



***FIT*after 50**

EXERCISE ESSENTIALS

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Introduction

It's common sense and a fact that regular physical activity has important benefits for physical and mental health. It's also common sense that throughout human history, people had to engage in more physical activity than people do today. With the advent of TV, the comforts of home, computers and the internet, people are now more sedentary than ever before. With the decrease in physical activity, comes an increased risk of many health problems, including cardiovascular disease, type 2 diabetes, anxiety, depression, musculoskeletal problems, some cancers and unhealthy weight gain.

We know that doing some physical activity is better than doing none at all, and that increasing amounts of physical activity provide even more health benefits. One of the great things about physical activity is that there are so many ways to be active. And while the minimum recommendation for activity is 30 minutes per day, you don't have to do that all at once. You can be active in short spurts throughout the day, or you can set aside specific times of the day on specific days of the week to exercise. Many physical activities — such as brisk walking, raking leaves, or taking the stairs whenever you can — are free or low cost and do not require special equipment.

Although physical activity is generally safe for everyone, if you're unaccustomed to activity you should start gently (for example, by walking), without over-exertion, and to gradually build up towards reaching recommended levels. Consult a health professional if you're unsure.

The goal of this Quick Fitness Guide is to provide you with answers to the 7 Key Questions that bring clarity to anything: Who, What, When, Where, Why, How, and How Much? Let's face it: Action is the key to everything. If you continue to take action, you can and will succeed.

Three Pillars

There are three essential things you have to do to obtain optimal physical fitness and keep your body healthy to promote a long life, minimize your risk of chronic diseases cognitive decline. These include managing your weight, choosing the right foods for optimal nutrition, and exercising. According to the authors of a March 2003 study published in "Age and Ageing," people who engage in unhealthy habits -- such as smoking, a poor quality diet, and physical inactivity -- are at increased risk for premature health decline and death.

Weight Management: Many chronic diseases that afflict people over 50 are related to weight management. Being overweight dramatically increases the likelihood that you'll get heart disease and / or diabetes, just to name a few. It's therefore critical that you manage your weight. In March, 2001 "The New England Journal of Medicine" published a hallmark 16-year study where participants who maintained a body mass index of 25 or less were had significantly reduced risk for developing type 2 diabetes compared to people with higher BMIs. The fact is, diets high in saturated fat, sugar and processed foods commonly lead to added pounds, which increases your risk for high blood pressure, arthritis and certain forms of cancer. We'll discuss that further later.

Proper Nutrition: Choosing the right foods is essential for physical fitness. Think about it like this: you wouldn't put regular gas in Ferrari, so why would you put unhealthy food in your body? It's actually pretty simple: to achieve optimal health, fruits, vegetables and whole grains should comprise about 75 percent of each meal. Ideally, the other 25 percent would include lean meats such as skinless chicken or other poultry, fish such as salmon or tuna. Also, it's a good idea to regularly have meatless meals comprised of beans or soy products to substitute red meat. Finally, limit sugar, salt and fried foods.. You should also limit salt, drink lots of water, and avoid processed foods and sodas, whether the soda is regular or diet, and reduce your portions for better weight control.

Physical Activity: Finally, there are simply too many studies that conclude that exercise related fitness is essential to longevity to quote. A recent study concluded that physical activity is the number one contributor to longevity, even if you don't start exercising until your senior years. And adding physical activity will also help you to enjoy your years, because you'll look better, feel more mentally alert, have more energy, reduce or eliminate the aches and pains that often accompany aging, and improve your sense of well-being.

Fitness

Who

This should be obvious: everyone should get fit. There are so many benefits, all of which fall under improved quality and length of life, better ability to get around, less pain and discomfort, etc. The trick is: don't over think it. It's begins as simply as putting on your shoes, and going for a walk. Fitness doesn't happen overnight, so don't stop if you don't see instant improvements. Think lifestyle. Adopt a fitness lifestyle, and you'll add years to your life, and life to your years. After all, who doesn't want to feel great?

What

If you're new to fitness, it may seem like you have to learn a whole new language, which is both frustrating and intimidating. Don't worry though, because even folks with a long history of exercising may have misconceptions about exactly what some fitness terms mean. Let's start with a definition of fitness:

"The ability to carry out daily tasks with vigor and alertness, without undue fatigue, and with ample energy to enjoy leisure-time pursuits and to meet unforeseen emergencies". [USDHHS](#)

Fitness is conventionally broken into 2 categories:

Skill Related Fitness is the ability to perform well in every day life activities and sports – or just do your daily tasks easily – and includes:

1. **Agility:** The ability to change body position quickly while maintaining control of its movement
2. **Balance:** The ability to maintain or regain equilibrium, while moving or stationary
3. **Coordination:** The ability to use senses of thought and sight together to accomplish accurate and well timed body movements
4. **Reaction Time:** The amount of time it take to start (or stop) moving once you decide to start
5. **Speed:** The ability to perform a movement to cover a distance in a short amount of time
6. **Power:** The ability to do strength performances quickly

Health Related Fitness involves exercise activities that you do in order to try to improve your physical health and stay healthy, particularly in the categories of cardiovascular endurance, muscular strength, flexibility, muscular endurance and body composition. Ideally, you should include activities and exercises that promote each of these components, as health related fitness is considered the most important because you need it to maintain good health and wellness.

1. **Cardiovascular Fitness:** the ability of the circulatory and respiratory systems to supply oxygen to skeletal muscles during sustained physical activity.
2. **Muscular Strength:** the maximum amount of force a muscle can put out when it contracts. This is built by exercise that is strenuous for short periods of time.
3. **Muscular Endurance:** the ability of the muscle to sustain activity or continue to perform work

4. **Flexibility:** the range of motion around a joint, and can be improved by regular stretching.
5. **Body Composition:** the relative amount of muscle, fat, bone, and other vital parts of the body.

So there are 11 components of fitness, and there you have them. Ideally, pay attention to all these areas, and incorporate a comprehensive fitness program that will have you achieving a level of competence in each area.

When

Do you feel more like being active in the morning, afternoon, or evening? If you can, schedule your workouts for times when you feel reasonably energetic. Remember that physical activity sessions can be spread out over the day. You don't have to be active more than 10 minutes at a time. The key thing to think about is what time of day works best for you.

The best time of the day is when you will do it most consistently; because the benefits of physical activity are directly related to the amount you do on a consistent basis. If you're tight on time, then get creative and break up your activity into daily bouts of 3 10-minute increments.

Where

There are so many things you can do to integrate activity into your life, that the answer to Where? is anywhere! That said, things to consider include whether you prefer company, or you like to do things on your own. If you like to be independent, activities like swimming, running, walking, weight lifting, or household chores may appeal to you. On the other hand, if you prefer group activities, then things like tennis, dancing, or joining a running or hiking club will appeal to you. If you do prefer group activities, and don't know where to find a group, I suggest looking at Meetup.com, where you will most likely find a local group to join – and if a Meetup group doesn't exist near you, then start one!

Why

Quite simply, if you want to enjoy good health and longevity, fitness is fundamental. If you're not working to get fit, you're not living life to its fullest potential – and you're potentially reducing the quality and quantity of the years you'll live. You're not simply getting active as you strive to get fit. You're improving your body's ability to function properly. You're ensuring better ongoing health, lowering your risk of disease, and ensuring that the years you have will be healthy and fully functional.

The benefits of fitness extend far beyond weight management. Studies show that regular exercise provides a vast array of benefits, including mental health, stress release, better sleep, reduced depression, improved relationships, and leads to a healthier and happier life overall. Here's a short list. To learn more about these, visit [Fit after 50](#).

- | | |
|---|--|
| 1. Reduce risk of heart disease | 17. Improve self-confidence |
| 2. Reduce risk of stroke | 18. Improve cardiorespiratory and muscular fitness |
| 3. Reduce risk of Alzheimer's disease | 19. Prevent cognitive decline |
| 4. Reduce risk of Parkinson's disease | 20. Reduce anxiety |
| 5. Reduce of a hip or vertebral fracture | 21. Reduce risk of injury |
| 6. Reduce risk of colon & breast cancer | 22. Boost brain power |
| 7. Reduce blood pressure | 23. Improve memory |
| 8. Prevent and control diabetes | 24. Help control addiction |
| 9. Reduce body fat | 25. Increase relaxation |
| 10. Reduce cholesterol | 26. Increase productivity |
| 11. Reduce, decrease and/or prevent back pain | 27. Increase energy |
| 12. Prevent or reduce bone loss | 28. Improve sleep |
| 13. Improve self-esteem | 29. Improve sex life |
| 14. Prevent or postpone disabilities | 30. Prolong your life |
| 15. Reduce stress | 31. Improve balance & coordination |
| 16. Increase overall happiness | 32. Achieve healthier body mass and composition |

How

Starting From Nothing

How can you get fit? What if you've never been fit? What if starting from nothing? The trick is to just start. Aerobic exercise such as walking is the easiest for most people. Put some shoes on, and walk out your front door, then keep going. But walking is just one thing. What else can you do?

- | | |
|-----------------------|--------------------------------------|
| 1. Mow your lawn | 13. Get on a rowing machine |
| 2. Vacuum your house | 14. Join a rowing club |
| 3. Dust your house | 15. Join a jogging club |
| 4. Wash your windows | 16. Join a hiking group |
| 5. Wash your car | 17. Take stairs, not elevators |
| 6. Start jogging | 18. Park far from the store and walk |
| 7. Go for a bike ride | 19. Go canoeing |
| 8. Walk your dog | 20. Go dancing |
| 9. Go for a swim | 21. Join a dance club |
| 10. Go for a hike | 22. Gardening |
| 11. Play Ping-Pong | |
| 12. Play tennis | |

These are just ideas to get you thinking. The key is *movement*. People spend too much time sitting. Shut off the TV, and do something active instead. Remember, the people who live the longest don't *exercise*, per se, but they have active life styles. They *move*, constantly, every day.

Doing activities you enjoy increases the probability that you'll not just start, but maintain a fitness lifestyle. The important thing to remember is that anything you do to keep physically active is good. For people who aren't active at all, a good goal to shoot for is 30 minutes of exercise on most days of the week (which could be as mild as going for a walk).

For regular fitness, The American Heart Association recommends at least 150 minutes per week of moderate exercise or 75 minutes per week of vigorous exercise (or a combination of moderate and vigorous activity). 30 minutes a day, 5 times a week is an easy goal to remember. Remember, the benefits are the same even if you divide your time into 2 or 3 segments of 10 to 15 minutes per day.

If you're one of the people who are looking to lower your blood pressure or cholesterol, the recommendation is for 40 minutes of aerobic exercise of moderate to vigorous intensity 3 to 4 times a week to lower the risk for heart attack and stroke. Remember, exercise is integral to fitness, and to your ongoing health. According to a study done through Harvard, the greatest indicator of vitality and longevity is regular exercise. Not family history. Not environmental exposure. Not even whether you smoke. Simply put, nothing can replace the benefits of exercise.

And sadly, there is no magic pill. Only regular, sustained effort can enable you to create the quality of life, vitality, and longevity you desire.

*A key to success is that
getting fit must be enjoyable.*

Step It Up A Notch

Beyond the simple act of beginning to do something, the next steps are to extend what you do to tune your body to optimal fitness. This involves doing more, and you can start that with as little or as much as you can muster. The good news is that our bodies are remarkably efficient and adaptable. Whatever we do on a regular basis, our bodies adapt to it, and become good at it. This is true with exercise: if you do the same type of exercise day after day, you'll become quite good at it. As you adapt, and exercise becomes easy to complete, it's time to step it up and challenge your body with something new.

As you look for new things to do, focus on developing a well rounded program that includes the five essential elements for optimal fitness: aerobic fitness, strength training, core exercises, balance training, flexibility and stretching.

Aerobic Fitness

We've already touched on aerobic fitness, which you'll also hear refereed to as cardiovascular fitness, or "cardio." As aerobic fitness is the easiest to begin with, it's where most people start. Doing any of the exercises listed above will get your heart pumping and improve the amount of oxygen in your blood. As you improve your aerobic fitness, your heart, lungs and blood vessels get more efficient at transporting oxygen throughout your body.

Interval Training

At the simplest, Interval Training involves alternating periods of exercise with periods of rest, such as jogging for 30 seconds and then walking for 60 seconds, and repeating that several times.

While any form of interval training is good, because it raises your heart rate and forces your body to adapt to more stress, research has proven that the best and fastest way to improve your physical fitness is with "High Intensity Interval Training" or "HIIT." HIIT alternates short periods of high intensity effort (usually 30 seconds) followed by rest periods.

A sample workout might look like this:

Warm-up:

Walk for 5 minutes

Jog very mildly for 30 seconds, then walk for 90 seconds. Repeat 4 times. (8 minutes)

High Intensity Interval Training Session:

Run as fast as you can for 30 seconds, then walk for 90 seconds. Repeat 8 times. (16 minutes)

Cool Down

Walk for 10 more minutes

That's your whole workout, and you're done in under 40 minutes!

HIIT dramatically improves your cardiovascular fitness and fat-burning capabilities, so it's an extraordinarily efficient use of your time for the benefits it brings.

Strength Training

Strength training is essential if you want to obtain optimal physical fitness.

Training at least twice a week helps increase muscular fitness and bone density, and also helps you maintain muscle mass during a weight-loss program. Strength training also improves your ability to maintain and/or lose weight, because it's your muscles that burn calories, so have more muscle by definition means that your body burns more calories. Finally, strength training helps combat the loss of muscle mass associated with aging (sarcopenia), builds strength, and improves function.

When strength training, keep in mind that your goal is to exhaust your muscles. Different people will have different goals, ranging from preventing age related muscle loss to "getting ripped." To prevent age related muscle loss, research recommends that you workout at least 3 days per week, for 45 minutes to an hour each time. The research shows that the ideal rep range is 8-12 reps; pick a weight that is heavy enough that you can't do more than 12 reps. You can break up your workouts so you focus on different muscle groups each time you workout.

As far as "getting ripped" goes, that's beyond the scope of this handbook, and there are lots of websites that you can look to.

Functional Fitness

Functional Fitness is exercise that mimics the way you move in everyday life, and follows the basic human movements such as walking, stepping, bending, reaching, or lifting, with an exercise program that helps with your normal daily activities. Additionally, since during our daily activities we stand, bend, reach, lean, twist, turn, stoop and change directions constantly, we need to train for the 3 planes of movement: front to back, side to side and rotational.

At the simplest, Functional Fitness is based on the pillars of human movement:

1. Push

The push-up is probably the most familiar push exercise. Another is the military press, where a barbell is lifted overhead.

2. Pull

The pull-up is the most familiar pull exercise, but you may be familiar with the deadlift, where you lift something off the floor. The deadlift is one of the most fundamental movements – think about it: what's more basic and natural than picking something up off the floor?

3. Squat

The bodyweight squat is the most basic, and it's something we do every day as we sit down and stand up.

4. Hinge

The hip hinge is simply refers to when you bend at the hip to pick something up. The deadlift exercise begins with a hip hinge, and then incorporates bending at the knees.

5. Rotate

We all twist and turn every day, so incorporating rotation-based exercises is important. It's also something that is tragically overlooked – go to any gym, and you'll rarely see anyone doing any rotation or anti-rotation exercises. Yet we

rotate all the time. In sports we see it in the golf swing and the baseball swing, or when a tennis player swings the tennis racquet. You probably rotate when you shut your car door.

6. Walk (or Running)

Walking is a fundamental part of daily life and should be a priority in any training program, especially one aimed at beginners. Important note: walking over 6 miles per week is associated with preventing cognitive decline.

7. Lunge

Lunges are important and are directly related to walking, stair climbing, and picking up stuff off the floor. You can add or decrease the amount of weight or number of lunges as your fitness goals and ability permits.

Core Training

Training your core involves working the muscles in your lower back, abdomen, and pelvis, and is a key element of a well-rounded fitness training program. Your core provides the foundation for movement throughout your entire body. A strong core supports and protects your back, makes your entire body less prone to injury, and promotes balance and stability.

Core exercises help train your muscles to brace the spine and enable you to use your upper and lower body muscles more effectively. So what counts as a core exercise? A core exercise is any exercise that uses the trunk of your body without support, such as abdominal crunches, medicine balls, or balance boards. A weak core contributes to poor stability, and inhibits proper limb movements, resulting in muscle imbalances

Balance Training

As we get older it's incredibly important to incorporate exercises that maintain or improve balance in our routine exercises. The fact is, balance deteriorates with age, which is why falls are so prevalent among older people. A few simple things

that improve balance include standing on one leg for increasing periods of time, or standing with your legs wide apart, or just standing with your eyes closed. Activities such as tai chi can promote balance, too.

A big benefit of balance training is that it improves *proprioception*, which is your body's ability to sense itself, to interpret and use information about your position in space. Proprioception is essential for effective interaction with your environment. A lack of or reduction in proprioception commonly results in falls, reduced functional independence in older people, reduced recovery after a stroke, and other conditions such as Parkinson's disease.

Flexibility and Stretching

Flexibility is an important part of physical fitness, and becomes increasingly important as we age. One of the joys of aging is that our muscles and tendons shorten and don't function properly, increasing the risk of muscle cramps, pain, and damage. Flexibility enables us to get through daily activities such as bending down to pick up stuff from the floor or tie your shoes. Stretching regularly – at least 3-4 times per week - makes your muscles longer and more flexible, which increases your range of motion, reduces pain, risk for injury, promotes better posture, and can even help relieve stress. For this reason, stretching and flexibility activities are an appropriate part of a physical activity program.

Your body is most receptive to stretching when your muscles are warmed up, so either warm up by walking, marching in place or doing a favorite exercise at low intensity for five to 10 minutes, or stretch after you exercise. It's a good idea to stretch whenever you exercise, and if you don't exercise regularly, stretch at least three times a week after warming up. Yoga is a fantastic activity to promote flexibility, and highly recommended.

Strategies for Success

Make the Decision to Adopt a Fitness Lifestyle and Commit!

Make the decision today to adopt a fitness lifestyle, and commit to it now and in the years to come. “Using the power of decision gives you the capacity to get past any excuse to change any and every part of your life in an instant” says Tony Robbins, the worlds most successful success coach.

For your decisions to really make a difference in your life it’s imperative to decide what results you’re committed to—and know specifically how these results will transform your life. It’s important to really decide to adopt a fitness lifestyle, and to get clear about how that will affect your life for the better. With that clarity, you’ll find it becomes easier to incorporate fitness into your daily schedule, which will move you in the direction living a longer and healthier life.

Using the power of decision gives you the capacity to get past any excuse to change any and every part of your life in an instant.

Tony Robbins

Set Specific Goals

Make your goals clear and measurable, and focused on something you want to work on. Make short-term goals and long-term goals. Make sure your goals are attainable. Be realistic. Set goals in smaller steps toward your ultimate goal to establish a pattern of success.

Get Appropriate Nutrition

Getting the right nutrition each day is as important to fitness as the right exercise routine. Remember: Plan foods that support energy, strength, endurance, and recovery. And eat each food at the right time of day for optimal results. Part of

this is to eat fresh whole foods. Make the commitment to choosing healthy foods at all times.

The American College of Sports Medicine says, “Adequate food and fluid should be consumed before, during, and after exercise to help maintain blood glucose concentration during exercise, maximize exercise performance, and improve recovery time. Athletes should be well hydrated before exercise and drink enough fluid during and after exercise to balance fluid losses.”

Before: About 2 hours before you exercise, you’ll want to drink a glass or 2 of water, and eat some whole grain cereal, or toast, or some fruits and vegetables. It’s a good idea to avoid saturated fats and even a lot of healthy protein, because they digest slowly and take away oxygen and energy-delivering blood from your muscles. If you only have 5-10 minutes before you exercise, eat a piece of fruit such as an apple or banana.

During: Stay hydrated.

After: After your workout, drink plenty of water. Because exercising burns carbohydrates during exercise, it’s a good idea to replenish. Have some orange juice or fruit. Finally, have some lean protein, because protein helps repair and grow your muscles.

So do what works best for you. Know that what you put in your body (nutrition) is as important as you what you do with your body (exercise). Both are crucial to keeping your engine performing at its best.

Make Exercise Fit Your Schedule

You don't have to exercise at set times. Start thinking of ways to fit exercise into your daily routine. Park a 10-minute walk from work. Park in the farthest space from the store. Take the stairs. Housework qualifies as exercise if you do it at a

good pace. Just start slowly, maybe with 10-15 minutes of your chosen activity, rather than an hour, and work your way up.

Use Technology

Download a few free fitness apps on your cell phone, and find one that works for you. I like interval training, and there are free interval training apps that are extremely flexible, so it's easy to set small goals and slowly increase your exercise. If you've chosen walking, there's a great app called **MapMyWalk** that tracks your steps, miles & calories burned. It's fun and motivating to see what you're achieving, and it also lets you share your workouts with friends.

Write it Down

It's a good idea to keep a record of your exercise, because it helps you stay motivated. Here again, you can use technology. Most cell phones these days have a Notes app, where you can easily track the days you exercise and the workouts you do.

Get Enough Sleep

While in general, occasionally not sleeping well won't impact your exercise routine, there's an abundance of research that shows that consistently getting inadequate sleep can result in subtle changes in hormone levels, particularly those related to stress, muscle recovery, and mood. While no one completely understands the complexities of sleep, some research indicates that sleep deprivation can increase levels of cortisol (a stress hormone), decrease the activity of human growth hormone (which is active during tissue repair), and decrease glycogen synthesis.

Be Realistic

You won't reach your fitness goals overnight. There's no replacement for time and effort to make your exercise routine successful. Make the decision, commit, stick with it. It's a lifestyle that will add years to your life, reduce some of the

discomfort that comes with growing older, and aid in keeping you mentally sharp. Why wouldn't you want that?

Nutrition

Exercise is an essential component of optimal physical fitness and promotes good health, assists with weight management or loss, and helps to prevent diseases and cognitive decline, but it's not enough. Good nutrition is absolutely essential to achieving optimal health, and research shows proper nutrition plays a bigger role in weight loss or management than your exercise routine.

Here are some basic facts to start with

1. Better nutrition enables better health
2. All true nutrition experts agree on what constitutes "better nutrition,"
3. All nutrition experts agree on what is "worse nutrition," or what foods to drastically limit or eliminate from your diet entirely
4. What you eat has a bigger impact on your weight than anything else you do
5. Sugar is bad. Sugar provides empty calories and research indicates that it is a leading cause of diseases that kill millions of people each year
6. Diets, with rare exception, don't work. The only way to ensure long term weight loss and a lifetime of improved health is to adopt a healthy lifestyle
7. Unprocessed food is healthiest

Michael Pollan put it best: eat fresh, whole foods, mostly plants. Put another way, your diet should include primarily fresh whole foods, preferably organic, and consist of at least 60% fruits and vegetables, nuts, seeds, whole grains, beans, legumes, herbs and spices. You should limit as much as possible, and ideally eliminate, processed food, processed sugar and artificial ingredients. Also, make sure to drink 8-10 glasses of water per day.

For optimal physical fitness and to achieve your best health, approach your food with the following recommendations:

1. Reduce or eliminate refined sugars and processed foods.
2. Eat more vegetables and fruits. Make fruits and vegetables at least 60% of your daily food intake.
3. Don't eat anything that won't rot. Honey, and a few other things are exceptions, but things like Oreos don't rot. If mold, mildew, fungus and microbes won't eat it, it's not food, and you shouldn't eat it.
4. Don't eat anything that people 200 years ago wouldn't have eaten. If it wasn't available then, don't eat it now.
5. Drink more water. Staying well hydrated keeps your body healthy and your cells, muscles, and tissues operating properly.
6. Eat fish at least once per week, and ideally more often than that. Fish contains the omega-3 fatty acids EPA and DHA, and has strong anti-inflammatory properties.
7. Never eat until you're full. Stop eating when you're 80% full.
8. Learn to cook. The easiest way to control what you eat is to prepare it yourself.
9. Diversify. Eat as much variety as possible.

Weight Management

Being fit necessarily includes adopting a lifestyle where you obtain and maintain a healthy body weight. That said, let's just face the plain fact: if you're overweight, it's not your body or metabolism that causes it – it's your brain. Poor decisions lead to weight gain, and good decisions enable you to lose weight. The good news is that when you change your decisions, you change your outcomes.

Is it easy? Not in my experience. But the important fact is that you can do it, even though it takes time. As with all behavior change, it takes commitment and practice. It doesn't happen overnight. Most people change habits more slowly than aircraft carriers make U-turns. It can take years to establish new habits, rituals, and routines. Choosing to eat healthy and increase your physical activity helps with weight management and decreases your risk for chronic disease. Isn't it worth making the choice?

Begin with Determining Calorie Needs

The first step for any healthy eating plan is to determine whether you want to maintain or lose weight. You then need to know the average number of calories your body burns every day (your Base Metabolic Rate, or “BMR”), and then adopt a daily calorie level based on whether your goal is weight maintenance or weight loss.

Maintaining your current weight involves consuming the same number of calories that your body burns during your daily activities. By eliminating sodas, sugar, processed foods, and trans-fats, and choosing foods including fruits, vegetables, whole grains, lean meats, poultry, seafood, legumes, and low-fat dairy products, you’ll naturally move towards a balance where the calories you consume will approximately equal the calories you expend. In other words, you need to balance your daily physical activity levels with an appropriate calorie level for weight management.

Losing weight requires that you consume fewer calories than your body burns, which produces an energy deficit. The National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute (NHLBI) recommends you reduce your caloric intake by 500–1,000 calories per day, which provides a safe and consistent weight loss of approximately 1 to 2 pounds weight loss per week.

Eat mostly fruits and vegetables

While any fruits and vegetables are good, the fresh fruits and vegetables from your local farmers market are best. Why? You can buy an organic apple from your supermarket that was harvested 8 months ago 8000 miles away. Do you think that has the same nutritional value as an organic apple that was harvested 2 days ago, 30 miles from where you live? The simple fact is that fresh is best when it comes to taste and nutrition.

A diet high in fruits and vegetables provides lots of complex carbohydrates, along with soluble and insoluble fiber, vitamins, minerals, and other health promoting

substances. Additionally, focusing on fruits and vegetables helps you lose weight, because fruits and vegetables are low in energy density (calories per gram of food) because they have a high water and fiber content.

Tips to increase fruits and vegetables in your diet:

- Eat dark-green leafy and yellow vegetables daily, like kale, spinach, broccoli, and zucchini.
- Eat legumes, peas, and lentils often.
- Citrus fruits, melons, berries are great as daily snacks. Blueberries are great in oatmeal.
- Raw vegetables such as carrots, celery, and broccoli, and fruit such as apples or bananas make great snacks.

Try new fruits and vegetables. It's important to diversify. You might be surprised at how good new foods can be!

Focus on the Healthy Fats

Believe it or not, about 1/3 of the calories in a healthy balanced diet come from fats – as long as those are from the right sources. Choose foods that contain health-supporting fats and eliminate or drastically reduce saturated and trans fats.

Good fats include those from plant sources like vegetable oils, nuts, and seeds. Saturated fats are typically found in animal products like fatty meats, whole milk, cheeses, ice cream, and butter. Eliminate or drastically minimize your intake of fried fast foods and anything containing “partially hydrogenated” ingredients, which are not natural.

Tips to reduce bad fats and increase good fats:

- Eliminate trans fats by eliminating or drastically reducing your intake of fried foods.
- Replace margarine and Crisco with butter and/or olive oil

- Choose low-fat or nonfat dairy products when available
- Trim excess fat and remove skin from meats and poultry before eating
- Replace red meat with fish such as salmon, tuna, or mackerel at least twice a week to decrease your saturated fat and increase heart-healthy omega-3 (polyunsaturated) fatty acids in your diet
- Pick at least one night per week to eat vegetarian.

Include Whole Grains

Research shows that whole grains not only help with weight management, they also lower the risk of chronic diseases, such as coronary heart disease, diabetes, and cancer. Research overwhelmingly shows that higher intake of whole grains is associated with reduced risk of obesity and weight gain. The recommended amount of whole grains you should be consuming per day is 3 16 gram servings – which is less than 2 ounces.

Tips to increase whole grains:

- Eat 1/2 cup oatmeal. Great with blueberries, and reduces cholesterol!
- Have your sandwich on whole grain bread
- Have a whole grain English muffin with breakfast
- Have 2 cups popcorn as a snack
- Replace white pasta with whole wheat pasta
- Replace white rice with brown rice at dinner

Reduce Salt

Most Americans eat too much salt, and about 75% of salt in the U.S. diet comes from processed foods. And salt is directly linked with weight gain. A recent study linked obesity and sodium intake, so reducing your salt intake is likely to help you shed belly fat. The study showed that every extra gram of salt you eat per day increases your risk of obesity by 25 percent.

Take control: since most of the salt you consume comes from restaurants or processed foods, when you choose to cook more at home, you control your salt intake. And get this: 1 teaspoon of salt equals 2,000 mg sodium, which is approximately the maximum daily recommended intake.

Tips to reduce salt:

- Eat fresh, whole foods, and taste before you shake. You may need to adapt to less salt.
- Prepare your own meals, and limit the salt.
- Ask for your food to be prepared without salt at restaurants.
- Replace salt with herbs and spices to flavor your dishes.
- Choose spices or seasonings that don't list sodium on their labels, such as garlic powder verses garlic salt.
- Choose the low-sodium foods, such as soy sauce, salad dressings, and lunch meats.
- If you must buy processed foods, read the labels. Avoid high sodium foods.

By focusing on achieving your energy balance (or energy deficit for weight loss), consuming more fruits and vegetables, eating healthy fats and abandoning unhealthy fats, choosing whole grain foods, reducing your salt intake, and making daily physical activity a regular part of your life, you will be on the way to adopting a healthy lifestyle and reducing your risk for chronic disease.