

8 Steps to a Healthier Life

by Jordan S. Rubin

When you are healthy, you can serve God with vigor. Here are eight practical ways you can change your life as you step into the new year.

At a Glance

what God created for food.

2. Stop drinking colas. Start drinking water.

3. Eat between meals.

Are you aware that America has an obesity problem? Both scientific research and casual observation of overweight people in public settings confirm it. Our fast-food nation is hooked on greasy fried foods, captivated by sugar and sweets, and relatively clueless about what's healthy to eat. As a result, we're not even close to our perfect weight, in great part because of the lousy foods we consume—and our nation's health is suffering as a result.

My goal is to help every person in the country attain his or her perfect weight and thereby improve personal, as well as national, overall health. That's why I'm recommending that you begin following the steps below as soon as possible. The start of a new year is a great time to make permanent changes in your lifestyle that will help knock off the pounds and put you on the road to better health.

1. Eat for Your Perfect Weight.

When it comes to a dietary strategy for winning the battle of the bulge, the most important step you can take is a lifestyle U-turn in what you choose to eat. You do that by following two fundamental principles. They are:

what God created for food.

foods in a form healthy for the body.

Eating foods that God created means shopping for foods as close to the natural source as possible. I'm talking about:

- A wide array of organically grown fruits and vegetables
- Healthy dairy products such as yogurt, cheese and butter
- Healthy red meats such as organic grass-fed beef, lamb, venison and bison
- Cold-water fish caught in the wild
- Pastured or free-range chicken
- Whole grains such as wheat and barley
- Nuts and seeds.

These foods are part of the Perfect Weight Eating Plan, which I describe in my book *Perfect Weight America* (Siloam). This comprehensive yet simple 16-week eating plan will give you the nutritious, healthy fuel you need and help you achieve your perfect weight.

As you probably can guess, I'm a proponent of natural foods grown organically and sustainably. "Organic" means the fruit or vegetable was grown without the use of most synthetic and petroleum-derived pesticides and fertilizers, antibiotics, genetic engineering, irradiation and sewer sludge for three consecutive years.

Organic meats must come from animals that eat 100 percent organic feed without any animal byproducts; for dairy cows, the whole herd must have eaten organic feed for the previous 12 months.

The term "sustainably" refers to a system of farming that maintains and replenishes soil fertility without the use of toxic pesticides and fertilizers. Livestock are pasture-raised and grass fed, and fish are not pulled from the ocean faster than they can reproduce or caught in ways that destroy other sea life or undersea habitats.

2. Drink for Your Perfect Weight.

You will start losing weight when you stop drinking colas, diet soft drinks, "energy" drinks such as Red Bull, and sports drinks such as Gatorade and PowerAde. Instead, drink water, green tea, certified organic coffee, fresh fruit and vegetable juices, and lacto-fermented beverages, which will do wonders for your health and your perfect weight.

Water can play a significant role in losing weight because of the way it revs up your metabolism and hydrates cells so that they can process carbohydrates and fat more efficiently. When your body's cells are well hydrated, you accelerate the liver's ability to convert stored fat into usable energy and help your kidneys flush out toxins.

Water is the ultimate calorie-free and sugar-free substance. It is the perfect fluid replacement to regulate body temperature, carry nutrients and oxygen to the cells, cushion joints, protect organs and tissues, remove toxins, and maintain strength and endurance. You honestly can't improve on plain water.

Whenever I leave home for my office, I carry a half-gallon polycarbonate plastic container filled with fresh water that's run through my home filtration system. I'm a big water drinker because I know that water hydrates my cardiovascular system, irrigates my digestive tract, keeps my body cool in the heat and helps eliminate waste products from my body.

If you're looking to slim down, drinking plenty of water is just as important as choosing the right foods to eat. You can drink your water cold or lukewarm, but don't drink water with added carbonation. Drinking still or natural sparkling spring water is best, and consuming water before and during your meals will help you digest

your food efficiently and prevent constipation.

How much water should you be drinking? A good approximation is at least a half-ounce of water for each pound of body weight daily.

3. Snack for Your Perfect Weight.

Contrary to what some people think, it is good to eat between meals. The reason? The body's metabolism resembles a furnace that must be stoked at regular intervals, and if you deny yourself food for long stretches of time, your blood sugar will drop and you may become headachy, lethargic and depressed.

Snacking wisely can help you satisfy hunger pangs before they become overwhelming. The way to do this is to arm yourself with ready-to-eat snacks that are good for you, such as whole-food nutrition bars; fresh, raw vegetables; fresh or dried fruit (with no added sugar or sulfites); organic popcorn; raw nuts and seeds; raw nut butters; and even healthy, organic cacao (chocolate) snacks. Also, drinking a delicious and satisfying high-protein and high-fiber meal supplement will keep you feeling satiated for up to four hours between meals.

4. Supplement for Your Perfect Weight.

Though consuming the right foods is the foundation for overall wellness, you could be missing out on nutrients essential to good health due to: reducing calories to lose weight; avoiding foods you don't like; overcooking your food; having a lack of knowledge, motivation or time to prepare healthy meals; or experiencing nutrient depletion from farming and processing methods, stress, lifestyle, pollution and toxins. Taking whole-food nutritional supplements can fill the nutritional gaps in your diet.

I believe we need supplemental vitamins, minerals and

antioxidants because our bodies do not produce these nutrients, and the standard American diet contains foods that have been stripped of many of their healthy components. Today's conventionally grown food is usually low in antioxidants and can cause free-radical damage that compromises cellular health.

The best types of supplements are those made up of whole-food concentrates from natural sources. Vitamins produced from isolated and synthetic materials are not as good or as potent as those from natural sources, and your body will not receive as great a benefit from them.

Taking a whole-food nutritional supplement made with antioxidant-rich fruits and vegetables, as well as nutrient-rich cereal grasses, is a great start. Cereal grasses are rich in nutrients, and they abound in unidentified growth factors, powerful antioxidants, immune boosters, and many other healthful nutrients.

Wheat and barley grasses, for example, are high in chlorophyll, beta-carotene, and vitamins C and E, and are among the best plant sources of protein.

Another important element to add to your diet is cod liver oil. Cod liver oil is a superstar among supplements because it contains omega-3 fatty acids, which are wonderful not only for maintaining your immune system but also for their ability to promote healthy blood lipids by lowering blood triglyceride levels.

5. Cleanse for Your Perfect Weight.

What goes into the body must come out. But all too often, everything doesn't come out, which is why cleansing is an important part of the Perfect Weight America program.

The gastrointestinal tract is expertly designed to help the body break down food and absorb nutrients as well as

eliminate unwanted waste products. Unfortunately, the typical American diet never allows the body to cleanse itself properly.

The goal is for the digestive tract to run like a Swiss train: everything leaving the station on time. Under ideal conditions—and the consumption of whole foods—only 12 to 24 hours should pass between the moment a meal is finished and the moment waste is eliminated.

However, a poor diet often causes undigested carbs to camp in the gut longer than 24 hours and impair digestion. Instead of everything being eliminated on time, the substances linger inside the intestines, causing an overgrowth of harmful bacteria and yeasts.

Habitual intake of a diet high in refined and highly processed foods leads to an accumulation of toxins, increased contact time, and damage to the lining of the gut due to pressure inside the bowel. If the digestive system isn't given a chance to restore itself—through body therapies known as cleansing and fasting—then digestive-related disorders and diseases can and will occur, affecting the very core of how the body grows, repairs itself, gains energy and reaches its perfect weight.

This is why I strongly recommend that every person undertake a detoxification and cleansing program I call the Perfect Cleanse four times a year. It combines a revolutionary 10-day detoxifying eating plan and a 10-day, three-step cleansing supplement system aimed at purifying, capturing and removing toxins from the body. For more information about this program see my book *Perfect Weight America*.

6. Get FIT for Your Perfect Weight.

Exercising is absolutely crucial to achieving your

perfect weight, but not the type you are probably doing at the gym. I recommend that you integrate an exercise system I call "FIT"—Functional Interval Training—into your schedule at least four times a week.

Interval training involves alternating short, intense bouts of exercise with brief recovery times. By sharply increasing and decreasing your heart rate, you will burn more calories than if you spend the same amount of time striding on a treadmill. Interval workout training will improve your resting metabolic rate (RMR) as well as your maximum oxygen intake.

In addition, FIT exercises that work the body's "core" muscles with dumbbells, resistance bands, stability balls, medicine balls or even Russian kettlebells are "functional" exercises long on exertion and short on duration. If you perform 20 minutes of concentrated, huff-and-puff exercise, you will benefit from huge caloric expenditures and continue to burn fat long after you've left the gym.

You see, you can't lose weight—or at least sustain any weight loss—without stoking the body's furnace to burn up reserves of fat. When you complete a series of FIT exercises, your body turns into a fat-burning engine that incinerates fat cells long after you've stopped working out. It does this by building muscle—or restoring muscle that's been lost over the years—through functional, anaerobic, or, as I like to call them, anabolic (building) exercises.

7. Reduce Toxins for Your Perfect Weight.

We have toxins inside our bodies because they are present everywhere in our environment—the air we breathe, the water we drink, the lotions and cosmetics we rub on our skin, the products we use to clean our homes, and even the toothpaste we dab on our

toothbrushes. The main toxic hit comes through the foods we eat and the beverages we drink.

Elizabeth Lipski, Ph.D., author of *Digestive Wellness*, claims that the average American consumes 14 pounds of additives a year. That's because supermarket shelves are crammed with packaged foods containing food colorings, preservatives, flavorings, emulsifiers, humectants and antimicrobials.

Some of the worst and most widely consumed additives out there are the no-calorie and low-calorie artificial sweeteners such as aspartame, saccharin and sucralose.

The digestive system has enough work to do without having to deal with an overload of toxins. Fortunately, some toxins are water soluble, so they pass rapidly out of the body and present little harm. But many more are fat soluble, meaning that it can take months or years before they are eliminated from your system.

The best way to flush fat-soluble toxins out of your bloodstream is to increase your intake of drinking water, which helps eliminate toxins through the kidneys.

Increasing the fiber in your diet eliminates toxins through the bowel, exercise and sweat eliminate toxins through the lymphatic system, and practicing deep breathing eliminates toxins through the lungs.

Here are some additional ways to reduce toxins:

- Install shower filters to remove chlorine and toxins from your water.
- Use glass or polycarbonate containers instead of plastic for food and drinks.
- Improve indoor air quality by opening windows, adding live houseplants or buying an air filtration system.
- Use natural cleaning products.

- Use organic cosmetics and personal care products.

8. Think for Your Perfect Weight.

Though many people don't realize it, our minds have a considerable impact on our weight and overall health. So rather than blaming your poor physical condition on some undetermined malfunction in your body, such as a thyroid problem or endocrine imbalance, you need to examine the condition of your heart—which influences the way you think.

Alex Loyd, Ph.D., co-creator with Ben Johnson, M.D., of an emotional health system called The Healing Codes, says that “the issues of the heart are the source of just about any problem that we can have in our lives. ... If we can fix [those issues], we can fix just about any problem we have.”

This includes problems with weight—because the way we feel and think about our weight creates stress, which suppresses normal bodily functions such as proper food digestion and metabolism of fat. “Very often,” Loyd says, “when you heal the underlying issues of the heart, not only do you feel better emotionally, but your physical systems also start to work the way they should.”

One way to heal these issues is to perform a healing codes exercise two to five times a day that will help you to release stress and deal with any lingering “issues of the heart.” (Learn more about this exercise in Chapter 9 of Perfect Weight America.)

One issue that is often overlooked is unforgiveness, which is common for those who grew up being overweight. When you harbor resentment in your heart, nurse a grudge or plot revenge against those who hurt you, the amount of toxins released into your bloodstream is the equivalent of what you would receive from bingeing on a

dozen glazed doughnuts.

After such an episode, the efficiency of your immune system decreases noticeably for up to six hours, and staying angry and bitter about those who have teased you in the past can eventually alter the chemistry of your body—and even prompt you to fall off the healthy food wagon. An old proverb states it well: “What you are eating is not nearly as important as what's eating you.”

No matter how badly you've been hurt, leave your past in the past and move forward. It's possible to forgive and go on.

Now that you know what to do to achieve your perfect weight, are you ready to take the challenge to “get in shape in 2008”? Why not make it your top resolution this year? You'll not only achieve your own perfect weight but also help America as a nation come closer to this goal.

Jordan Rubin is the founder of the Garden of Life wellness company. He is also the author of numerous health books, including the New York Times best-seller The Maker's Diet and his most recent, Perfect Weight America (both Siloam). For more information, visit .