

3 Surprisingly Easy Things You Can Do to Live Longer

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Most of us have only a general sense of what we can do to live a good, long life, and eating well, exercising, and getting a good night's sleep are the go-to, standard health tips we all know. But beyond these universal wisdoms, I believe we can all further increase our odds of an even longer and higher-quality life with few other strategies most of us rarely think about.

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Keep a Regular Schedule

Admittedly, this is a hard one to actually follow, but I know first-hand the value of maintaining a predictable schedule on a daily basis. I go to bed and get up at the same time every day (and yes, that means weekends too), eat meals at approximately the same time every day, take any prescribed medication on cue every day, and plan my workouts at roughly the same time.

Some days I'm better than others. Lately, I've been traveling across different time zones for work, in addition to doing the "CBS This Morning" show once a week. The program is shot live in New York, so I have to be at the studio in Los Angeles, where I live, by 4 a.m. on those mornings. It's hard to keep a regular schedule with these kinds of responsibilities, but I do the best I can. When I travel for two or more days, for example, I switch my schedule to the time zone of my destination, but try to stay on Pacific Daylight Time for very short trips.

Why does a regular schedule make such a big difference? Your body loves predictability. It's one of the best ways to reduce stress and maintain a balanced state of being. Take, for instance, the mundane habit of eating lunch. If you consistently eat at high noon, and one day an unexpected phone call or obligation has you postponing your lunch until much later, your body won't just show physiological signs of hunger in that waiting period. It will also experience a surge in cortisol, the stress hormone that tells our bodies to hold tightly to fat and to conserve energy. The body, in essence, goes into survival mode because it's suddenly unable to predict when it will get its next meal. And that increased cortisol further adds to your lifetime risk for numerous health problems, from weight gain and sleep problems to depression, heart disease, and memory and concentration impairment. So if you keep a consistent routine every single day, especially with regard to your body's natural rhythms, you'll feel the difference: more energy, enhanced sense of well-being and (bonus!) weight loss will become easier, too.

Make a goal in 2014 to stick to a very regular routine daily. And don't beat yourself up if you fall of the proverbial wagon. Just get back on it again as soon as possible.

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Get off Your Butt More (in Addition to Formal Exercise)

Regardless of your exercise routine, you have increase the amount of time you move each day. Our bodies were designed to move. In fact, movement makes our bodies work. It's how virtually every system and organ in the body stays nourished, refreshed, and ready to tackle any challenges.

Here's the bad news: Sitting for five hours a day (as so many of us do thanks to computer-focused desk jobs) is equivalent on a health basis of smoking a pack of cigarettes daily, and, sorry, this is true even if you sweat it out for an hour at the gym. The sad truth is that we have designed our lives to be immobile, as certain technologies make us more automatically sedentary for much of the day.

Early last year I wore Nike Fuel Band on my wrist for the first time and was shocked to discover just how much I was on my derriere. I bought a hands-free headset that day, which allows me to walk around my office while I talk on the phone (I may look like an air traffic controller, but I have significantly reduced the amount of time I sit). I also got a treadmill desk for my office. Within a week I had mastered the skill of checking email while walking slowly. Now I walk on it one to two hours on it a day while responding to emails. I also focus on my accelerometer to make sure I get enough movement over time each day.

Of course, if you can't swing a treadmill desk at your workplace, there's plenty you can do without one: Get up every hour and walk around for five minutes; park farther away from your destination; call certain people back throughout the day when you don't have to be at a desk and can take a walk while using your cell phone or a wireless headset. Simply put: Don't spend the whole workday sitting.

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Mobilize Your Medical Data

Focus on being in charge of your own health and collecting data about your body. I've personally tackled this one head on, checking my blood pressure on a regular basis and

sending the information to my doctor. I also have uploaded all of my medical information to an online cloud. That way if I get sick, or God forbid, land in the emergency room, I can access all of my medical information at the touch of a keyboard. You keep tabs on plenty of other important information via computer, why not your medical records too? Since any of us can fall ill while on vacation or at midnight on a weekend when the doctor's office isn't open, we need to be in charge of our own data and make sure it's there when we need it.

Changes like these, while relatively simple, may not be the easiest to implement, but there's compelling scientific proof behind them that we can't ignore. And we shouldn't forget that positive changes to our health, however small, ultimately impact all of us as a collective society. As the former Supreme Court justice Potter Stewart once said, "There is a big difference between what we have the right to do and what is right to do." Health changes should, at long last, focus on the latter. The good news is that if we make them we actually can feel better and enjoy the remarkable life we have.

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