

# SHOALS

## Family Medicine

Becoming and staying healthy is about having a long happy life for yourself and your loved ones. It starts with taking ownership of your body, mind, and spirit and being mindful of your own choices. Of course, as your physicians we are here to guide you with medical knowledge and treat you if you get sick. The goal is to be healthy and spend less time being sick as far as we can help it. Likely, you are doing one or many of these things to be well already, but here are a few more things to help on your journey.

Eat a healthy diet of lower carbohydrates – Stop eating “low-fat” and start thinking about the carbs you eat. Avoid sugary drinks including juice, stop eating sweets/desserts, avoid wheat including healthy whole grains, eliminate high fructose corn syrup and decrease intake of white potatoes and rice.

Increase your vegetables (everything but corn is ok), meats, healthy fats like nuts/olive oils, eggs/dairy, low glycemic fruits such as berries, and non-grains like oats. More information can be found here: <http://www.nmsociety.org/low-carb-diet.html>

Increase your fiber intake – The average American only gets about 15 grams of fiber a day. You should increase your total fiber intake to at least 30 grams a day. There are two types of fiber: Soluble and Insoluble. Soluble fiber – including fruits, vegetables, legumes, and oats – are absorbed after you eat and help lower cholesterol and blood sugar. Insoluble fiber – such as seeds, “roughage” from vegetables, and husks on brown rice – are healthy for the “gut”. If you cannot eat enough vegetables and low glycemic fruits to get enough fiber try a supplement that has both soluble and insoluble fiber like Metamucil. Please be aware of your medications and ask about them since excessive fiber can interfere with some medications.

Lose body fat if you have too much – Note that it is about body fat and not weight. Even though our society has focused on weight, it is really about body fat. Body fat, particularly around your belly, is more than just unsightly – it is very unhealthy (even inflammatory). Use a tape measure instead of a scale. Measure from the top of your hip bones (about the level of belly button). Your waist should not be more than 40” if you are a man and 35” if you are a woman. Ideally, it should be less than 35” if you are a man and 31” if you are a woman. Eating the diet in the first tip and being active is a good place to start.

# Healthy Living



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Increase your activity and exercise – There are not many things you can do for your health that pay off more than being active. Any activity is better than none. If you have physical limitations or if you have serious medical problems, we will need to do further evaluation before you begin a serious exercise program. Otherwise, if you are capable below is your exercise Rx:

- a. You need two different types of exercise: Cardiovascular/Aerobic and Weight Training.
- b. Cardiovascular exercise needs to be 150 minutes of moderate activity a week or 75 minutes of vigorous activity in order to give you the most health benefit. Even as little as 5 minutes a day of increased heart rate is beneficial.
- c. Weight training should be done 2–3 times a week and should concentrate on major muscle groups (chest, arms, back, legs). Be sure to focus on your “core” muscles including your abdominal and lower back. If your joints are sore, you are probably using wrong technique. Ask for assistance if you are new to resistance training.
- d. Increase everyday activity with small choices. Use stairs instead of the elevator, park away from the door and walk, and carry bags instead of using a luggage roller.
- e. Take up an active healthy hobby or sport like tennis, swimming, or basketball.

Take a Vitamin D supplement and get some sun exposure 2 to 3 days a week – Do not stay in the sun long enough to burn, and always protect your face from the sun. However, you should spend approx. 25% of the time it would normally take to you to become a mild “pink” in order to get your proper Vitamin D. Expose your arms and legs. After you get your proper sun exposure, you should use an SPF 30 sunscreen for the remaining time you are going to be outside. Also, take a Vitamin D supplement of at least 1,000 U a day. More information can be found here: <http://drholick.com/> If you have a history of skin cancer or a strong family history of skin cancer then a stronger vitamin D supplement and no sun exposure is best for you – for further discussion talk to Dr. Bullard or Dr. Parker.

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Dr. Megan Bullard



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Get enough Omega-3 fats in your diet – Omega-3 fats, DHA and EPA, that are found in fish and fish oil are very important for your health. Fish oil is a potent anti-inflammatory with multiple health benefits. Fish Oil supplements should be from a reputable company. Most people need take at least 2,000 mg a day. You could need more depending on any problems you might have. Also, be sure to not take fish oil in excess if you are on Coumadin as it can interfere. Be sure to ask about fish oil supplements if you are on any anticoagulants/blood thinners. More information can be found here: <http://umm.edu/health/medical/altmed/supplements/omega3-fatty-acids>

Don't smoke (or use smokeless tobacco) – This is a no brainer. It is not just about lung cancer either. Lung disease, heart attacks, strokes, high blood pressure, colon cancer, and even ectopic pregnancy are all linked to smoking.

Get enough sleep – Sleep is underrated. It affects every system in our body as well as our minds. Lack of sleep is even a major risk factor for obesity. 7-8 hours of restful sleep should be the goal. Here are some suggestions for achieving proper sleep hygiene:

- a. Ask about any medications that might interrupt your sleep.
- b. Go to bed and wake up as close to the same time every day.
- c. Be active and get exercise during the day to promote restful sleep at night.
- d. Keep the bedroom cool, dark, and quiet when sleeping. Turn the television and radio off.
- e. Do not keep cell phone and multiple outlets near the head of your bed.
- f. Use deep breathing, relaxation, and prayer before you go to sleep. Progressive Relaxation Technique is described here: <http://www.webmd.com/balance/stress-management/stress-management-doing-progressive-muscle-relaxation>
- g. Do not lie awake in bed for more than 20 minutes. Your brain will begin to associate being awake with your bed. Go to another room and do something that will make you sleepy. Then try to go back to sleep.
- h. Avoid caffeine after 3 PM.
- i. Do not use alcohol for sleep.

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Take the other parts of your wellness seriously – You are a complex person that is more than just a body. Your mental and spiritual health affect your body and vice versa. Do not ignore any part of your health and wellness.

Visit your Dentist – Brush your teeth twice daily and floss once a day. Keep your scheduled visits with your dentist. Good oral hygiene and good teeth will make your whole body healthier.

Visit a physician once a year for a physical – Of course, you need to come in more often if you have other illnesses. However, the yearly physical allows us to do a full exam including skin, lab work, and address any issues that might arise. We want to address things before they happen.

Know what medications you are on – Also consider everything that is over-the-counter or a “supplement” a medication. Make sure you write them down. This goes back to being mindful of what you are putting into your body and knowing what affects for good or bad that might have.

Take a multivitamin – A portion of the vitamins in the multivitamin will be wasted and will become “expensive urine” that we hear so much about. However, a multivitamin fills the gaps of your diet in order to make sure your body has all of what it needs to run well. Make sure it has at least 400 mg of calcium. You should get at least 1,000 mg a day of calcium from a vitamin and diet. You might need even more if you are on certain acid reflux medicines.

Find out about your family medical history – Not all diseases are inherited but some are. Knowing more information about your family will help keep you healthy. Make it a point to ask questions.

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