THE PERFORMANCE™ PRESCRIPTION

PRx

EAT, MOVE, AND LIVE WELL

TEN STEPS CLOSER

TO HEALTHY, HAPPY, AND WHOLE

Ten Steps Closer to Healthy, Happy, and Whole

You're probably familiar with the old saying, "It's what's on the inside that counts." And from a purely scientific standpoint, it's true! You simply can't look, feel, or perform your best if your body isn't being fueled with an adequate and balanced supply of macronutrients (fats, proteins, and carbohydrates) and micronutrients (vitamins and minerals).

Nutritional imbalances are often the primary cause of many health and performance problems. Since the appearance of early warning signs is often slow and insidious, however, their involvement is often overlooked. Fatigue, low motivation, slow recovery, nagging injuries, and restless sleep are often attributed to an athlete's dedication to her training regimen, and sometimes to her age. But it is possible to increase your body's capacity for complete and lasting health by optimizing just a few, key lifestyle and dietary choices. Use the following recommendations as a starting point for reaching—or even exceeding—your personal health, performance, and recovery goals.

1. Learn to love a little sun.

Exposure to the sun is necessary for optimum, human health and performance. Why? Because it's the key to unlocking the body's ability to produce vitamin D3. Achieving and maintaining an optimal level of Vitamin D3 can increase your strength and power, improve your agility and balance, and dramatically reduce your recovery time after an injury, illness, or difficult workout.

Unfortunately, our modern lifestyle is not always conducive to spending time outdoors. Most of us spend the majority of our working day inside. And we've been conditioned to use sunscreen whenever we are outside, even for short periods of time. According to the latest research, an overwhelming majority of women have a less than optimal level of vitamin D3, including those who live in warm, sunny climates and spend regular time outdoors.

Chances are, your health, performance, and recovery could benefit from the regular use of a vitamin D3 supplement. But every woman's need for vitamin D3 (obtained either from the sun or from nutritional supplementation) varies, sometimes dramatically. While your body will never make too much vitamin D3 with sun exposure, it is possible to take too much. The correct amount of vitamin D3 can help you become a fitter, faster, stronger,

and more resilient athlete. But too much of a good thing can create imbalances that weaken the body. So, it's important to measure your vitamin D3 level periodically—once each spring, summer, winter, and fall is ideal. Most doctors are willing to add this assessment to a basic blood work panel. Thanks to recent advancements in at-home testing technology, it has become easy and relatively inexpensive to check your vitamin D3 level at home.

2. Take a high-quality fish oil.

Many athletes take dietary supplements to an effort to increase their strength, power, speed, and endurance. Fish oil is considered among the most important of these. It's good-for-you, omega 3 fatty acids are the reason why.

Omega 3's have received plenty of attention for their heart-health benefits. With an adequate and appropriate dosage, they have also been shown to decrease both heart rate and the amount of oxygen the body requires during exercise. What does that mean? A hard-working athlete's perceived rate of exertion can be noticeably reduced.

Omega 3's come in three types—eicosapentaenoic acid (EPA), docosahexaenoic acid (DHA), and alpha-linolenic acid (ALA). The long-chain fatty acids, EPA and DHA, are found in fish and fish oil supplements; the short-chain in plant sources like avocados, olive oil, flax and chia seeds.

Omega 3's are classified as 'essential' fatty acids because the body cannot make them. Even if you're already eating lots of fresh fish, your omega 3 level might still be low. According to recent research, most Americans consume 10 times more omega 6 than omega 3 fatty acids. Omega 6's (found in vegetable oils like corn, soy, canola, and safflower) are strongly linked to chronic inflammation.

After a tough training session, the muscles are left with microscopic tears that, when healed, make athletes stronger and faster. Omega 3's serve as powerful, anti-inflammatory compound that speeds this recovery process. They also reduce the risk of overuse injuries by boosting blood flow and increasing range of motion.

In a recent *Journal of the International Society of Sports Nutrition* study, researchers also found that daily omega 3 fish oil supplementation increased the body's ability to burn fat for energy during exercise. Burning more fat means burning less muscle. More muscle mass contributes greater strength and fitness gains.

3. Eat more (healthy) fat.

This may sound shocking, considering that we've been told for years to limit our fat intake. If you don't want to get fat, you shouldn't eat fat. Makes perfect sense, right? Wrong!

In fact, nothing could be further from the truth. The common assumption that being overweight and/or carrying excess body fat are the end results of eating too much fat is flawed. Did you know that eating more of the right kind of dietary fat can?

- Help your body burn off unwanted pounds of body fat?
- Improve your digestion?
- Reduce your sugar or carbohydrate cravings?
- Increase your energy and improve your mood?
- Speed your body's ability to recover and heal?
- Boost your endurance and stamina?
- Make it easier for you to concentrate?

There are good fats (those we need for optimum health and performance) and bad fats (those that cause degenerative disease). Bad fats are either refined or easily ruined by over-heating. Corn, soy, canola, and cottonseed oils; and saturated fats from conventionally raised, grain-fed animals fall into this category. Eating a lot of them can lead to a variety of metabolic imbalances as well as high levels of chronic inflammation, the underlying cause of poor recovery and chronic disease.

Good fats, on the other hand, are an absolute health essential. They include the natural and unprocessed fats found in nuts and seeds; the healthful saturated fats like those found in avocados, olives, and coconuts; and the omega 3 fats like those found in grass-fed and naturally-pastured animals and wild, cold-water fish. These fats are critical for the formation of intracellular hormones that control pain, inflammation, immunity, tissue oxygenation, and blood clotting (among many, other things).

In addition, they provide the body with a reliable, slow-burning, and consistent source of energy. The next time you're tempted to tear open a high-carbohydrate snack bar, try a few handfuls of almonds or half an avocado instead.

4. Reap the health-enhancing benefits of sleep.

One of the most powerful, yet under-utilized, strategies for improving your health, performance, and recovery is to prioritize sleep. Unfortunately, it's often the first trade-off a busy athlete makes. And popular sayings like, "I'll sleep when I'm dead" reinforce the idea that sleep is somehow unimportant.

Fueling the body with the right balance of macro and micronutrients is only part of the total health equation. Because athletes are continually exposed to physical and psychological stressors, both the quantity and the quality of sleep are considered essential for building a healthy body and mind. Sleep is not only when the muscles, tissues, and cells have their biggest window of opportunity to repair and re-build, it's also when cognitive function is restored.

The exact amount of sleep you need depends on a number of different variables—your genes, your sport, your competitive aspirations, and your age are just a few. Most active women need seven to nine hours a night. But many top, female athletes believe that more is better. Lindsey Vonn, for example, sleeps a minimum of 10 hours a night; and she naps whenever it's possible.

As Casey Smith, the Head Athletic Trainer of the Dallas Mavericks, has said, "If you told an athlete you had a treatment that would reduce the chemicals associated with stress, that would naturally increase human growth hormone, that enhances recovery rate, that improves performance, they would all do it. Sleep does all of those things."

What does the research say about athletes who don't get enough sleep? They have significantly slower reaction times and higher injury rates; they have weaker immune systems, which makes them susceptible to illness. They are more likely to be forgetful, depressed, stressed, anxious, and angry.

Maybe you are among those who acknowledge the health and performance benefits of sleep, but have a tough time getting enough of it. Active bodies tend to co-exist with active minds. So, getting to sleep (and staying asleep) can sometimes be an issue. If that's the case, consider taking steps to minimize your exposure to artificial light and digital stimulation after it gets dark. Try to implement a pattern of consistent bed and wake times and try to transition as calmly as possible both into and out of sleep. Awaken naturally without alarm, whenever you can. Nap when it's necessary and/or possible. Contrary to what you may have overheard in the gym or during your last group workout, sleeping more doesn't make you weaker. It makes you stronger, healthier, and happier.

5. Ban processed foods from your diet.

Almost everyone knows that it's important to eat well. But it isn't always easy. Unfortunately, the quality of our food supply is in a sad state of decline. Grocery store shelves are packed with products high in refined and/or artificial ingredients. In fact, many of these products contain so few nutrients they don't really qualify as food.

Making different dietary choices can have a big impact on how you look, feel, and perform. Consider adopting a strict policy against eating any processed foods, including those that contain genetically modified ingredients (especially corn, soy, canola, and cottonseed oils); non-organic dairy products, refined sugars (including those found in Gatorade and other 'sports' drinks), refined flours, artificial sweeteners, food colors, and preservatives. Try to do all your shopping in the outer aisles of the supermarket, choosing fresh, organic, and locally grown produce, meats, and dairy products whenever possible.

6. Eat fewer grains—even if you're an endurance athlete.

Volumes of scientific and historical research suggest that our health, performance, and recovery can be improved greatly by reducing or eliminating our intake of whole grains.

How could whole grains be anything but healthy? It turns out that the bran or outer shell of all grains contain phytic acid, a mineral blocker that prevents the absorption of calcium, magnesium, iron, copper, and zinc. In addition to stripping your body of key nutrients, grain consumption causes a spike in insulin production which disrupts the hormonal system, interfering with muscular growth and repair.

In the last 130 years, grain consumption in North America has increased dramatically, and so has the incidence of chronic disease. More than 30% of all Americans are not just overweight, but obese. And our nation's fertility rate continues to fall. In fact, recent research done at the University of Missouri confirms that the average sperm count of American males has dropped a full 50% since 1930.

So, grains cause weight gain and infertility while robbing the body of key nutrients. Could it get any worse? Unfortunately, the answer is yes.

Grains contain gluten—a sticky, water-soluble protein that breaks down the microvilli in the small intestine, eventually allowing undigested particles of your food to enter your blood stream (a condition commonly referred to as Leaky Gut Syndrome). The long-term effects include food allergies, digestive dysfunction, and autoimmune disease. To top it all off, grains provide your body with very little nourishment. While they may contain calories, they don't offer many nutrients. Your body and mind will thank you for eating vegetables, fruits, proteins, and healthy fats, all of which are significantly more nutrient dense.

7. Fuel your muscles—faster and more effectively.

Did you know that the human body doesn't need dietary protein as much as it needs the eight, essential amino acids it derives from it? Essential amino acids are the building blocks of strength, energy, and recovery. They are used to build your bones, repair your connective tissues, and create all the brain chemicals, hormones, and enzymes your body needs to function fully and efficiently. Because athletes push the physical limits or their bodies, they require more essential amino acids for repair and recovery.

Athletes have been led to believe that protein powders are the perfect way to meet their extra essential amino acid requirements. While they can supply some of what your active body needs, they can't do the job completely. Studies show that the body utilizes only 25% of the essential amino acids found in protein powders for anabolic (repair and recovery) purposes. The other 75% is converted to glucose and burned for immediate energy. While this might sound just fine, burning protein for fuel isn't ideal because the necessary conversion process generates a lot of nitrogen. Clearing excess nitrogen from the body is hard work for the kidneys.

On the other hand, studies show that almost 99% of a high-quality essential amino acid supplement is used to directly support muscular growth, repair, and recovery. There is no nitrogen waste, which means no stress on the kidneys. Instead of using a protein powder for recovery, consider giving your body what it really needs—a high-quality, essential amino acid formula.

I have a 10% discount code for *FundAminos*, my personal, go-to product. Send me an email and I'll share it with you! Fueling up a half hour before and/or within a half hour after your workout will help you perform better and recover faster. Coming back from an illness or injury?

FundAminos can offer your body the added support it needs.

8. Say no to soy.

It may come as a surprise to learn that unfermented soy products aren't really 'health' foods. They contain large amounts of phytoestrogens (plant estrogens), which can increase fat production and cause hormonal imbalances in both men and women.

They also contain enzyme inhibitors, which interfere with protein digestion; haemagluttin, which can hinder oxygen up-take and cause red blood cells to clump; and other compounds that disrupt both thyroid function and metabolism. Because the amino acid structure of soy protein is so imbalanced, the human body has a very difficult time digesting and utilizing it.

But here's some better news: Fermented soy products like natto, tempeh, and miso are much lower in the anti-nutrients that prevent the absorption of minerals (like calcium, magnesium, iron, and zinc). They are easier to digest and contain friendly bacteria or probiotics that boost digestion and nutrient absorption. They are high in vitamin K2, which is an important nutrient in supporting bone and cardiovascular health.

Keep in mind, however, that most soybeans—organic or not—are processed with hexane, a toxic petrochemical. Concerned about the environment? Widespread soy cultivation is the leading cause of rainforest destruction in the Amazon.

If you're a vegan or vegetarian, there is a growing list of soy-free alternatives to choose from. When it comes to protein powders, consider rice, hemp, pea, or pumpkin seed. Need a non-dairy milk? Opt for almond or coconut. It's incredibly easy and extremely cost-effective to make any kind of nut milk at home. Dozens of great recipes are waiting for you online.

9. Re-think your calcium supplement.


Bloomberg
Calcium Supplements Raise Heart Attack Risk by 30% in Study of 11 Trials

BBC
Calcium Pills 'Increase' Risk of Heart Attack

Daily Mail
Women who take calcium supplements increase risk of heart attack by up to 30%

In her book, ***Better Bones, Better Body***, Dr. Susan Brown writes, “Over and over we are told to consume adequate calcium. What we are not told, however, is that we also need other bone building nutrients.”

If you regularly follow health and fitness news, you may be aware of the many, recent studies linking the use of calcium supplements to a higher incidence of heart attacks, osteoporosis, and bone fractures. Despite what you’ve been told, taking calcium without its companion nutrients—magnesium, vitamin D3 and vitamin K2—can be harmful.

In fact, the countries with the highest calcium intake (over 1,000 milligrams daily) have the highest osteoporosis rates. What’s up with this? High calcium intake interferes with the absorption and/or utilization of many nutrients including manganese, magnesium, iron, zinc and phosphorus—the minerals bones need to become strong and remain flexible. Populations that consume only a few hundred milligrams of calcium (but plenty of other key nutrients) suffer from little to no osteoporosis and have the lowest bone fracture rate.

If you’re concerned about building and maintaining healthy bones, you’re better off ensuring an adequate and balanced calcium intake from your food—organic, full-fat dairy products, sardines, salmon, dark leafy greens, and bone broth.

10. Develop a plan for putting the pieces together.

With so many different variables influencing the body’s capacity for peak health and performance, it can be difficult to put all the pieces together. It might even seem too complicated or time consuming to begin sorting them all out. That’s when it helps to have some sound guidance, and a solid plan.

A performance-oriented health coach can simplify and streamline the process of identifying and eliminating the obstacles that stand between you

and your health and fitness goals. Chances are, making some small, simple changes will make a very, big difference in how you look, feel, and perform—in every aspect of your life.

Armed with the knowledge of how exercise, nutrition, and lifestyle choices all contribute to your overall health and well-being, a professional health coach can work with you to develop a complete, practical, and personalized plan that will eliminate the guesswork involved in deciding what, when, and how much to eat; what supplements you should (or shouldn't) take; and how to objectively interpret the ever-evolving needs of your body.

Health coaches can step into the places other healthcare practitioners are either unable or unwilling to go. They provide their clients with clear, specific, and measurable goals to work toward. Leveraging the expert guidance and personal support of a health coach can serve as a positive turning point for restoring the mind, body, and spirit.

If you're interested in learning more about how I can help you do that, let's talk!

Feeling frustrated trying to figure your health and performance issues out?

Take a 10-minute time out to complete a free symptom survey that can offer you some insights into which system (or systems) of your body are in most need of support.