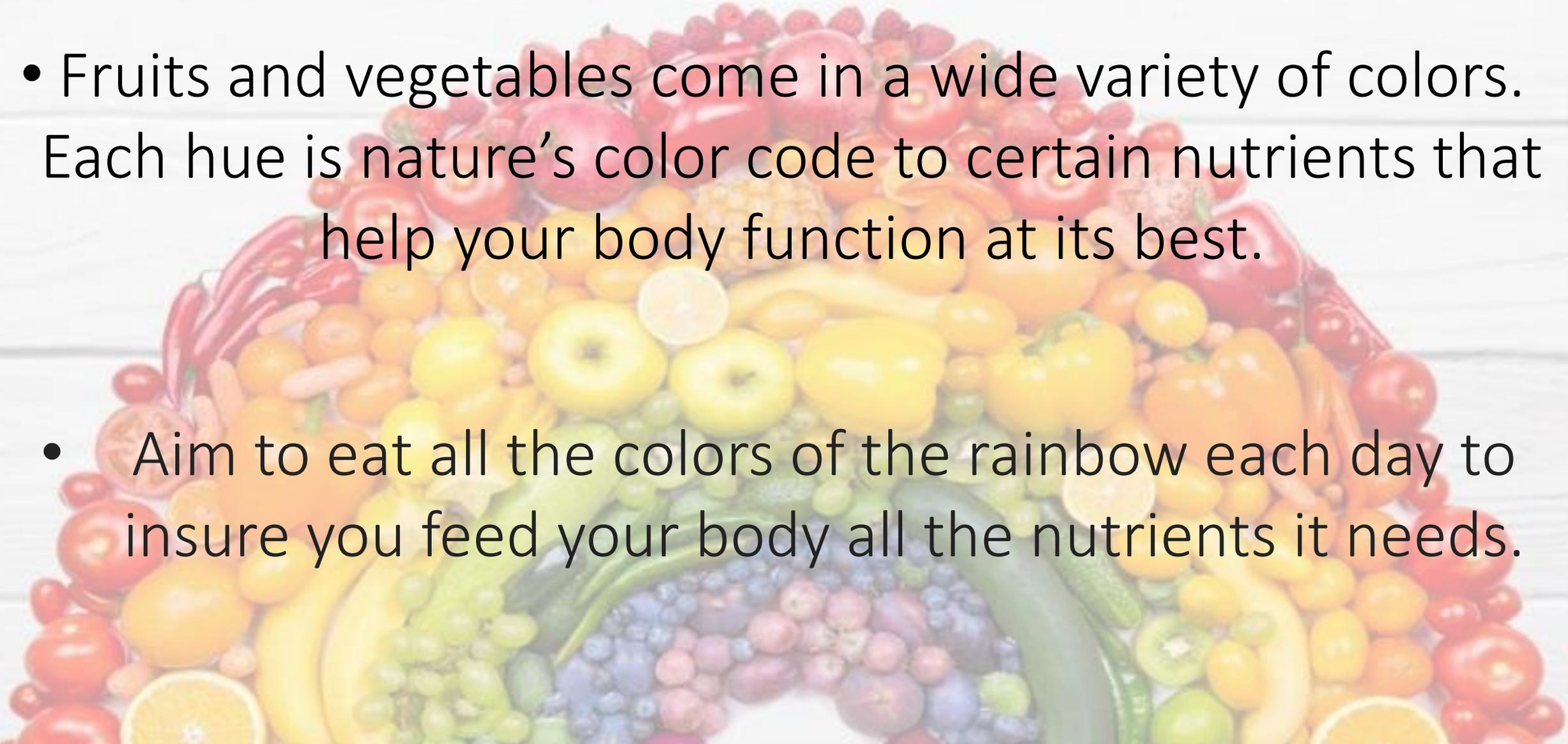
Be Kind; It's Good for You

- When you are kind to another person, even in a small way, it has a positive effect by helping that person feel valued and supported. If you make such acts of kindness a regular habit, it's actually good for *your* health and even slows your body's aging process, according to research.
- When kindness becomes a habit we start to produce 'happy chemicals' like dopamine and oxytocin more consistently and that makes us feel good.



Eat The Rainbow

- Fruits and vegetables come in a wide variety of colors. Each hue is nature's color code to certain nutrients that help your body function at its best.
- Aim to eat all the colors of the rainbow each day to insure you feed your body all the nutrients it needs.



Nutritionally Dense Food vs. Empty Calories

- Get the most out of your calories by eating nutritionally dense food.
- These foods are often relatively low in calories, but high in nutrition, so they can help you maintain a healthy weight while giving you a good dose of vitamins, minerals, protein, and fiber.



Brush and Floss Your Teeth



- Brushing and flossing your teeth truly can affect your overall health.
- Not only does flossing daily protect your teeth and gums, but good dental health is also important for your immunity and heart health.

Avoid Products that Contain **TRANS FATS**

- Trans fats are very harmful. Intake of trans fat should be kept as low as possible. You can limit your intake of trans fats by choosing foods that are low in sources of trans fat.
- Read product labels and check the ingredients list for words like "partially hydrogenated," "hydrogenated" and "shortening."
- Although food manufacturers and restaurants have reduced the amount of trans fats in recent years, they can still be found in some desserts, microwave popcorn, frozen pizza, margarines, and coffee creamers.



Eat Eggs, Yolk and All



- Eggs are one of the planet's most nutritious foods and a great source of protein.
- Eggs also are a good source of other nutrients, including [vitamin D](#), which aids bone health and the immune system.
- It is a myth that eggs are bad for you because of their cholesterol content. Studies show that eating eggs has no effect on blood cholesterol in the majority of people.

Practice Gratitude

- Practice gratitude each day—this could be when you wake up, during your lunch break at work or whenever it works for you.
- The benefits of practicing gratitude are many. People who regularly practice gratitude by taking time to notice and reflect upon the things they're thankful for experience more positive emotions, sleep better, express more compassion and kindness to others, and even have stronger immune systems.
- Practicing gratitude can be as simple as saying out loud each morning the things you are grateful for.

Hungry or Just Thirsty

- Drinking plenty of water is an important part of proper nutrition. Foods like raw fruit and vegetables can also help keep you hydrated.
- It's important to realize that your body can have trouble distinguishing hunger from thirst pangs, so being well hydrated can often keep you from eating too much.
- Sometimes, when you think your body is saying "I'm hungry," it could actually be trying to tell you that it simply needs more water.



Limit Alcohol Consumption

- Alcohol is high in calories with essentially no nutritional content.
- So, if you are paying attention to your calories intake and you want every calorie to count, avoid the empty calories in alcohol and save them for food that is nutrient dense.



Get Enough Sleep

- Getting enough sleep can be easier said than done, but the importance of getting enough quality sleep cannot be overstated.
- If you are embarking on a new health routine, getting enough sleep should be at the top of your list. It is very difficult to incorporate new routines into your already busy life if you are too tired to think clearly or to include exercise into your day.



Try Lifting Weights

- Lifting weights is one of the best things you can do to strengthen your muscles. Check with your doctor or a trainer to insure you are lifting the right amount of weight for your body and current health condition. You don't need official weights to do some light lifting. You can use cans of food or water bottles or whatever you have access to.

Weight-lifting benefits include:

- Keeping your bones strong and healthy.
- Staving off disease.
- Boosting metabolism and fat loss.
- Regulating insulin and lowering inflammation.
- Improving posture, sleep, mood and energy level
- Improving strength and endurance.



Be Aware of your Sodium Intake

- When choosing meals and snacks, keep in mind that the average person should limit daily sodium intake to 2,300 milligrams (one teaspoon) or less.

To minimize your salt intake:

- Limit processed foods, which can be high in sodium.
- Try flavoring foods with herbs, spices, and other seasonings—instead of salt.
- Remember that meals from restaurants can be high in sodium. Check the nutritional and sodium content of a restaurant's food, either on its menu or online if possible.



Sugars and other Simple Carbohydrates

Try tracking your daily sugar consumption. Less than 10% of your daily calories should come from added sugars.

To decrease your sugar in-take:

- Read labels for sugar content and avoid sugary snacks.
- Drink water, unsweetened tea, or coffee, instead of sugary beverages.
- Avoid simple carbohydrates (like white rice, white bread, enriched white pasta, cakes and cookies, etc.)



Limit foods with “Empty Calories”



- Cut down your intake of foods with "empty calories"—those that have high calorie counts with little nutritional benefit.
- These foods often get their extra calories from saturated fats and added sugars. That's why a piece of fruit in the morning is far better for you than a sugary pastry.

Include Non-Animal Protein Sources in Your Diet

Protein is important – our bones and muscles need it to function. There are plenty of affordable protein sources to maintain a healthy body and stay on budget. Here are seven plant-based sources that can easily be incorporated into your daily life.

- Nuts
- Lentils
- Beans
- Quinoa
- Peanut butter
- Chick Peas/Garbanzo Beans
- Tofu



Pay Attention to the Type of Fats you are Eating

- Be aware of your saturated fat consumption. Less than 10% of your calories should come from saturated fat – that is 22 grams per day for a 2,000 calorie diet.
- The main sources of saturated fats in the U.S. diet include meals containing meat, cheese or both such as burgers, sandwiches, tacos, and pizza. Unhealthy snacks, sweets and frozen dairy products also contribute to saturate fat intake.

To lower your saturated fat consumption:

- **Read labels** and choose packaged foods lower in saturated fats and higher in polyunsaturated and monounsaturated fats
- Consume smaller portions of foods higher in saturated fats or consume them less often.
- Cook with unsaturated fats such as olive, soybean, corn and sunflower oils



Cut back on your Consumption of Fatty Meats.

- Foods that are higher in dietary cholesterol, such as fatty meats and high-fat dairy products, tend to also be higher in saturated fats.
- Because of this commonality, diets that are limited in saturated fats will also be lower in cholesterol. Eggs and shellfish are unique in that they are higher in dietary cholesterol but not saturated fats and therefore can be included in most diets as a healthy protein choice.



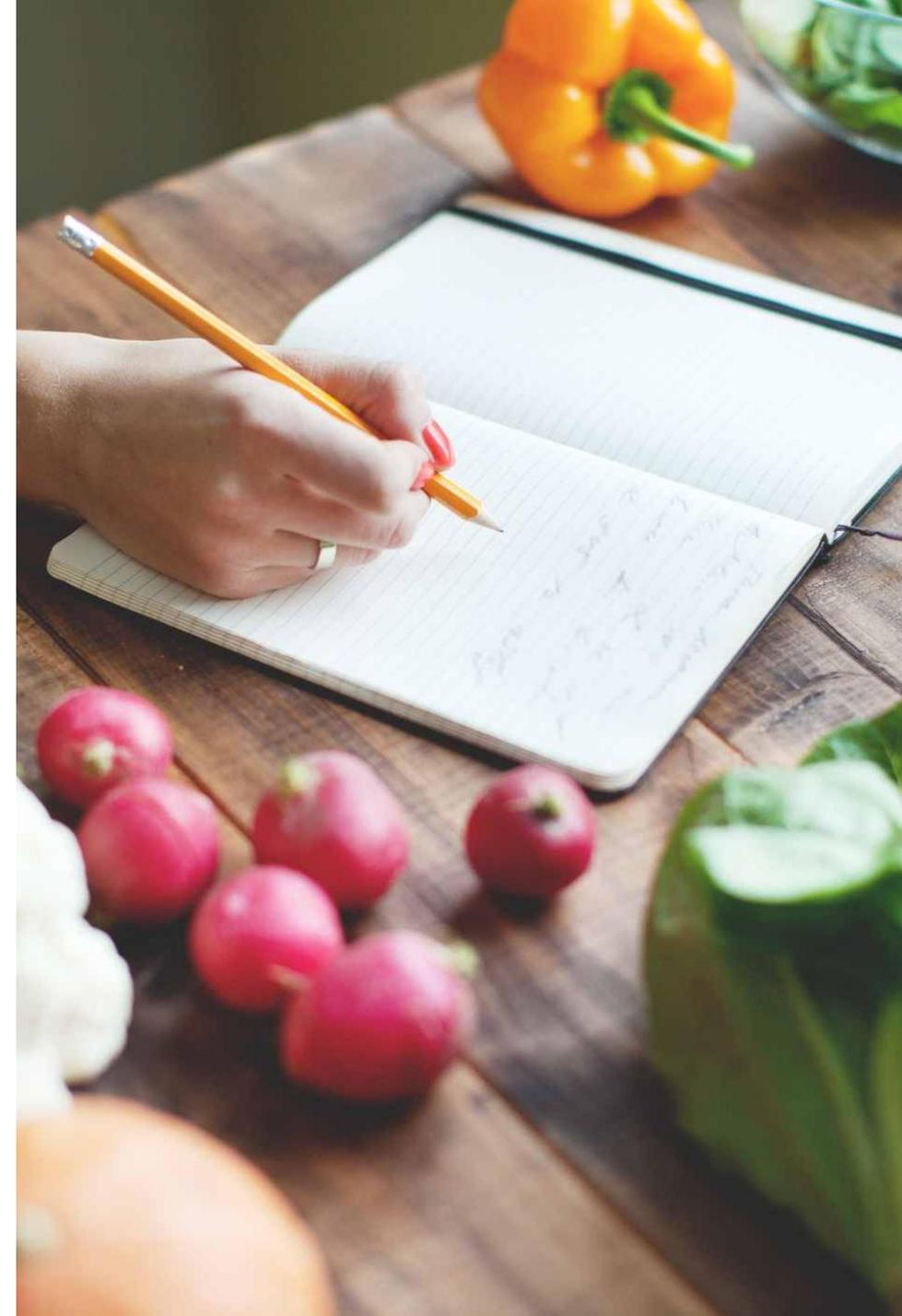
Get Out and Enjoy Nature

- Studies have shown that time in nature is an antidote for stress. It can lower blood pressure and stress hormone levels, enhance immune system function, reduce anxiety, and improve mood.
- This doesn't have to involve a week-long camping trip in the mountains. Take a walk in your local hills or stroll the perimeter of your local park. Just get out there. It can do you a world of good.



Balance Calories In vs. Calories Out

- Maintaining a healthy weight is *in part* a matter of calories consumed vs. calories burned. Try writing down everything you eat for a week. This will give you an idea of how many calories you are actually eating and then you can adjust your calorie intake to your physical activity level. Keep in mind that *quality* of calories is also important.



Eat Calcium Rich Foods

- Your body needs calcium to maintain strong bones and to carry out many important functions. It needs calcium for your muscles to move and for nerves to carry messages between your brain and every part of your body.
- If your body doesn't get enough calcium and vitamin D to support important functions, it takes calcium from your bones. This is called losing bone mass. Losing bone mass makes the inside of your bones become weak and porous. This puts you at risk for the bone disease osteoporosis.
- Dark leafy vegetables, like turnip greens, kale, Chinese cabbage, and mustard greens, are naturally rich in calcium. Dairy products are also a good source of calcium and other calcium-fortified foods include cereals, breads, and some juices, as well as soy, rice, and nut beverages.



Take Care of your Gut Health with Probiotics

- The bacteria in your gut, collectively called the gut microbiota, are incredibly important for your overall health.
- A disruption in gut bacteria is linked to some of the world's most serious chronic diseases, including obesity.
- Good ways to improve your gut health include eating probiotic foods like yogurt and sauerkraut and eating plenty of fiber. Fiber functions as healthy fuel for your gut bacteria.



Exercise Any Way You Can

Want to feel better, have more energy and even add years to your life? Exercise!
Everyone benefits from exercise, regardless of age, gender or physical ability.

Regular exercise helps prevent or manage many health problems and concerns, including:

- Stroke
- High blood pressure
- Type 2 diabetes
- Depression
- Anxiety
- Arthritis
- Falls
- Weight control



Regular exercise improves your mood, boosts energy and promotes better sleep.

Try it. You'll be amazed at how much better you feel!

Coffee Can be Good for You

Coffee in the right amounts can be healthy for you. It's high in antioxidants, and many studies have linked coffee intake to longevity and a reduced risk of type 2 diabetes, Parkinson's and Alzheimer's diseases.

- Caffeine tolerance is different for everyone. Do not drink so much that you feel "jittery." You get some of the potential health benefits by drinking just one cup of coffee a day.
- Coffee also contains active substances that may reduce internal inflammation and protect against disease.
- Remember that what you add to your coffee can make a difference in how healthy the beverage really is. Avoid adding flavored creamers containing sugars and trans fat if you want to reap the benefits of drinking coffee without added calories.



Enjoy a Little Sunlight Every Day

- Vitamin D is one of the most important nutrients for your overall health and sunlight is a great source of it. Research shows that vitamin D may reduce the risk for viral infections, including respiratory tract infections, by reducing production of proinflammatory compounds in the body.
- Being outside in the sunshine has also been associated with lowering depression rates.





Eat Fatty Fish at Least Twice a Week

Fish is a good source of protein and, unlike fatty meat products, it's not high in saturated fat. Fish is also a good source of **omega-3 fatty acids**, which are good for your heart. Research has shown that omega-3 fatty acids can reduce your risk of heart disease and stroke and reduce inflammation.

Fatty fish like salmon, mackerel, herring, lake trout, sardines and albacore tuna are particularly high in omega-3 fatty acids.

Exercise Away the Urge to Smoke

We all know how dangerous smoking is. Quitting smoking should be at the top of your list if you trying to take better care of yourself. Quitting smoking can be really tough, but studies suggest that regular physical exercise may be the secret weapon to quitting.

- Exercise helps limit weight gain and it also helps in dealing with cravings for a cigarette.
- Even moderate physical activity, especially aerobic exercise, reduces the urge to smoke.
- Withdrawal symptoms and cravings for cigarettes decrease during exercise for as long as 50 minutes afterwards.

Walking is one easy way of getting more physical activity. Take a walk at lunchtime or after dinner, perhaps finding a coworker, friend, or family member to join you. Be sure to choose companions who don't smoke! Gradually lengthen your walks and step up the pace. **You can do it!**



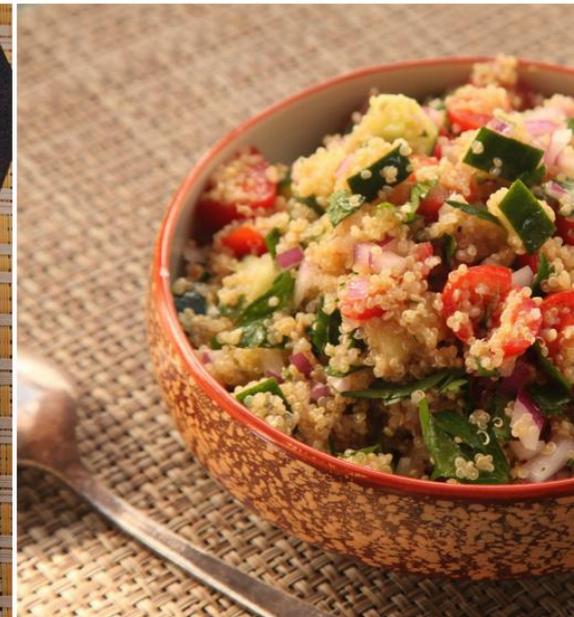
Eat Leafy Greens



- The vitamin K content of dark green leafy vegetables provides a number of health benefits including protecting bones from osteoporosis and helping to prevent inflammatory diseases.
- Because of their high content of antioxidants, green leafy vegetables may be one of the best cancer-preventing foods. Studies have shown that eating 2 to 3 servings of green leafy vegetables per week may lower the risk of stomach, breast and skin cancer. These same antioxidants have also been proven to decrease the risk of heart disease.
- Adding more green vegetables to your diet increases the intake of dietary fiber which, in turn, regulates the digestive system and aids in both bowel health and weight management.

Choose Whole Grains

- Choose whole grains instead of refined grains.
- Whole grains offer health benefits, unlike refined grains, which are stripped of most of the valuable nutrients in the refining process.
- All whole grain kernels contain three parts: the bran, germ, and endosperm. Each section houses health-promoting nutrients. The bran is the fiber-rich outer layer that supplies B vitamins, iron, copper, zinc, magnesium, antioxidants, and phytochemicals. Phytochemicals are natural chemical compounds in plants that have been heralded for their role in disease prevention.





Avoid Processed Foods/Eat “Whole” Foods Instead

- Processed junk food is incredibly unhealthy.
- These foods have been engineered to trigger your pleasure centers, so they trick your brain into overeating — even promoting food addiction in some people.
- They are usually low in fiber, protein, and micronutrients but high in unhealthy ingredients like added sugar and refined grains. Thus, they provide mostly empty calories.
- Choose “whole” foods like vegetables, fruits, whole grains, nuts and beans and avoid processed foods.

Take care of your Relationships

- Social relationships are incredibly important not only for your mental well-being but also your physical health.
- Studies show that people who have close friends and family are healthier and live longer.
- We are all busy, but it only takes a minute to contact someone we haven't seen for a while or reach out to someone who looks like they might need a friend. It will do you both a world of good.





There are ways to add variety to your meals even if you are just cooking for yourself

Cook a larger serving of grains and proteins, such as rice and chicken or quinoa and lentils, then change the spices or sides each day for variety.

Add different fruits and vegetables. Use up fresh, frozen, or canned ingredients!

Prepare larger batches of your favorite meals and freeze in small portions.

Keep a stocked pantry with a variety of staples and condiments that can improve flavor, including different types of oils or vinegar, soy sauce, honey, crushed chiles, or lemon juice.

