



Guide to Longevity and Well-Being

This guide shares our clinic's top recommendations for living a long, healthy life. Topics include:

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Anti-inflammatory Diet

General Guidelines

- Aim for variety.
- Eat a plant rich diet.
- Eat the color spectrum of vegetables and fruits.
- Include as much fresh local food as possible.
- Eliminate your consumption of processed foods and fast food.

Caloric Intake

- If you are eating the appropriate number of calories for your level of activity, your weight should not fluctuate greatly.
- Put simply, your plate should contain about 75% plant based foods. Aim toward a majority of this to be some combination of vegetables, nuts, seeds, and beans.
- Protein can be up to 6 ounces (roughly the size of your palm), and carbohydrates should be limited to a small side portion.
- The ideal amount of fruit is no more than 2-3 servings/day.

Carbohydrates

- Keep grain consumption to no more than a small side portion at each meal. This portion can be up to a ½ cup of cooked whole grains.
- The majority of your carbohydrates should be in the form of whole grains.
 - Whole grains are grains that have been minimally processed, if at all. Examples include brown rice, quinoa, steel cut oats, and barley.
 - Try asking yourself the question, “Does this food look similar to how it looked when harvested from the field?” If the answer is no, then it is likely not a whole grain.
- Eliminate or keep to an absolute minimum grains that are refined and/or processed.. These include breads, cereals, “instant” foods, cakes, cookies, and anything made of flour.

Sugar and Sweets

- Keep foods with added sugar to a minimum. The goal is that added sweet is a rare treat and not a part of your everyday diet.
 - This includes: sugar, maple syrup, agave nectar, corn syrup and honey.
 - American Heart Association Guidelines recommend no more than:
 - 13g of sugars for children
 - 22g of sugars for women
 - 35g of sugars for men
- Try to satisfy your sweet-tooth with whole fruits. You will be amazed at how satisfied a ripe fruit will leave you!
 - Juices and other processed fruit products count toward your sugar total!

Fat

- Include foods rich in monounsaturated fats, including avocados, olives, olive oil, sesame seeds, nuts, nut oils, and nut butters.
 - Extra-virgin olive oil can also be used as a spread.
- Include foods rich in omega-3 fatty acids such as wild sockeye salmon, sardines, omega-3 fortified eggs, flax seeds, hemp seeds, chia seeds, pumpkin seeds, and walnuts.
- If consuming animal fats, ensure they are from grass-fed animals.
 - Grain-fed animals are high in inflammatory arachidonic acid.
- Strictly avoid margarine, vegetable shortening, and all products listing them as ingredients.
- Avoid using safflower oil, sunflower oil, corn oil, cottonseed oil, and mixed vegetable oils.
- When using cooking oils, make sure to not exceed the smoke point.
 - When an oil smokes it creates carcinogenic free radicals.
 - Olive oil has a low smoke point and avocado oil has a high smoke point.
 - Consider using avocado oil when cooking at high heat.
 - Olive oil is best when cooking at lower heat.
- **Strictly avoid all products made with partially hydrogenated oils of any kind.**

Protein

- Eat more vegetable protein. Vegetables such as beans have plenty of protein to satisfy your needs.
- If eating animal products, **favor omega-3 rich fish that are low in mercury.**
 - See [NRDC guidance](#) on this and [download their app to your phone](#) for up-to-date shopping recommendations.
- Decrease your consumption of animal protein.
 - Cultures around the world that eat plant rich diets have longer life spans.
- If eating red meat, make sure it is sustainably raised and grass-fed. Grass-fed meat has increased omega-3's and CLA's, which help decrease inflammation. Try to limit red meat to no more than one serving per week.
 - Factory farmed red meat has increased palmitic and myristic acid, which increases cholesterol and inflammation.
- **Also consider that as a culture we can feed many more people if we all eat less meat. Additionally, raising factory-farmed and clear-cut pastured animals for food is a major contributor to our climate change crisis.**

Fiber

- Try to eat 40 grams of fiber a day.
- The best fiber sources include fruit, vegetables, and whole grains.

Phytonutrients

- To get maximum natural protection against age-related diseases, including cardiovascular disease, cancer, and neurodegenerative disease—as well as against environmental toxicity—eat a variety of fruits, vegetables, and mushrooms.
- Aim for vegetables and fruits to be as much as 75% of your diet!

- Choose fruits and vegetables from all parts of the color spectrum, especially berries, tomatoes, orange and yellow fruits, and dark leafy greens.
- Choose organic produce whenever possible. At a minimum learn which foods are the most important to eat organic at <http://www.ewg.org/foodnews/summary.php>
- Eat cruciferous vegetables regularly.

Vitamins and Minerals

- The best way to obtain all of your daily vitamins, minerals, and micronutrients is by eating a diet high in fresh foods with an abundance of fruits and vegetables.
- Consider adding a high quality multivitamin into your diet.
- Consider adding 2000-5000 IU of Vitamin D3. Your medical provider will help you determine how much supplemental Vitamin D you need.
- Women should take supplemental calcium, 500-700 milligrams a day, preferably calcium citrate or MCHA.

Other Dietary Considerations

- Consider a 1000mg fish oil supplement. Nordic Naturals brand is safe.
- Eat ginger and turmeric regularly for their anti-inflammatory components.
- Traditional spices such as curry powder and Italian seasoning are rich in anti-inflammatory herbs.

Water

- Try to stay well hydrated daily.
 - Aim for your water intake to be approximately half your body weight in ounces. For example, a 150lb individual should aim for 75 ounces of water daily. This includes water from all sources (water, tea, coffee, etc.)
- Consider carrying water with you when you leave your home.
- Eliminate all cola/soda and fruit drinks from diet.
 - Many fruit juices have as much sugar as soft drinks.
- Always use a water purifier in your home.

Additional information

- Dairy: limit or avoid. Dairy products have been linked to obesity, diabetes, heart disease, cancer and osteoporosis.
- If not sensitive to caffeine, consider including unsweetened tea in your diet -- quality white, green, or oolong teas are rich in antioxidants.
- Enjoy plain dark chocolate (with a minimum cocoa content of 70%) in moderation. Moderation means one square or one ounce per day.

Movement

Physical Activity

Physical inactivity is a major health problem in the United States. Research studies show that a **sedentary lifestyle is a stronger predictor of mortality than smoking, high blood pressure and diabetes**. Movement is a modifiable risk factor that can improve the quality of your life and prolong it as well.

There are many recommendations and types of movement practices. Ultimately it is by listening to your body that you can decide what movement practice works best for you while incorporating evidence-based recommendations as listed below. Plan an exercise program for yourself with the guidance from your medical provider, health coach, or personal trainer. Think about what is reasonable for your body while also challenging yourself.

Benefits of Physical Activity

- Live a longer life
- Reduce the risk of heart disease
- Improve insulin sensitivity and glycemic control
- Protect against breast, intestinal, bladder, kidney, lung, stomach, esophageal, prostate, endometrial and pancreatic cancer
- Manage weight
- Build bone mineral density
- Improve cognitive function
- Improve sleep and mood while reducing stress

Risks of Physical Activity

Although benefits of movement and exercise outweigh the risks, some individuals with chronic medical conditions like heart disease or lung disease may have increased risk that should be evaluated prior to starting an exercise program. Talk to your provider about what movement and exercise options are right for you. Musculoskeletal injuries can also occur if the body is not properly warmed up.

Exercising Safely

When starting an exercise program, spread the workouts out over the course of the week to reduce the risk of injury. Studies even show that a short burst of activity versus continuous exercise have similar benefits, if not better. For example, exercising 10 minutes 3 times during the day versus 30 minutes continuously was shown to be beneficial in weight loss as well as the sustainability of the program. As always, listen to your body.

Limited Mobility

Those with limited mobility due to injury, illness, disability, or weight can still enjoy the mental and physical health benefits of movement. Visit helpguide.org for examples of exercise options.

Exercise Prescriptions

- Each week do moderate intensity exercise for a total of at least 150 minutes or high intensity for at least 75 minutes. See the chart below for examples:

Moderate intensity exercise	High intensity exercise
<ul style="list-style-type: none">● Brisk walking (at least 2.5 miles per hour)● Water aerobics● Dancing (ballroom or social)● Gardening● Tennis (doubles)● Biking slower than 10 miles per hour	<ul style="list-style-type: none">● Hiking uphill or with a heavy backpack● Running● Swimming laps● Aerobic dancing● Heavy yard work● Tennis (singles)● Cycling 10 miles per hour or faster● Jumping rope

- The American Heart Association also recommends strength training two times per week. Examples of strength training are:
 - High Intensity Interval Training
 - Weight lifting
 - Power Yoga
 - Boot camp
 - Pilates
- Stretch 2 times per week.

For children ages 3-5, the recommendation is to be physically active with opportunities to move around during the day. Children 6-17 years old should get 60 minutes of daily physical activity.

There are many workout programs that are available virtually on demand. Others may choose to go to a gym or workout with a personal trainer. Choose an option that fits your lifestyle so that exercising can become a regular part of your routine.

Is motivation an issue?

We have an expert health coach who can work with you on specific goals if you would like to set them. You may schedule an appointment by visiting integrativeasheville.org or calling our front desk. Your next step is to create a routine you enjoy and work toward challenging yourself.

Sleep

Optimizing Sleep

We spend a third of our lifetime sleeping. Refreshing sleep has an anti-inflammatory effect and is linked to living longer, healthier lives. Poor sleep is linked to certain medical conditions like diabetes, high blood pressure, heart failure, heart arrhythmias, and dementia...among others (Sharafkhaneh, 2005). More and more people in our society are not getting restful sleep leading to daytime fatigue, chronic medical conditions, and shorter lifespans. For these reasons, we believe prioritizing sleep is fundamental to maintaining a healthy lifestyle.

When people are not getting enough sleep, the cause often times falls into three broad categories:

1. **Intentional:** Many folks will intentionally not allow themselves to get enough sleep in the hope that they can get more done in their day.
2. **Insomnia, sleep-onset:** Difficulty falling asleep that is impacting daytime function
 - Evaluate what may be preventing you from falling asleep at bedtime. Some examples may include:
 - Racing thoughts
 - Anxiety, depression, or other mood disorders
 - Acid reflux
 - Palpitations
 - Chronic medical conditions, i.e. heart failure, COPD, etc.
 - Medications or supplements that are taken in the evening
3. **Insomnia, sleep maintenance:** Waking up in the middle of the night that is impacting daytime function
 - Evaluate what may be preventing you from falling asleep once you wake up in the middle of the night:
 - Sleep apnea
 - Nocturia (waking up at night to urinate)
 - Chronic medical conditions (coughing from asthma, COPD)
 - Anxiety, depression, or other mood disorders
 - Medications
 - Alcohol

While the list above is not exhaustive, it provides an idea of factors that may impact sleep. Reviewing sleep hygiene and managing chronic conditions can help you stay asleep. Talk to your

primary care provider about chronic medical conditions that need management. Your provider may recommend a sleep study to evaluate for sleep apnea or other conditions affecting your sleep.

Most of the time when individuals practice optimal sleep hygiene, sleep normalizes.

Tips to help you optimize your sleep:

- Create a routine/ritual at bedtime
 - Go to sleep at the same time each night, and create a habit of waking up at the same time each morning. Try to give yourself an 8 hour “sleep opportunity” each night. For example, 10pm-6am.
 - Create a bedtime routine, e.g. dimming the lights, warm bath or shower, etc.
 - Avoid snacking in the evening
 - Consider a relaxation technique before bedtime (e.g. diaphragmatic breathing, body scan, meditation, guided imagery, 4-7-8 breath technique, prayer, etc.)
 - If you are waking up frequently in the middle of night to urinate, avoid drinking fluids after 6pm
 - Avoid alcohol and caffeinated beverages in the evening
 - Avoid exercise in the evening
 - Try to keep your house a bit cooler during night time hours since we sleep better in cooler temperatures. Optimal sleeping temperature is 69°F.
- Do not stay in bed if you can’t sleep.
 - If you are awake in bed and cannot fall asleep, get out of bed, read a book or meditate. When laying in bed when you can’t sleep, it can associate the mind and body with the anxiety and frustration with the inability to sleep creating a vicious cycle leading to sleeplessness.
- Aim to expose yourself to morning sunshine for 20-30 minutes each day.
 - This helps establish the circadian rhythm and primes our melatonin to increase appropriately in the evening and early night time.
- Reduce exposure to **Light at Night (LAN)**
 - LAN reduces melatonin, the hormone that regulates our circadian rhythm and helps us fall asleep.
 - Remove TV/electronics from the bedroom, and avoid watching TV 1-2 hours before bedtime
 - If you are watching TV or using screens prior to bed, place blue light blockers (f.lux on computers, blue blockers on phones) to assist with reducing the blue light that may keep you up.

- Studies have shown that screen use before bed can reduce melatonin as much as 50%.
- Use blue light blocking glasses in the evening
- Dim the lights in the bedroom
- Extended release, low-dose melatonin at 300-500mcg (0.3-0.5mg) can be helpful to boost the melatonin
- Use black out curtains to eliminate light from outside sources
- Use an eye mask to block out light

Cognitive behavioral therapy for insomnia (CBT-I)

This form of therapy is considered first-line therapy for chronic insomnia. Your provider may recommend you to a therapist in the community who specializes in CBT. Additionally, there is a free app called “Insomnia Coach” through the US Department of Veterans Affairs that is available for free.

Dreams

Dreams are a way for our psyche to process the emotions of the day. Creating a dream journal can be one way to help process those dreams. For those with mental health disorders like depression, anxiety, and etc., monitoring your dreams and reviewing them with a therapist can be a helpful way to process emotional difficulties.

If you are not dreaming, become aware of this. This is another sign that you may not have optimal sleep. As you continue to work through optimizing your sleep, you may notice that you are dreaming more. Setting an intention to dream prior to bedtime can be a helpful way to start the dreaming process.

Next Steps

The recommendations listed above will help you get a good night's rest. However, if you continue to have difficulties with sleep, which is causing dysfunction during the day, please speak to your provider for further recommendations.

Book Suggestions:

1. *Why We Sleep*, by Matthew Walker
2. *Healing Night*, by Rubin Naiman

Stress Reduction

Stress Management

Stress is a natural response to how the body and mind react to demanding situations. While stress in small amounts can be healthy, chronic, uncontrolled stress can be detrimental to health. For example, stress can worsen mood disorders like anxiety and depression, increase the risk of heart disease and heart attacks, and cause tightness in the body leading to muscle aches and headaches.

What are signs of stress?

Body	Mind	Emotion
Headaches	Unhealthy eating patterns	Anger
Tension in the body	Feeling overwhelmed	Depression
Abdominal pain	Isolation	Anxiety
Insomnia	Lack of focus	Restlessness
Low energy	Sluggishness	Emotional lability

<https://www.mayoclinic.org/healthy-lifestyle/stress-management/in-depth/stress-symptoms/art-20050987>

Ways to Manage Stress

There are many ways to manage stress. You may try several different modalities or start with one.

Meditation

- Research studies show that a daily meditation practice increases grey matter in areas of the brain related to concentration and memory and reduces grey matter in areas related to anxiety, over the span of eight weeks.
- There are many different types of meditation practices, including but not limited to: mindfulness meditation, breathing meditation, focus meditation, heart centered or loving kindness meditation, and walking mediation.
- If you have never meditated, consider starting by joining a local meditation group such as Asheville Insight Meditation (<https://www.ashevillemeditation.com/>) or using apps like Headspace, Insight Timer, or Calm to find meditation practices that resonate with you.

Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction

- Jon Kabat-Zinn describes mindfulness meditation as “the awareness that arises from paying attention, on purpose, in the present moment and non-judgmentally.” Mindfulness-based practices help reduce anxiety, depression, and help manage stress.
- Mindfulness-based stress reduction (MBSR) is an eight week course that teaches individuals various techniques to help manage stress including both formal and informal practices including body scans, yoga, meditations over the course of eight weeks.
 - Scott Macgreggor leads a local eight-week MBSR program that is an excellent entry point to mindfulness. Learn more at <https://www.ashevillmindfulliving.com/>

Movement

- See the *Exercise* section of this guide for more information.
- Exercise releases endorphins, reduces stress, and helps improve mood.
- Find a movement practice that works with your body.
- There are gentle, movement-based practices like Qi gong, Tai chi, and restorative or yin yoga that can relax the sympathetic nervous system.
- Dancing and spontaneous movement are also ways of moving stress through the body.

Cognitive Behavioral Therapy

- Cognitive behavioral therapy is effective for a number of different mood disorders like depression, anxiety, alcohol or drug use, etc.
- Speaking with a trained counselor can help build the mind-body connection to build grit, improve resiliency, and reduce stress.

Body Work

- There are many different modalities of body work and energy medicine practices that can help reduce stress, including: Swedish and Lomilomi massage, acupuncture, Reiki, Healing Touch, Qi Gong, and etc. You may want to explore body work as a way to alleviate stress.

Social Connectedness

- Dean Ornish, a cardiologist who emphasizes lifestyle medicine, mentions that we are “creatures of community,” and a belief in something larger than ourselves can help alleviate stress and reduce risk of heart disease. Connecting with our loved ones, participating in support groups, focusing on compassion, and practicing forgiveness are all ways that we can improve our wellbeing and reduce stress.
- Create rituals that are comforting and start to become routine. This can be prayer, words of affirmation, connecting to Source/God/Creator in whatever way resonates with you.

Resources

- Meditation Resources page on our website at:
<https://www.integrativeasheville.org/members-meditation/>
- Beneficial meditation apps: Headspace, Insight timer, Calm, Waking Up
- [Noom Healthy Mind app](#) to reduce anxiety and stress (16-week paid program)
- Guided imagery meditation through Kaiser:
<https://healthy.kaiserpermanente.org/health-wellness/podcasts>

Endocrine Disruptors

Endocrine disrupting chemicals (EDCs) are present in our environment, and studies show they can be readily absorbed in human body fluids and tissues. EDCs can mimic actions of natural hormones. Low dose exposures can impact fertility, increase the risk of reproductive disorders, increase risk of certain cancers, and increase the risk of obesity, diabetes, and cardiac disorders, among its other effects. Therefore, reducing exposure to EDCs is important.

EDCs include:

- **Industrial chemicals:** pesticides, flame retardants (PFA chemicals), combustion products (PAH, dioxins), and PCBs
- **Household, personal care, and consumable items:** cosmetics, sunscreens, toys, tobacco products, , benzophenone-3 and oxybenzone, BPA, phthalates, perchlorate, dioxins
- **Medical supply:** IV tubing, gloves, bags (BPA, phthalates)
- **Pharmaceuticals:** natural and synthetic steroids (DES, estradiol)

While this can appear to be an overwhelming list, we recommend making at least small changes to reduce your overall exposure and risk.

Suggestions

- Use mineral-based sunscreens (zinc oxide, titanium dioxide) rather than chemical-based sunscreens.
- Avoid heating and storing food in plastic containers. Use glass containers instead.
- If purchasing canned foods, buy cans that are BPA free since the lining of cans sometimes can contain BPA.
- Avoid using pesticides/herbicides in your garden, if possible.
- Reduce/minimize application of makeup. If desired, use makeup that is mineral-based and/or see below for guidance on selecting healthier products.
- For all personal care products, use the Environmental Working Group (EWG) Skin Deep database at www.ewg.org/skindeep/ to identify products that are either EWG certified or on a threshold of 1-3 on the scale of 10. The EWG website reviews product ingredients and indicates what may increase the risk of endocrine disruption or lead to allergy symptoms.
- Avoid tobacco products.

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