

10 Most Important Things to Improve Your Health

When someone makes the decision to improve their health, it can seem like the journey will never be complete – the possibilities for change are endless. Sometimes, this can get overwhelming. It doesn't have to be.

Whether you have been on the natural path for years or just starting out, it is important, even vital, that you focus on *progress, not perfection*. Nobody eats perfectly all the time – nobody. And you don't have to either. If you are making progress towards your health goals, you are moving in the right direction, and eventually, you will get there.

Follow the 80/20 Rule in regards to healthy changes – do things 'right' 80% of the time and use the 20% to keep you sane and allow some flexibility while you incorporate these changes. You may eventually find that you don't need the 20%, but give yourself the flexibility. It isn't cheating, it's living.

Here are ten bases for you to cover as you work to improve your health and your life. If you do these ten things every day, you'll be well on your way to health and happiness.

1. **Drink enough water.** Start your day by drinking 8-16 ounces of water. Then drink $\frac{1}{2}$ your body weight in ounces every day (don't include the water you gulped down first thing in the morning). A 150 lb. person would need to drink at least 75 ounces of water daily in divided doses, ideally about 2-4 ounces (1/4-1/2 cup) every 30 minutes. If you sweat a lot (i.e. during a workout), drink more for a few hours after the workout.



Staying hydrated is the single more important factor for improved health and most people do it wrong. Your body can only absorb and use about 2-4 ounces of water at a time; drinking more than that just means more trips to the bathroom. Drinking substantially less means you will be dehydrated and your health will suffer.

If you have to get up often to urinate at night, try to curtail your water consumption 2-3 hours before you go to bed.

2. **Chew your food (until it is a liquid)!** This usually means at LEAST 30 times before swallowing or putting other food in your mouth. Set down your fork between bites and savor/enjoy each bite.

Your stomach doesn't have teeth; if you don't chew up your food enough, it takes a LOT of extra energy and effort to break it down. If you 'chomp, chomp, swallow' you have the equivalent of rocks in your stomach and you end up on the couch 'resting' while your body tries to break those rocks down. That uses a ton of energy you could be using to do something else.

3. **Ditch the soda.** Soda has nothing that benefits you and lots of stuff that will slow you down. Nothing hydrates you better than water. If you need some flavor, opt for naturally flavored waters, squeeze in some lemon or lime or buy some flavored stevia drops (they come in almost every flavor imaginable) at your local health food store.

The detrimental health effects of soda are too long to list in this report. However, here is the cliff-notes version. Soda (regular or diet) decreases your health because:



- *It is very acidic.* Sodas, especially colas, have a very low pH. Your body has to maintain an alkaline state to be healthy and your body has to expend a lot of work (and minerals) to neutralize the acids in soda.

- *It is loaded with sugar.* Regular sodas typically contain between 10-13 teaspoons of sugar per 12 ounces – that is a ton of empty calories, not to mention it will cause your teeth to fall out.

Many people get almost $\frac{1}{4}$ of their daily caloric intake purely from soda and they don't even realize it. That leads to a lot of extra weight along with all the health problems that come along with it. If you're a visual person, check out www.sugarstacks.com to see how much sugar is in some of your favorite drinks.

- *Diet sodas are full of artificial sweeteners.* Studies have shown that consuming artificial sweeteners actually causes you to *gain* weight. You read that right; eat foods and beverages that contain artificial sweeteners will cause you to gain weight. When you eat something that is artificially sweetened, your body doesn't get the expected amount of calories along with that sweet sensation. It feels betrayed and unsure about what to do next. It retreats a little and doesn't send out the satiety hormones that are typically triggered when you eat sugar. It doesn't get what it expects (i.e., calories) with the taste of sweet, so it sends out signals to eat more. In addition, if and when you do eat something that contains sugar, your body will use those calories more slowly, which can lead to more storage as body fat. This means that not only will you eat more, you will gain weight more rapidly because your metabolism has decreased due to the communication double cross induced by the artificial sweeteners. Artificial sweeteners have no place in your diet if you are trying to get healthier and they will make it much harder for you to reach your goals.
- *Soda causes you to become dehydrated.* All sodas, whether diet or regular, are diuretics, which means they make you go to the bathroom more. This means you will lose more water if you drink soda. In addition, people often drink soda instead of water during their day, so not only are they losing more water, they aren't drinking as much either. That spells disaster for long term health. See #1 above for more information.

4. **Eat whole foods most of the time**, including fruits, vegetables, nuts and seeds, beans, healthy meats/fish and grains. It means eating foods that didn't come from a box, bag or package. Your body was designed to run on real food – this generally means something

that doesn't need a label. Supplying it with lesser quality fuels only insures improper functioning. If your grandparents wouldn't recognize it as food, don't eat it.

5. **Cover 50-75% of your plate with fruits or vegetables.** At any meal, cover at least 50% of your plate with vegetables or fruit; this will provide regular doses of vitamins, minerals, phytonutrients, carbohydrates, water and fiber your body needs to function properly. The other 25-50% should be protein (meat, fish, beans, nuts, seeds or protein powder) at every meal with additional carbohydrate (like whole grains) 1-2 times per day.



6. **Skip fried foods.** This includes French fries, chips, chicken fingers, fried fish, etc. Fried foods contain trans fats and/or omega-6 fatty acids that are very inflammation-producing in the body and are very hard to digest. Your body has to expend a lot of energy to break these foods down. In addition, they only function to increase pain and inflammation in your body and that's something nobody needs.



7. **Get enough sleep.** Your body repairs mainly while you are sleeping; if you don't get enough sleep, you won't repair and your health – physical, mental and emotional – will suffer. Recharge your batteries by getting to bed between 8-10 PM and get at least 8-10 hours of sleep. You'll know you are getting enough when you wake up without an alarm clock and feel rested. Until that time, get to bed as early as you can.

8. **Exercise.** Your body was designed to move, so move it. Get at least 30 minutes of exercise every day, more if you can. Mix things up so you don't get bored and enjoy pushing your physical limits. It is usually best if you do a combination of resistance, aerobic and flexibility training. Try doing resistance training (weights, body-weight exercises, and calisthenics) 2-3 times per week and aerobic training (walking, running, cycling, jumping rope, swimming, etc.) 3-4 times per week. Flexibility training (yoga, stretching) should be done daily.

9. **Be good.** Do something good for yourself and something good for someone else each day. Nobody gets out of this life alive; since we are all in this together, we might as well have some fun and help each other. Doing good for others and being good to yourself feeds your soul, and that's something everybody needs.

10. **Focus on progress, not perfection.** This brings us back to the beginning, and it's important enough to state again. Many people bring a great deal of dissatisfaction into their lives because they feel disappointed in themselves. This negative self-image erodes self-confidence and takes the fun out of life. Think of life as an experiment and treat yourself as you would a child. Learn from your experiences and gain in knowledge what

you may feel is a lack of achievement. Life is a lesson that will always have something to teach. If you need a goal, strive for 1% improvement every day; by the end of the year, you'll be over 350% better.

Realize that no matter what your age, you are responsible for you. Take responsibility for your actions. Realize that you are in control of your life; you can change or you can remain where you are – either way, you make the decisions daily that determine how our life will play out.

By incorporating just these ten things into your daily life you can radically transform your health. Each day, strive to have fun, learn a little and enjoy your time on this earth.

If you need additional support, or have specific needs, don't hesitate to [contact us](#) – we're here to help and dedicated to helping you stay on your natural path to optimal health!

Sincerely,
Chad Oler, ND