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# Top Five Habits for a Healthier Life

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*In my interview on "The Joe Cohen Show," I discussed several fundamental health principles that virtually everyone can integrate into their lives to achieve better health*

*Even small changes add up to meaningful health improvements over time, especially when you know where to focus your energy*

*Eliminating vegetable/seed oils from your diet and getting more sun exposure top my list of healthy habits*

*Embracing time restricted eating, which means limiting your eating window to six to eight hours per day, is also important*

*Exercise and protecting yourself from electromagnetic fields round out my five top habits for a healthier life*

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Looking for straightforward advice to set your health on a path toward wellness instead of disease? My recent interview featured on "The Joe Cohen Show" is for you. I discussed several fundamental health principles that virtually everyone can integrate into their lives to achieve better health.

It can feel overwhelming to make positive lifestyle changes, but when you make them one step at a time it's much more manageable. The secret is that even small changes add up to meaningful health improvements over time, especially when you know where to focus your energy. Here, I've detailed several examples where a relatively small "investment" in terms of lifestyle changes will lead to major health rewards.

## Five Tips for a Healthier Life

**1. Stop eating vegetable oils —** Linoleic acid is the primary fat found in polyunsaturated fatty acids (PUFAs), including vegetable/seed oils. It accounts for about 90% of dietary omega-6 intake.[1] Examples of seed oils high in omega-6 include soybean, cottonseed, sunflower, rapeseed (canola), corn and safflower.[2]

Omega-6 is considered to be proinflammatory because of the linoleic acid, which will radically increase oxidative free radicals and cause mitochondrial dysfunction.[3] While omega-6 fats must be balanced with omega-3 fats to not be harmful, most Americans consume far more omega-6 than omega-3.

Most of the omega-6 people eat, including seed oils, has been damaged and oxidized through processing. The oxidized omega-6 develops lipid hydroperoxides,[4] which rapidly degenerate into oxidized linoleic acid metabolites (OXLAMs). OXLAMs can cause a host of problems in your body.[5,6]

- Cytotoxic and genotoxic
- Mutagenic
- Carcinogenic
- Atherogenic
- Thrombogenic

Metabolic dysfunction can also occur, while OXLAMs are also toxic to the liver and are associated with inflammation, fibrosis and fatty liver disease in humans.[7] As researchers further noted in the journal Nutrients, "In addition, a few studies suggested that omega-6 PUFA is related to chronic inflammatory diseases such as obesity, nonalcoholic fatty liver disease and cardiovascular disease."[8]

Linoleic acid is found in virtually every processed food, including restaurant foods, sauces and salad dressings, so to eliminate it you'll need to eliminate most processed foods and restaurant foods from your diet — unless you can confirm that the chef only cooks with butter.

However, because animals are fed grains that are high in linoleic acid,[9] it's also hidden in many ostensibly "healthy" foods like chicken and pork, which makes these meats a major source as well. Olive oil is another health food that can be a hidden source of linoleic acid, as it's often cut with cheaper seed oils.

**2. Get more sun exposure —** You're probably aware of the many health benefits of optimized vitamin D levels. But an important caveat is that vitamin D should ideally be obtained from healthy sun exposure, not an oral supplement. Not only will adequate sun exposure naturally raise your vitamin D levels to healthy levels, but it will provide a wide variety of other benefits, many of which are only beginning to be understood.

Many people are not aware that only 5% of your body's melatonin — a potent anticancer agent — is produced in your pineal gland. The other 95% is produced inside your

mitochondria — provided you get proper sun exposure. In fact, vitamin D is more than likely a biomarker or surrogate for sun exposure, which is so intricately involved in melatonin production.

During the day, if you get enough sun exposure, near-infrared rays from the sun penetrate deep into your body and activate cytochrome c oxidase, which in turn stimulates the production of melatonin inside your mitochondria. Your mitochondria produce ATP, the energy currency of your body. A byproduct of this ATP production is the creation of reactive oxidative species (ROS), which are responsible for oxidative stress and free radicals.

Excessive amounts of ROS will damage the mitochondria, contributing to suboptimal health, inflammation and chronic health conditions such as diabetes, obesity and thrombosis (blood clots). But melatonin essentially mops up ROS that damage your mitochondria. So by getting plenty of sun exposure during the day, your mitochondria will be bathed in melatonin, thereby reducing oxidative stress.[10,11]

Getting more sun exposure also goes hand in hand with eliminating seed oils from your diet. The latter will dramatically reduce your risk of sunburn and skin cancer, as susceptibility to UV radiation damage is controlled by the level of PUFAs in your diet, almost like a dial. The PUFAs control how rapidly your skin burns and how rapidly you develop skin cancer.

**3. Embrace time restricted eating (TRE)**

If you're still eating three meals a day — morning, noon and night — you're missing out on one of the most powerful, free health interventions available. TRE involves limiting your eating window to six to eight hours per day instead of the more than 12-hour window most people use.

When you eat throughout the day and never skip a meal your body adapts to burning sugar as its primary fuel, resulting in the downregulation of enzymes that utilize and burn stored fat.[12,13]As a result, you become progressively more insulin resistant and start gaining weight. When you're metabolically unfit, your body primarily relies on glucose, or sugar, as fuel, instead of using fat as a primary fuel.

Even though the fat is there in abundance, your body doesn't have the metabolic capacity to access it. For most people, surplus fuel stored in your body is stored in the form of fat. However, no one has more than about two days' worth of sugar stored in their tissues. This is why when you first start fasting, and you're unable to access your fat stores, you'll quickly exhaust your sugar stores and can experience low blood sugar.

It's not that you don't have the fuel to generate, because your body can make sugar itself, but that process takes a while to ramp up and, as a result, most people get relatively hypoglycemic when they first start using TRE. You may experience dizziness and fatigue as a result, which are signs that you're not metabolically flexible. If you were, your body would have more than enough capacity to produce all the fuel you need to keep your brain happy and healthy.[14]

TRE promotes insulin sensitivity and improves blood sugar management by increasing insulin-mediated glucose uptake rates,[15] which is important for resolving Type 2 diabetes.

Another study revealed that eating all meals between 8 a.m. and 2 p.m. — instead of between 8 a.m. and 8 p.m. — resulted in greater metabolic flexibility, reduced hunger and increased sense of fullness, resulting in weight loss.[16]

Ideally, you'll want to stop eating for three to five hours before bedtime, then start your eating window in mid- to late morning after you wake up. Most people reading this can benefit from embracing TRE; however, it isn't recommended for people who are underweight, pregnant or breastfeeding. You also need to use caution if you're taking certain medications, such as those for blood pressure or blood sugar.[17]

Interestingly, when you're metabolically inflexible and unable to use fat for fuel, your body generates a molecule called acetyl-CoA when it's breaking down fats — and that happens to be one of the cofactors for your body making melatonin.

So when you're metabolically inflexible, your body produces far less melatonin in the mitochondria where you need it, because that's where almost all the damage that causes cancer is caused — due to oxidative stress from the process of generating energy within the mitochondria.[18]

**4. Exercise often —** Exercise is probably the single most important "drug" we know of, and it's a powerful intervention to prevent Alzheimer's, among other chronic diseases. One of the most comprehensive studies to date of the molecular changes that occur in your body due to exercise provided an unprecedented glimpse into the details of the body's physiological response.

It demonstrated that "an orchestrated choreography of biological processes" occur, including those related to:[19]

- Energy metabolism
- Oxidative stress
- Inflammation
- Tissue repair
- Growth factor response

In all, 17,662 molecules were measured, 9,815 of which changed in response to exercise, with some going up and others going down. Certain molecules also spiked immediately after exercise then quickly dropped, while others remained heightened for an hour.

"It was like a symphony," study author Michael Snyder, Ph.D., professor and chair of genetics at Stanford University, told The New York Times. "First you have the brass section coming in, then the strings, then all the sections joining in."[20]

Even weekend warriors who pack 150 minutes of exercise into two days enjoy lower all-cause and cause-specific mortality rates,[21] although I encourage you to make exercise a priority on most days of the week instead. Along with the well-known benefits to your heart, exercise is protective for your brain.

If you know you're at increased risk of dementia, for instance if a close family member has been diagnosed, it's even more important to adhere to a regular exercise program. In

seniors who are at high risk of dementia, cognitive decline can be reduced with a comprehensive program addressing diet, exercise, brain training, and managing metabolic and vascular risk factors.[22]

Exercise initially stimulates the production of a protein called FNDC5, which in turn triggers the production of BDNF, or brain-derived neurotrophic factor. In your brain, BDNF not only preserves existing brain cells,[23] but also activates brain stem cells to convert into new neurons and effectively makes your brain grow.

Research confirming this includes a study in which seniors aged 60 to 80 who walked 30 to 45 minutes, three days per week, for one year and increased the volume of their hippocampus by 2%.[24] Higher fitness levels were also associated with a larger prefrontal cortex.

**5. Protect yourself from EMFs —** Electromagnetic fields (EMFs) are the cigarettes of the 21st century — and most people are being exposed 24 hours a day. Most of the radiation emits from cellphones, cell towers, computers, smart meters and Wi-Fi, to name just a few of the culprits. Exposure causes serious mitochondrial dysfunction due to free radical damage. Among the most common consequences of chronic EMF exposure to your brain are:[25]

- Alzheimer's
- Anxiety
- Autism — One of my longtime mentors, Dr. Dietrich Klinghardt, has linked autism in children to excessive EMF exposure during pregnancy[26]
- Depression

EMFs may also play a role in heart issues and infertility.[27] Research conducted by the National Toxicology Program (NTP)[28] also found "clear evidence" that exposure to cellphone radiation led to heart tumors in the male rates, along with "some evidence" that it caused brain and adrenal gland tumors in the rats.[29]

While it's nearly impossible to avoid EMF exposure completely, there are practical ways to limit it. Given the number of EMFs that bombard you all day long, getting educated about the negative effects of EMFs is imperative to your well-being. Particularly if you are dealing with a serious illness, it is well worth your time to reduce your EMF exposure as much as possible.

One strategy is to connect your desktop computer to the internet via a wired connection and put your desktop — and cellphone — in airplane mode. Also avoid wireless keyboards, trackballs, mice, game systems, printers and house phones. Opt for the wired versions. If you must use Wi-Fi, shut it off when not in use, especially at night when you're sleeping. Shutting off the electricity to your bedroom at night will also help reduce your exposure.

I encourage you to embrace all of these protective strategies that support optimal health. These are just a start, as there are many others, such as use of a near-infrared sauna, that will also protect your health and lower all-cause mortality.

But remember, you don't have to implement them all overnight. With each small step you take to reduce a toxic exposure or add a health-protective element — like more sun exposure — to your day, the better your health will become.

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**Notes**

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