

# TOP TIPS FOR WOMENS HEALTH



Tacara's Fitness Blog

subscribe 

Monday, September 24, 2012 • Kansas City, MO 64132

## TOP TIPS FOR WOMENS HEALTH

By [Tacara Daniel](#)

I want to share with you a roundup of my favorite tips for women's health. I've divided them into three groups (nutritional, sexual, and mind/body/soul). I hope you find them all useful, and some (perhaps) pleasantly surprising!

### **Five Tips for Dietary Health**

#### **1) Alkalize.**

Remember high school chem, when you learned about the PH scale? Our bodies also exist in a balance between acidity and alkalinity. High acidity in the body has been linked to fatigue, bone loss, and a host of other symptoms that we'd all rather avoid.

What acidifies our bodies? Alcohol, drugs, nicotine, and caffeine are big culprits. We also create lactic acid when we digest meat, dairy, and very high-protein foods. These foods, also known as high-PRAL foods, acidify our blood. The human body doesn't like to be in an acidic state, and it works overtime to compensate. Our lungs, kidneys, and other organs try to "neutralize" acidity by a process called buffering; this means linking the acid to a "base" mineral. These include sodium, potassium, and calcium. There's now substantial research to prove that high-PRAL foods (which are typically also high-protein foods) contribute directly to calcium loss and over-taxation of the kidneys. Why? Because our body is trying to neutralize blood acid by leaching calcium from bones and into the bloodstream.

---

The good news is that alkaline foods immediately help to stabilize and alkalize our bodies. What are alkaline foods? Well, they include vegetables, sprouts, low-sugar fruits, legumes, and certain grains (spelt, quinoa, and millet in particular). In other words, the foods that are a cornerstone of a plant-based diet! Which is all the more reason you should be eating as many veggies as possible. Dig in!

#### **2) Eat for Your Bones**

It's no great secret that women are prone to bone density loss as we age. To prevent this, it's important to eat as alkaline a diet as possible: again, eating too much animal protein, which is acidic, forces our bodies to deplete calcium reserves as a buffer. Ever wonder why countries with highest osteoporosis rates, ours included, are typically the countries with highest dairy consumption? This is why.

In addition, it's important to eat calcium rich foods. Wondering about the best plant-based sources? Sesame seeds, spinach, collard greens, turnip greens, blackstrap molasses, kale, and tofu are all stellar. Most non-dairy milks and soy products are also fortified with calcium, as are many commercial vegan cereals.

If you have any reason to believe that you're not getting adequate calcium from your diet, go ahead and seek out a good vegan supplement with Vitamin D3. Right now, I'm a big fan of Vitamin Code's Raw Calcium.

#### **3) Pump up the Iron**

We ladies, I'm sorry to say, are also rather prone to anemia. It's very common for young women to be anemic—symptoms include sensitivity to cold, brittle nails, fatigue, thinning hair, headaches, and depression. To prevent this, it's crucial for us to eat enough iron.

Fortunately, a plant based diet is full of iron-rich foods! Black strap molasses is a terrific source: one tablespoon daily (try stirring it into raw or cooked oats) brings you halfway to your USDA requirement. Other sources include leafy greens – chard, kale, spinach — as well as edamame, lentils, spinach, tofu, sesame seeds, pumpkin seeds, and navy beans.

Cooking with a cast iron pan imparts some iron, too.

#### **4) Stop Fearing Fats**

Women—especially women with histories of chronic dieting—tend to be pretty fat-phobic. Don't be, ladies! I've written ad infinitum on the [benefits of healthy fats](#), but just to remind you: healthy fats help our nerves, eyes, and immune systems. Our brain is composed of 60% fats, and our hearts are regulated by them. They're known to help prevent cholesterol, and they're especially important for fertility and fetal brain development.

The bottom line? Eat up! Be mindful of eating a sufficient amount of Omega-3 fatty acids, which can be found in chia seeds, walnut, flax, and pumpkin seeds, and monounsaturated fats, found in almonds, coconut, olives, walnuts, sunflower seeds, and avocados.

#### **5) Ditch the Fad Detoxes**

I cannot tell you how frequently I'm asked about "doing a detox." Should I do a cleanse? Should I do a fast? Should I drink lemonade and lemon juice for sixteen days? Should I eat nothing but green smoothies for a week?

In a word: no. There is no reason for a healthy, average woman to drastically lower her caloric consumption with “cleanses”. In fact, there’s a good chance that whatever cleanse you’re interested in—juices, lemonade, all raw veggies, smoothies only, and the list goes on—will only leave you feeling deprived, strip you of water weight, and lower your metabolism. Even undertaking a radically low-cal diet is likely to lower your metabolism drastically, so that when you do return to normative habits (as you eventually will have to, because you’re human), you’ll be likely to gain weight quickly, and in the form of fat.

If you need to lose a few pounds, or you aren’t feeling your best and want to tune up, simply commit to a few small changes (less processed food, no diet sodas, no sugary desserts) that will help boost energy and let you shed fluff weight. That’s a few, not all: getting healthy doesn’t mean trying to be perfect. It means *doing what’s optimal as often as is reasonable*. Don’t set yourself up for yo-yo diets that can permanently destroy your metabolic function and digestion: opt instead for small, sustainable changes that will boost health for good.

---

## **Five Tips for Sexual Health**

### **1) Be Proactive About Birth Control**

Deciding whether or not to go on the pill is deeply personal, and it should be based upon lifestyle, on your dialog with your sexual partner, and on your own comfort level. The pill is a major source of security and freedom for many women, but many others experience negative side effects. Therefore, be proactive: there are proactive ways to prevent pregnancy without BCP (such as copper IUDs), and we have the power to explore them.

### **2) If You Are on the Pill...**

Remember: birth control pills do NOT prevent STDs. Many of my readers grew up in the era of AIDS awareness. That’s terrific, but statistics show that condom use and preventative measures against STDs are dropping among white heterosexuals. HIV rates have dropped marginally, but not nearly enough to justify careless behavior. (*No drop, save the eradication of all STDs, would justify carelessness.*)

Ladies, if you are taking the pill, remember that it’s no barrier against STDs. Herpes rates are on the rise (some statistics suggest that one in every two single heterosexuals in New York City has the herpes virus), and chlymidia and HPV are as common as ever. If you’re feeling tempted to skip the rubber, or if your partner assumes that your being on the pill is a green light for riding bareback, stop dead in your tracks, and reach for the bedside drawer.

---

### **3) Remember Your Pap**

Be sure to get a pap smear regularly. I previously thought it was necessary annually, but a few readers have mentioned that the new ones are good for 2-3 years at a time (ask your ob-gyn). These exams scan for any reproductive abnormalities, STDs, and cervical cell changes associated with HPV.

### **4) Get the HPV Vaccine**

People in the raw and vegan communities have mixed feelings about vaccines. I fall on the pro side of the fence, though I do think it is every parent’s right to select which vaccines are administered to their children, and at what age.

Adult women, naturally, can also make up their own minds about the HPV vaccine. But it seems awfully foolhardy to forgo vaccination against a form of cancer (cervical cancer) that is essentially preventable—especially since so few forms are. And we’ll be protecting our future sexual partners in the meantime.

### **5) Get to Know Your Body**

Do I sound like I’m hailing from the pages of [Our Bodies. Ourselves](#)? Maybe I do, but even so, this message bears repeating: a conscious sex life is a rewarding sex life. Even in this day and age, young women are afraid to explore their own bodies, and to share what they learn with partners. Don’t be! Get to know your bod: if that means the old self-examination with a mirror at home, go for it. If it means getting cozy with some erotic literature or visuals, go for it. If it means picking up a sex guide, like [The Guide to Getting it On](#) (a classic), do it. Do anything that puts you in touch with what you like, and what you don’t; what feels good, and what doesn’t. And when you figure it out, speak up! Your partner will appreciate a knowledgeable and proactive approach, and you’ll be grateful for it when he (or she) responds accordingly.

---

## **Five Tips for Mind, Body, and Soul**

### **1) Move**

It’s nothing you’ve never heard before, but gentle exercise—I’m talking 35 minutes at least three times weekly—is your friend. No, this doesn’t have to mean marathon training or torture sessions at the gym. It can mean brisk walking, yoga, zumba, pilates, rebounding, or simply dancing around your apartment to the newest Gaga single. Exercise will boost your mood, strengthen your heart, strengthen your bones, and keep energy levels high. What’s not to like?

---

### **2) ...But Not Because You Like to Eat**

One of the most troubling habits I see among clients is the use of exercise as a means of feeling “safe” about food—to burn calories, feel less “lazy,” or ensure they won’t gain weight from eating.

Two weeks ago, I wrote about [embracing our appetites](#). This means embracing the fact that we hunger simply because we must: hunger is part of being alive. Exercise is a beautiful thing, but it should be separate from hunger, and eating is not optional.

So move, ladies. But don’t move because you ate. Move because it makes you feel energetic, happy, or strong—not because you had a piece of cake. The more you do to dissociate fitness from food, the more you’ll be able to appreciate them both.

### **3) Remember Self Care**

We ladies are often caretakers: we care for children, for parents, for each other. But in so doing, we also forget to take time to care for ourselves. No matter how cliched it may sound, it’s true that we cannot love or value for others until we love and value ourselves.

Carve out time for solitary walks, little beauty treatments, reading, music, catching up with friends, and other forms of self-focused activity. Be gentle and indulgent: if this means canceling a commitment once in a while, or saying no to someone, or taking break from work, do. Preserving your own sanity—which such habits help you to do—means more energy and focus when you do re-emerge to care for the people you love.

### **4) Don’t Feel Responsible for Other People’s Comfort**

I’ve [spoken before](#) about a woman’s tendency to eat in such a way that pleases other people. Often, this is because we sense that our good food habits make other people feel insecure or ashamed, and we compensate with self-sabotage. Is there anything more backwards than this—treating our bodies poorly to make our friends or family members feel better about themselves? I don’t think so.

---

The habit extends beyond food: so often, we bite our tongues, soften our opinions, or shy away from conflict because we know that it will make other people more comfortable. Guess what, girls? Other people are responsible for their own happiness, security, and comfort. Be kind and generous to others, certainly, but

don't take blame for other people's unhappiness unless you caused it through malice or poor behavior. You've got your own happiness to worry about: allaying other people's private and often self-imposed unhappiness is not your job.

## 5) Embrace Independence

One of the more troubling tendencies I see in young women today is a feeling of discomfort with solitude—both physical (in that they fear having time alone on their hands) and existential (in that they fear a lack of male companionship). It's normal, of course, to experience loneliness now and then, or to want to find partnership in life. But to fear one's own company is, I think, a shame. Life is lived in the company of loved ones, but there's also truth to the dictum that we live and die alone. At the least, the capacity to support oneself financially, to make one's way through the world independently, and to amuse oneself in quiet moments, is crucial.

Sharing your life with wonderful people is vital. But it's also vital to enjoy your own company. So the next time you find yourself striving to make yourself more appealing to others, stop for a moment, and think: how can I be more appealing to myself? Take some time to cultivate a sense of personhood that you enjoy and take pride in, and the pleasures of autonomy will follow.

---

Monday, September 24, 2012 • Kansas City, MO 64132

## 8 Strength Training Tips For Women!

By [Tacara Daniel](#)

---

### A weights-and-intervals program gives you the best bang for the buck.

I'm an endurance junkie, so for better or worse, running or cycling for a few hours at a time will always be part of my life. But if you aren't training for a half-marathon and your goal is to pare some fat from your bod and make your jeans fit better, Cosgrove says a weightlifting program coupled with intervals—alternating high-intensity bursts of riding a stationary bike or running with a recovery period—is preferable to plodding along at the same slow pace. "When it comes to fat loss and enhancing the way you look, time is the limiting factor," he says. The program in his book calls for three days a week of strength training, with and without intervals, for a combined time of less than an hour per workout.

### Lift three times a week.

Two will offer some benefits, and one is better than nothing but isn't going to do much good. By contrast, more than three is not likely to give you enough time to recover in between workouts, which is when the strengthening of your muscles is happening. (Government recommendations for heart health include 30 minutes of the equivalent of brisk walking most days, so you might want to add a few days of that to this routine—it's not going to interfere with recovery from the weights.)

### You need to lift enough weight to make it worthwhile.

Women often choose light weights that they think will magically shape and tone the muscles, whereas men will go right for the big bang kind of exercises," says Cosgrove. Uh, guilty as charged. I tend to use machines that focus on one muscle at a time because squats with a barbell intimidate me. Cosgrove favors free weights: "You can sit on a machine and do a leg extension, or you can spent a minute doing squats, working many more muscles and being much more time effective," he says." Sold, to the woman in the pink running shorts!

### You need to increase the weight over time.

Cosgrove suggests you let the number of repetitions dictate how much weight you start with. Pick a weight that you can definitely lift eight, maybe 10, but definitely not 12 times. Ideally, you'd increase that weight a smidgen every time you do the routine, but since most weights come in 5-pound increments, he suggests this instead: Do 10 reps in a set the first time, then 11, then 12, and once you're doing sets of 12, increase the weight and go back to 10 reps per set. (His program calls for different numbers of sets, depending on the stage, but two to three sets for 10 to 12 reps is a good rule of thumb.)

---

### Don't waste your time doing exercises that only work your smaller muscles.

Machines that isolate the calf, biceps, and triceps muscles aren't doing much good, says Cosgrove. "Muscles are like a web and work as a system," he says. "They're designed to work together." Doing exercises like presses, rows, and pulldowns lets those little muscles work the way they're supposed to: in concert with the bigger ones.

### Toss the standard back-on-the-floor crunches.

Straining against the hard ground isn't doing your spine any favors, and you aren't working the full range of your abdominal muscles. Instead, Cosgrove recommends other ab exercises, including crunches on an inflatable ball (which are cushier on your back and let you reach the full range of motion) and a deceptively innocent-sounding move called a plank, where you hold your body straight in a modified push-up position, propping yourself on toes and forearms.

### One-size "proper form" does not always fit all.

You don't want to be so caught up with the so-called rules of an exercise ("Don't lock your elbows!" "Don't let your knee move past your toes!") that you are petrified to even start. Everyone's body is different. So if your basic technique is correct, and you aren't experiencing pain during or after a workout, you're probably OK, he says. One visible test: "My usual rule is that the first rep and the last rep should look the same, though the last rep will be slower."

### Don't worry—you aren't going to get huge.

It's not easy even for men to get so they look like those folks on the cover of *Muscle & Fitness* magazine. For women, because of our lower levels of testosterone, it's definitely not going to happen, unless you have some off-the-charts genetic propensity to pile on muscle and are spending your entire day working out. Worry about global warming, worry about whether Heidi will marry Spencer from *The Hills* and populate the world with little blond idiots, but don't worry that lifting will make your muscles burst out of your clothes.

---

Thursday, September 13, 2012 • Kansas City, MO 64132

## GET MOTIVATED! The Workout Plan You Wont Cancel

By [Tacara Daniel](#)

---

Karen Stein was feeling angry with herself. She had started a new job, with a demanding travel schedule that caused her to add unwanted pounds. As winter ended, Stein\* felt so

unhappy about her weight gain that she resisted when her friend, Susan Mosher\*, tried to get her outdoors for physical activity.

That might have been the end of the story. But Stein, 37, and Mosher, 41, are exercise buddies as well as friends. They had started exercising together as co-workers and continued after the company that employed them had folded. For nearly five years now, except in the dead of winter, the two Pennsylvania women meet at least once a week (more often in summer), to walk a five-mile loop in a park near their homes.

According to Stein, her exercise buddy wouldn't let her stay depressed and inactive. Mosher finally convinced her to lace up her sneakers and head for the park.

"We just started going again and it worked itself out," says Stein, who lost nearly all the extra weight. "She was a huge part of me taking it off."

---

### How buddies help

There's strength in numbers, the old saying goes, and that's especially true for many women when it comes to exercising. Social support encourages physical activity. An exercise buddy (or two) makes such support even more personal. If you decided to become more active this year, having an exercise buddy may help you achieve and maintain that goal.

"Exercise partners can provide a kind of gentle coercion and limit your negative self-talk," says Barbara A. Brehm, Ed.D., professor, Department of Exercise and Sport Studies, at Smith College in Northampton, MA. Forget making excuses about why you're too tired or too busy to exercise. When you're scheduled to meet a friend for exercise, Brehm says, "you'll avoid that debate in your head about whether you should go and work out."

The buddy system keeps boredom away and makes time pass quickly. Many exercise partners talk as they walk (walking is a popular buddy exercise). The miles or kilometers seem to disappear more rapidly while chatting with a companion than they do when you're exercising alone, focusing on every step or minute.

"I can go on a two-mile walk by myself, but I don't like anything longer," Mosher says. Yet when she walks five miles with Stein, "before you know it, you're done!"

Having a conversation while exercising dissociates you from the discomfort of the activity, says researcher James J. Annesi, Ph.D., Director of Wellness Advancement at the YMCA of Metropolitan Atlanta. "People who can tolerate discomfort better are less likely to drop out from exercise," he says.

What's more, even if they start out as only casual acquaintances, exercise buddies often build strong friendship bonds. That was true for Mosher and Stein, who count the psychological benefits of their relationship as important as the physical ones. "It's almost therapeutic," Mosher says. "As we walk, we tell each other our problems and struggles. And it's cheaper than therapy."

The buddy system works for losing weight as well. Researchers at Miriam Hospital/Brown Medical School and University of Massachusetts Dartmouth found that participants in a weight loss regimen that included exercise lost more weight when their support partners took part in the same program and were successful at dropping pounds. Others participating alone, or whose support buddies didn't lose weight, did not do as well.

---

### Relating to buddies

One reason that teaming up with an exercise buddy works is that you see someone who's similar to you doing a physical activity. That strengthens your belief that you can accomplish the same thing.

The greater your self-confidence about performing regular activity or keeping up in an exercise class, the more motivated you're likely to become, Brehm says. That boosts adherence—your ability to stay with an exercise regimen beyond the start-up phase.

"People who stick to their exercise program get some kind of reward: it makes them feel better, it helps them sleep, it's fun to do, or it's accomplishing something," says Brehm. When you have a buddy, "you're accomplishing two things at once. You're getting to see your friend...and you're exercising at the same time."

You can achieve adherence success with a supportive group as well, says Annesi, who has conducted research on the subject. He's sympathetic if your knees grow weak at the thought of entering a room filled with sleek, high-intensity, power exercisers. Not all physical activity that happens in a social setting is supportive, he notes.

Annesi advises you avoid groups (and individuals) that make you feel as if your body is being judged negatively. "When you find a group that you feel comfortable with...you'll stay with the exercise," he says.

---

### Tips for a successful exercise buddy relationship

- *Consider personality.* "Pick somebody who you really want to spend time with, because that's going to motivate you to go," says Stein. But don't convince your best friend to be your exercise buddy if she doesn't like physical activity. If you do, your plan could fail quickly.
- *Make joint decisions.* Find someone who shares your same exercise interests and whose schedule is similar to yours. Choose an activity location that's convenient for both of you.
- *When possible, match skill levels.* If you walk for exercise, your buddy's speed should be similar to yours. It's okay if she's a little bit faster, because that will encourage you to push yourself a bit. You don't want a wide difference in skill or you might feel as if you're holding her back. Matching ages doesn't matter, Brehm notes, as much as matching fitness levels. Partners of varying abilities can buddy up by meeting at a gym and using equipment set to their skill levels, such as elliptical trainers or treadmills.
- *If you need extra encouragement, make an altruistic match* Some people have more success when they're exercising because it's good for someone else, such as an overweight child or a spouse with heart disease.
- *Make your exercise sessions a priority.* Buddies need a similar amount of commitment to the plan. "There have been many Saturday mornings," says Mosher, "when she shows up at my house at 6 a.m. and I say, 'If you weren't coming, I wouldn't be up.'"
- *Have a back-up plan ready for when your buddy can't participate* Occasionally, your buddy will get sick or have a schedule conflict. If she can't make a session, have an alternate plan—whether it's to walk the same route alone or while talking to a friend on a cell phone, exercise to a DVD or video at home, or go to the gym. Knowing what you'll do will help keep you moving.
- *Make adjustments when needed.* Mosher and Stein have kept their buddy relationship active over the years by adapting to changes in jobs, family, and health. Success comes from "constantly tweaking what we're doing, to make it work for our lives," Stein says.

---

Thursday, September 13, 2012 • Kansas City, MO 64132

## Start Strength Training for Good Health

By [Tacara Daniel](#)

---

Remember those boxes of books you carried up the stairs so easily a few years ago? Or the jammed grocery bags you used to grab from your car's trunk two at a time?

Maybe these days you're packing less into storage cartons and shopping sacks, to make them lighter to lift, or enlisting a teenager's help in hauling them. As we get older, many of us find ourselves becoming less strong than we once were. That's to be expected in middle age and onward, especially if you're a woman—right?

It doesn't have to be so. Your healthy future depends upon keeping your muscles strong. Losing strength may result in serious health problems: fractures, imbalance, loss of mobility and inactivity—leading to [diabetes](#), heart disease and [obesity](#). Yet those risks can be turned around, and even prevented, with quick and simple [strength training](#) exercises.

"Strength training—as in lifting weights? I can't do that!" you may be thinking.

Don't worry. Even if you'd rather pump your own gas than pump iron, the exercises to help you stay strong are easy to do and won't leave you looking like a professional body-builder.

And the health payoffs are big. Just a few months of strength (also called resistance) training—at home, in a gym or fitness center—can lower your [cholesterol](#), reduce your risk of [cardiovascular](#) disease, help you avoid [osteoporosis](#), decrease arthritic symptoms and build muscle so you remain active and independent for years to come.

### Losing muscle with age

Most women know that aging can weaken our bones. If left untreated, this condition (called [osteopenia](#)) can lead to osteoporosis. A related process—called sarcopenia—happens when our muscles and lean body mass begin to decline.

"The loss of muscle mass starts in your early 30s," says Michael J. Hewitt [Ph.D.](#), research director for exercise science at Canyon Ranch Health Resort in Tucson. "By the time a woman is in her mid-40s, she may have lost 6 to 7 percent of her muscle mass."

If that muscle isn't retained or rebuilt, you lose strength. You also lose metabolic rate, Hewitt adds, which causes you to gain weight. Eventually, as muscle mass declines further with each decade, everyday activities—such as rising from a chair, putting away the dishes, or getting out of the bathtub—may become too difficult to manage.

Many people believe such weakening is inevitable. "We have this idea that because we're older, we're not supposed to have the same level of function and that's really wrong," Hewitt says. Strength or resistance training—whether performed with handheld weights, exercise bands, or on more sophisticated machines—helps fight that muscle loss.

### Benefits to heart

Strength training also helps your heart health, says Kevin R. Vincent, M.D., Ph.D., of the Department of Physical Medicine and Rehabilitation at The University of Virginia in Charlottesville. Vincent co-authored research showing that resistance exercise aided cardiovascular function by lowering levels of [homocysteine](#), an amino acid that can cause harmful clots, increasing anti-oxidant defenses, and decreasing [blood pressure](#).

"When people think of something heart-healthy, they commonly think of [aerobic](#) exercise, but strength training is a good adjunct," Vincent says. Exercising with resistance keeps your blood pressure response lower when you hurry to catch a bus, climb stairs, or lift a box. "That's protective," he adds, "so you run a smaller risk of having a [heart attack](#) or a stroke."

### Getting started

Even if you've never lifted a weight before, you can begin an easy strength training program. Indeed, women who are new to resistance exercise gain the most health benefits from such training.

"It's never too late to start," Vincent says. "Start with light weights and progress slowly." He advises spending two to three months using light weights and gradually getting used to the exercises. Check with your doctor beforehand, especially if you have a [chronic](#) medical condition or [joint](#) problems.

You don't have to join a gym to get stronger. Resistance exercises are easy to do at home with inexpensive handheld weights, available at discount stores and sporting-goods suppliers. You can also build strength effectively with lightweight elastic resistance bands.

### Ten minutes, twice a week

For those of us who are perennially time-crunched (and who isn't?), Hewitt created the strength-building Key 3® program as *amini*mal approach to strength work. The three exercises in the plan—wall squat, chest press and single arm row—take only about 10 minutes, twice a week.

In that brief time, the three exercises work about 85 percent of the body's muscle mass. They can also stimulate bone growth, helping to curb osteopenia at the same time they're fighting sarcopenia. "The good news is, you're not even going to break a sweat doing these," Hewitt says. "You can do them in your bedroom, in your pajamas, if you want to."

So, kick off those bunny slippers and start building your muscle strength now:

**Wall Squat:** (When first beginning this exercise, don't use any weights for the first two weeks.)

- Stand with your back against a smooth wall. Your feet should be shoulder-width apart and about a 1-1/2 to two of your foot lengths from the wall.
- Bend knees slightly; hang arms freely at sides, using holding light weights.
- Slowly slide your back down the wall until knees come close to a 90-degree angle, but do not exceed it.
- Then press upward, back still against wall, until legs are nearly straight.
- Repeat.

Typically healthy adults will hold 10 to 25 lb in each hand (women) or 15 to 35 lb (men). Size of weights used will depend on one's body weight and strength level.

### Chest Press:

- Lie on back with bent knees, arms perpendicular to body.
- Hold hand weights (3 to 5 lb. to start) directly over elbows.
- Slowly press hands up, bringing weights together in a triangular motion.
- Lower weights slowly until elbows return to floor.

### Single Arm Row:

- Place one hand and knee on bench or edge of chair, with other foot on floor.
- Keep back flat and parallel to floor.
- Hold hand weight (8 to 10 lb. to start) in free hand, hanging directly below shoulder.
- Raise weight slowly to just under shoulder. Keep elbow close to side.
- Lower slowly and repeat.
- Reverse position to work opposite side.

### Rules of the game

When just starting out, aim to do one set of eight to 12 repetitions (called reps) of each exercise. With strength training, you work to a level [fatigue](#) at the end of each set. If you can only do six reps, you may need a lighter weight. If you easily reach 13 reps, it is time to use a heavier weight.

As you become accustomed to the exercises, build to doing two sets of each exercise, twice a week. With proficiency, you'll still be able to complete a session in about 10 minutes. You may even add a third session during the week, but allow at least a day's rest between them.

For strength training to be effective, Hewitt says, you need to do it regularly, with no more than three days between sessions or the benefits begin to wear off. When traveling, he advises doing the exercises in a hotel room, using a laptop computer or briefcase. If they are too light, add the room's phone directory or Bible for additional weight.

"Strength work and exercise in general are kind of like investing," he says. "A little bit every week is far better than a lot once in a while."

---

Wednesday, August 15, 2012 • Kansas City, MO 64132

## You are what you think you eat!

By [Tacara Daniel](#)

Did you know that what we believe we are eating and what our brain thinks we are eating dramatically affect the body's response to what we eat? Furthermore, emerging evidence suggests that certain foods may actually promote addictive responses in our brains. Unfortunately, countless experts still promote the overly simplistic approach of a "calorie is a calorie" and that the energy-balance equation (calories in vs. calories out) is the only consideration necessary for weight management. The more we learn about our intricately connected brains and bodies, however, the more outdated these approaches become.

### Mind Over Milkshakes

While it's true that we are what we eat from the perspective of what the cells of our bodies are constructed from, when it comes to how our body reacts to, processes and uses the foods we eat, a growing body of research suggests that we are, in fact, what we think we eat.

For example, a research team from Yale University fed the exact same (360 calorie) milkshake labeled as either "indulgent" (620 calories) or "health conscious" (140 calories) to 46 study participants, who consumed each shake one week apart. To lend credibility to the "different" shakes used in the study, the researchers hired a graphic design team to produce realistic-looking labels to be placed on each of the two "different" shakes (Crum, 2011).

Researchers measured the subjects' ghrelin response after each shake was consumed. Ghrelin is a hormone that rises to stimulate hunger when it is time for us to eat. (It's opposite is leptin, which tells us we are full and to stop eating.)

The subjects' ghrelin response differed significantly after each shake despite the fact that they drank the same shake—only the labels (and thus, the subjects' perception of each shake) had changed. When participants consumed the "indulgent" shake, their ghrelin levels experienced a significantly steeper decline than when they drank the "health conscious" shake. Thinking they had indulged led them to feel more satisfied for longer (and become hungry later) than when consuming the supposedly healthier shake.

These findings suggest that the psychological mindset of sensibility while eating may actually dampen the effect of ghrelin.

The implications of this are significant. Grocery store shelves are loaded with products sporting many health claims on their labels, some of which may be misleading or even completely false. The combination of unhealthy nutrients with healthy proclamations may be especially dangerous. Not only is the product itself unhealthy, but the mindset of sensibility might correspond to an inadequate suppression of ghrelin, regardless of the actual nutrient makeup.

In other words, if someone believes they ate something healthy, they'll likely become hungry again sooner, irrespective of whether or not the food they ate was actually healthy.

### Does Sweet to the Brain = Fat on the Body?

Another team of researchers from Purdue University explored what happens when you take away the calories that the brain expects when it senses a sweet taste. Sweet taste predicts a certain caloric content and expectation in the brain. Non-caloric sweeteners apparently disrupt this relationship and may lead to excessive calorie consumption through two mechanisms: increased food intake or diminished energy expenditure. If "sweet" hits the tongue, but there are no calories coming in with it, the brain appears to send a signal to "keep eating" to retrieve the calories it expects. Alternatively, if the brain perceives that not enough calories have been consumed to support activity, it may discourage physical activity to save energy. The Purdue researchers found that reducing the correlation between sweet taste and the caloric content of foods using artificial sweeteners resulted in increased caloric intake, body weight and adiposity in rats (Swithers and Davidson, 2008).

A sweet taste in the mouth produces an insulin response in the body. Additionally, given that many artificial sweeteners are much sweeter than sugar, the insulin response may be larger than if sugar was consumed. Furthermore, anything that increases insulin levels promotes fat storage in the body (Yang, 2010).

Clearly, there is no calorie-free lunch in life. After all, we cannot realistically expect to derail one of the most finely tuned and most powerful drives in life—for food—and expect that the consequences will be positive. While many will cite the need for more research to prove that artificial sweeteners have no negative health effects, in fact the opposite is true. The burden of proof lies on manufacturers of artificial sweeteners to demonstrate that they have positive health effects and are healthier than caloric sweeteners. In the absence of these proofs, coupled with the research previously cited, the prudent recommendation would be to avoid artificial sweeteners altogether.

### Can Some Foods Hijack the Brain?

In [The End of Overeating](#), Dr. David Kessler explains that the most dominant source of the power of highly palatable foods comes from just one of the senses: taste. Taste has by far the most direct connection to the body's reward system. It is hardwired to brain cells that respond to pleasure and prompts the strongest emotional response.

Dopamine drives desire through a survival-based capacity known as "attentional bias," which is defined as the exaggerated amount of attention paid to highly rewarding stimuli at the expense of other stimuli. When emotions amplify reward, the drive for reward becomes even harder to control. This explains, in part, the drive many people have to seek out comfort foods when they feel stressed (Kessler, 2010).

In 2001, a study by a team of researchers at the Brookhaven National Laboratory showed that very obese people had lower levels of dopamine receptors in the reward areas of their brains than did people who were normal weight (Wang et al., 2001). This is exactly what you find with alcohol and drug addicts. The decreased dopamine activity drives overconsumption because there isn't much reward derived from "normal" amounts of these substances.

Interestingly, obese people may not start out with an underactive dopamine response, but an overactive one. This is the initial "hook" that drives overconsumption to chase the "high." Over time, the dopamine response progressively diminishes to the point that more "stimulus" (e.g., food, sugar) is needed to elicit the same response (Liebman, 2012).

It will take several more years of ongoing research in this area to better understand whether or not some foods can be truly addictive. However, given that many foods follow the same neurochemical pathways as other addictive substances of abuse, there will likely be at least some degree of correlation to what Dr. Kessler terms "hyper-palatable" foods. These are foods that have been over-processed and have unnaturally high levels of sugar, fat or salt, which thwart the body's ability to self-regulate and override an individual's good judgment, wisdom and responsibility and when making food choices.

As we seek to help our clients navigate an ever-changing nutritional landscape that, sadly, includes a growing list of extreme flavors and foods engineered to make us crave more of them by overstimulating the pleasure centers of our brains, it is essential to keep in mind the complex and powerful relationship between the mind and the body. As a growing body of research continues to demonstrate, the ability of one to influence the other cannot be underestimated.

## References

- Crum, A.J. et al. (2011). Mind over milkshakes: Mindsets, not just nutrients, determine ghrelin response. *Health Psychology*, doi:[10.1037/a0023467](https://doi.org/10.1037/a0023467).
- Kessler, D. (2010). *The End of Overeating*. Emmaus, Pa.: Rodale Books.
- Liebman, B. (May 1, 2012). Food and addiction: Can some foods hijack the brain? *Nutrition Action Healthletter*, 3–7.
- Swithers, S.E. and Davidson, T.E. (2008). A role for sweet taste: Calorie predictive relations in energy regulation by rats *Behavioral Neuroscience*, 122, 1, 161–173.
- Wang, G.J. et al. (2001). Brain dopamine and obesity. *Lancet*, 357, 9253, 354–357.
- Yang, Q. (2010). Gain weight by 'going diet?' Artificial sweeteners and the neurobiology of sugar cravings. *Yale Journal of Biology and Medicine*, 83, 2, 101–108.

---

Sunday, August 12, 2012 • Kansas City, MO 64132

## Goal Setting & Motivation tips for Women

By [Tacara Daniel](#)

---

### Get a Fitness Baseline

There are a variety of health fitness services available at health clubs. These services can be a great way to get a "fitness baseline."

Getting a baseline for things such as body fat, strength and flexibility can provide you with information that you can use to measure progress in your fitness routine. It can also help you set reasonable fitness goals. Here are some baseline numbers that you may want to consider getting before starting or re-vamping a fitness program:

- Body fat percentages: Typically done using calipers and measurements
- Cholesterol numbers: A simple blood screen will be performed
- Blood pressure: Taken by using a blood pressure cuff
- Flexibility measurements: The tests for this vary
- Strength measurements: Usually done by recording maximum lifts
- Cardiovascular endurance measurements: Often done by taking a treadmill or bike test while having vitals monitored

The majority of these "tests" can be given at a health club, so you may want to inquire about them at the desk if you can't find any literature on them at the facility. Things such as cholesterol tests and blood pressure can be measured by a physician as well.

These services are sometimes offered for free, while other times there may be a charge for them. Some health clubs will offer specials or promotions where the testing is done at no charge. Community health fairs and screenings are other places that you may find these tests offered.

---

### Challenge Yourself to Change It Up

Any fitness routine can become stale if done for too long a period of time. Things get boring and that can make you lose your motivation. Keep your program fresh by continuing to challenge yourself in a variety of ways. Here are some super tips for staying motivated and changing things up a bit:

- Learn new exercises. Check out women's magazines for new ideas or keep an eye out in the health club for moves you have not tried before.
  - Add weight and do less repetitions for a change of pace or drop the weight and do extra sets.
  - Try out new fitness classes for a different atmosphere.
  - Keep an eye out for new ab exercise equipment or other types of gear. Using new props can challenge your muscles in different ways.
  - Join a "boot camp." Some places have them just for women.
  - Try out interval training to change up the routine. Bursts of cardiovascular exercise (such as jogging) mixed in with weight training can make the workout go more quickly.
  - Get out of the rut. If you find that you are using the same machines all the time, resolve to incorporate new ones. If you always walk on the treadmill, try out the elliptical trainer. Change things up -- you will be glad you did!
- 

### Creating Fitness Goals

Why should you take the time to write down your fitness goals? Because it can help you reach them. In order to write them out, you will need to think through things such as how you can achieve your goals and what is a reasonable amount of progress is that you can expect over time. Comprehensive fitness programs at the health club often have this component, and some personal trainers do it as well.

So how can you get started? Try thinking about your end goal. Perhaps it is weight loss; or even being able to run a marathon. Then take a little time to develop a strategy for reaching it that works with your lifestyle. Try to outline some "benchmarks" for the goal so that you can chart your progress as you go.

Evaluating your progress along the way is a key feature of this type of program. If you are not meeting your benchmark goals, you may need to re-vamp the plan you originally came up with. Re-adjusting goals is a normal part of the process, and will help you see if your fitness program is practical.

You may want to start with just one fitness goal at a time. Try beginning with something manageable and see how it goes. Perhaps you may want to set a distance goal for your walking program, or begin doing some lower ab exercises to begin. Keeping the goals small at first will help you learn the process and build confidence as you go.

---

### Sticking to a Fitness Program

Are you having difficulty sticking to a fitness program? Getting into a regular routine can be a challenge, but there are some time-tested solutions that will help you stay motivated and assist you in meeting your fitness goals. Choose from some of the following:

- Team up. Having a "workout buddy" can keep you dedicated to a fitness routine. Find a running partner. Ask your sister to join a health club with you. Take a walk with your spouse every night after dinner. If you can team up with another person, you are less likely to take a pass on your workout.
- Walk the dog. It may sound a little crazy at first, but getting into a good walking routine can not only help your health, but your dog's too!
- Reward yourself. Set a goal for working out each week, and if you reach it, reward yourself with something small. You might try something like buying a book or going to see a movie. Try to keep the reward to non-food items.
- Set small, reachable goals. Try not to discourage yourself by attempting to go all out. Strive for slow, steady improvement.
- Be honest with yourself. Will you *really* work out when you get home from a long meeting or playing with your kids at the park? Try to make sure you schedule time for fitness when you have the energy.
- Join a class. It can help to have a set time to work out. Try out something that interests you for extra motivation.
- Just go. If you think about working out too much, you might talk yourself out of it.

---

Tuesday, August 07, 2012 • Kansas City, MO 64132

## Eating Well ( [www.eatingwell.com](http://www.eatingwell.com) )

By [Tacara Daniel](#)

---

I came across this website today that I just fell in love with! I couldn't figure out what I wanted to eat for dinner tonight, but I knew I wanted it to be something healthy! So, I went online and was browsing different websites trying to find some good recipes. Then I seen this website, [www.eatingwell.com](http://www.eatingwell.com) and found lots of great recipes, including desserts! Mmmmm. So I thought I would share this with my people because finding a healthy meal to cook can get kind of difficult.

You can browse through their inventory of recipes, or you can search for the type of food you are having, and they will give you different recipes that you can make with that food.

You can also sign up for different newsletters that come to your email for free. The newsletters give you different diet and eating tips weekly.

They give you tips on how to still eat healthy even when you are on a budget.

They also have top recipes, articles, and blogs posted each day to give you even more tips on healthy habits.

I don't know about you, but this website will start to be a great help for me. So go check it out and get on the right track to a longer, healthier, happier lifestyle!

---

Monday, August 06, 2012 • Kansas City, MO 64132

## Top 5 Training Tips for Every Body Part!

By [Tacara Daniel](#)

**There are so many exercises out there for each body part that it can be hard to figure out which ones will give you the best results. So, Muscle & Fitness for Her asked IFBB figure pro Felicia Romero for the best excercises to help you get stronger, leaner, and fitter. Here is what they came up with: (I thought this was great!)**

### 1. Arms

"Curls are one of the most popular arm exercises out there, yet they are also one of the least utilized by women. To get the best definition in your arms, do curls with 20–25 pounds. Then, immediately go into triceps extensions, making sure to keep your elbows close to your head. Do three sets of 15 reps."

### 2. Back

"Close-grip lat pulldowns are one of the most common back exercises but they're frequently performed incorrectly. Using an underhand grip, slowly pull the bar down to your chest, making sure to keep your body and back straight with every rep."

### 3. Legs

"Try plié squats. Make sure to keep your legs wide and your toes pointed outward. Lower into the squat until your thighs are at least parallel to the floor, and as you press up, squeeze your glutes and inner and outer thighs. To make them harder, try holding a weight between your legs. Do three sets of 20."

### 4. Abs

"When it comes to working your core, definitely go with a three-exercise circuit. Exercise 1: Ball Crunch; hold a Bosu ball as you crunch for 25 reps. Exercise 2: Hanging Leg Raise (15 reps), and

Exercise 3: Bicycles on the ground. Perform this circuit three times, resting only between each circuit.”

## 5. Shoulders

“Nice shoulders make you look more toned. I like the single-arm cable side lateral. Start with light weights and stand with your right side facing the machine as you grip the cable with your left hand. Good form is key. Make sure your arm stays straight— raise the cable to your left side to about shoulder height.”

---

These things should get you on a great start to a new workout plan. Change your workout plan every 4 to 6 months so your body is continuously changing. And not getting used to the workout.

---

Sunday, August 05, 2012 • Kansas City, MO 64132

## Dance – The Secret To A “Celebrity” Body

By [Tacara Daniel](#)

---

What’s the secret of a J.LO, Shakira, Beyonce or Britney body? DANCING is what they all have in common. Dancing is the most entertaining total body aerobic workout that you can do; it provides endless fun and keeps your adrenaline flowing. Dance is the soul of a choreographic step class, of a dynamic Zumba class as well as the foundation of any group aerobics class. Dance is also a great core exercise. You can’t shake it, swirl it or drop it like it’s hot without a strong core.

“Strong is the new skinny” – see that new skinny in these four fit women, who are in enviable shape because of their passion for dance and exercise:

### Shakira: Abs

Shakira, the Colombian singer has made music history with songs like “Hips don’t lie” and “She Wolf.” Her hits are associated with her gorgeous midsection – killer abs that belly dancing can make rock hard through provocative movements such as circles, slides and hip shaking. She includes a lot of belly dancing in her fitness routine, some strength training (to build lean, long muscles and firm up the whole body), and lots of Pilates for defined abs. Remember, crunches focus mostly on the front muscles and sides of your abdominal area, while dance movements are more complex – they work on your lower abs and hips to get your core stronger.

### Beyonce: Hips and Thighs

Beyonce is a naturally curvy girl, but that doesn’t mean that she’s not toned up or she doesn’t stick to a strict workout regime. Her workout routines are smart, simple and diversified: at least a 30 minute cardio session (dance, running, or biking) followed by 45 minutes of total body strength training. She says that dancing is the most enjoyable way for her to sculpt her body and swing her curves: she loves Hip-Hop and R&B.

### Jennifer Lopez: Legs and Butt

J.Lo is definitely an icon of ageless beauty- those sleek legs and curvy posterior has made that seductive look so famous! She mixes her cardio exercises routines (dancing, boxing, running, and biking) with resistance training 2-3 times per week. She believes that squats and lunges are mandatory to firm the glutes, but she uses dance to firm her midsection and lower belly. Latin rhythms are definitely preferred and, salsa is her favorite dance type.

### Britney Spears: Total Body

Britney Spears shed her baby weight not once, but twice with dancing. Dancing is a high intensity workout and burns a high amount of calories and body fat. She prefers hip-hop dancing because it requires movements that develop endurance, strength and flexibility. Make sure your dance workouts have a lot of jumping, skipping and hopping; Essentially anything that takes your feet off the ground and brings your body into the air. These high-intensity moves will help you increase bone density, burn fat and build muscle. Britney also lifts weights and runs to increase her coordination, endurance and decrease the odds of energy.

Whether you’re shaking it in your living room or at a class, dancing is a great way to get a body that would make a celebrity jealous!

---

Saturday, August 04, 2012 • Kansas City, MO 64132

## Stick to your work out plan!

By [Tacara Daniel](#)

Motivation. We all want it, especially when it comes to eating healthy and exercising. So why are we always at a loss—looking for it, losing it, feeling helpless without it?

I came across this article this morning that lists three key things that can help you stick to a workout plan: positive reinforcement, self-control, and social context. Here's how you can use these psychological principles to increase your own workout motivation.

### Positive Reinforcement

"Operant conditioning theory states that if a stimulus, such as exercise, elicits a positive response, such as enjoyment or contentment, then people will seek to reproduce those feelings by engaging in the behavior again," writes Fell.

This is basic psychology. You can reward good behavior to encourage more of it, or punish bad behavior to discourage it. While experts and individuals may disagree on which

option works best, most people prefer positive reinforcement to punishment.

So how does this apply to exercise? Well, you can choose activities that you enjoy, as Fell suggests. Rewards are another way to positively reinforce the behavior of working out. When you're having fun and enjoying whatever workout you're doing, you're more likely to want to do that workout again. This is definitely true for me. I don't do any exercise that I don't enjoy, and that has to play a role in keeping me coming back for more. At the same time, when I skip a workout, I feel bad, guilty, and lazy—totally down in the dumps. That means I'm less likely to choose that as a "solution" to not feeling like working out in the future. Instead, even if I'm not feeling up to it, I remind myself that NOT doing it will make me feel worse. As I always tell people: You'll never regret exercising, but you will regret choosing to skip it.

### Self-Control

In psychology, self-control is defined as behavior that produces the larger, longer-term reward when people are faced with the choice between it and the smaller, short-term reward. Fell quotes Barbara Brehm's 2004 book "Successful Fitness Motivation Strategies," to apply this to exercise: Put simply, "self-control is a limited resource and that the stress we experience during the day gradually erodes our willpower to exercise," she says. This explains why many studies have found that people who exercise in the morning have the highest adherence rates. The longer the day goes on, the more time and energy people have to expend to exert self-control. By the end of the day, we are worn out from all the "right" decisions we've made throughout the day and don't have it in us to exert self-control to go exercise.

To increase the amount of self-control you have over your workouts, you need to remove as many barriers, hurdles or excuses as possible to make it easier to make the right decision. Morning workouts work well for this. You could also come up with a list of excuses or hurdles that tend to get in the way of your workouts and then come up with an alternative plan that will allow you to work out or remove said barriers altogether.

Personally, I do a mix of morning and evening workouts. I make it as easy as possible to work out in the evening by packing my gym bag before work so I can go straight to the gym before I go anywhere else (I might encounter additional barriers if I ran errands or stopped at home first).

### Social Context

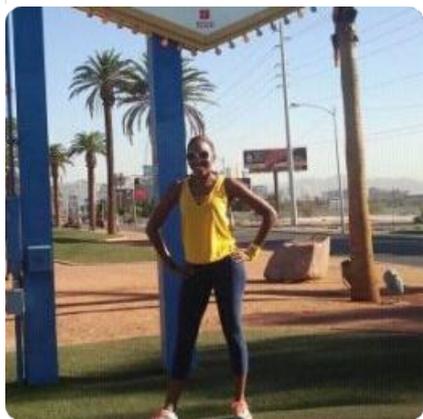
By nature, human beings are social. We like to do things in groups, feel like we're part of the group, and we often look for acceptance and approval from others. For this reason, Fell says that working out by yourself can be a major barrier to sticking with an exercise routine.

People thrive with support, and in being able to share ideas with others and reach out for help and encouragement when they need it. That's why it's important to share your goals with others.

A fitness buddy can be a great motivator (provided you have a fitness buddy with lots of self-control and who also makes exercise a positive experience for you!), as can joining a gym (even if you work out solo while there), or taking group classes. They say that healthy and unhealthy habits alike can be "contagious," so the more you surround yourself with fitness-minded people, the more likely you'll be to behave like them, too.

For more tips to make exercise a habit—and stay motivated to stick with it—be sure to read Fell's article in full over at [latimes.com](http://latimes.com).

**Make it fun. Make it as easy. Make it social. That's how you stick with a workout routine. Do you agree?**



 [Contact Tacara](#)

[About Me](#) [View Profile](#)

#### Tacara Daniel

My name is Tacara Daniel, I am a personal trainer that mainly focuses on weight loss, weight management and muscle toning. I work mainly with women, helping them burn lots of calories in a fun environment. My main focus is developing personalized programs for each individual to give them the best results possible. I provide fitness assessments to help track your goals and you will see your progress right on paper. I also help to develop healthy living patterns, set short and long term goals, and help each individual reach those goals.

 [Follow My Updates](#)

 [My Facebook Page](#)

### Upcoming Events [More Classes/Events](#)

No upcoming classes/events.

### Archive

2012

[August \(8\)](#)

[September \(4\)](#)

**Note:** The content on this blog is not endorsed or edited by IDEA Health and Fitness Association.



powered by **IDEA HEALTH & FITNESS ASSOCIATION**

admin September 4, 2018 Top 4 Important Tips for Women Health2018-09-04T15:48:41+00:00 Health No Comment. Women in their 40's and 50's are so focused on people around them that they often compromise on their health. It is very essential to manage your health in addition to managing the health of your partner and your kids. We are keen to encourage women to take care of their health. This is why we will share some essential tips here. Contents. 1 Control stress.

16 Nis 2014- Fitness ile ilgili herÅey. www.AnkaraSporMerkezleri.com. VÅ¼cut geliÅtirme, Ankara ve Fitness motivasyonu hakkÄ±nda daha fazla fikir gÅ¼rÅ¼n.Å AnkaraSporMerkezleri.com - Ankara Spor Merkezleri Rehberi #spor #fitness #pilates #pilatesstudio #sports #basketball #karatedo #taekwondoallday #volleyball #yoga #taekwondo #body #bodybuilding #ankara #ankaraetkinlik #ankaranÅ±ndikmeni #tunalÅ± #kÅ±zÅ±lay #balgat #cayyolu #Å¼mitkÅ¼y #bahÅelievler #ankaraspor #fit #koÅ¼u #antreman. Tacara's Fitness Blog. Please Note: The Chrome browser does not natively support RSS feeds. To subscribe, you will need to install a Chrome extension that provides support for RSS. You may find one here. Monday, September 24, 2012 â Kansas City, MO 64132. Top tips for womens health. By Tacara Daniel. I want to share with you a roundup of my favorite tips for womenâs health. Iâve divided them into three groups (nutritional, sexual, and mind/body/soul).