

# **6 Health Strategies You Should be Taking Advantage Of (But Probably Aren't!)**

A Special Report Brought to You by:



## 1. Flatten Your Stomach in Two Simple Steps

Everyone knows the children's song about the leg bone being connected to the hip bone, but how many people really take it to heart? Obviously, everyone knows that the leg bone does in fact attach to the hip bone; that's not the point. Most people, however, don't really stop to think about how related and interconnected the parts of the human body really are.

To illustrate this point, the back and stomach muscles are all affected by one another as they form a girdle around the lower torso. It stands to reason, then, that your posture affects how your stomach looks, and the strength of your stomach muscles affects your posture.

### Step 1: Stand Up Straight

This first step to flattening your stomach is to stand and sit up straight. This actually has a few different effects. First, slouching accentuates belly fat, so simply sitting up will make you appear slimmer. Second, proper posture helps improve the strength of your back, which of course makes it easier to maintain proper posture longer. Third, poor posture leads to back pain, which makes stomach exercises difficult.

Having good posture will make it easier for you to work out your stomach muscles and whittle down that belly. In addition, a nice straight posture enhances blood flow throughout the body, particularly to the legs and lower back, both of which are involved in many stomach exercises.



So, if you are trying to lose a belly, the first step is to simply sit and stand up as straight as possible as often as possible. Do that, and you are already on your way!

### **Step 2: Perform the Back Extension Exercise**

To perform this exercise, start by lying on your stomach with your forehead on the floor. You may use a mat or towel to cushion your pelvis and head if needed. Position your arms by your sides, palms up. Contract your back muscles to lift your torso off the floor. Hold the contraction briefly, then release and slowly lower your torso back down to the floor. Repeat for an entire set (10-12 repetitions).

The next part of this exercise begins by extended your arms out above your head (picture a superhero flying through the air). Lift your legs off the floor simultaneously while keeping your head and arms held in place. Try to imagine your legs growing longer as you are lifting them up. Hold your legs up briefly, then slowly lower them back to the floor. Repeat for an entire set (10-12 repetitions).

Doing these two simple things will help you strengthen your back and correct your posture, which are great first steps to losing an unwanted belly. However, for optimal results you should continue working on your back muscles and other core muscles. Stomach exercises that work the core will help you straighten up your posture, flatten your stomach, and gain muscle tone. As with any workout routine, be sure to consult your



health care professional before beginning and always warm up properly to avoid injury.

## **2. Fight the Fear of Failure – and Win!**

Everyone wants to achieve some measure of success in life. It's the natural order of things. But there are some people who are afraid of taking the risks needed to achieve success, which limits their potential and actually kills the thrill of living life to its fullest extent.

Fear of failure isn't always the underlying problem, however. Sometimes, it's the fear of success that allows us to sabotage our hopes of achieving a particular goal. In fact, there are some people who, when they are just on the brink of something wonderful, suddenly walk away or end their quest without explanation.

This fear – the fear of success – is altogether different than the fear of failure, yet it holds the same power when the going seems to get too tough or the light at the end of the tunnel is clear but the thrill is more in the journey than the final destination.

If you experience a fear of failure (or of success), there are several things you can do to overcome that fear.



1. Determine what it is that is holding you back. What is the ultimate fear?
  
2. Re-examine your life and try to pinpoint the first time you experienced this type of fear.
  
3. Talk with a friend or a professional who can be objective about your situation and shed light on what's really getting in the way of your goal.
4. Make a list of your previous "failures." Write down what stopped you from succeeding and note the reasons why you consider these to be failures.
  
5. Review your list with an honest assessment about your fear. Self-realization is important at this point. Once you determine why you failed, you can then understand the fear behind it. Was the goal too difficult to reach (fear of failure)? Or, perhaps the success was too difficult to handle (fear of success)?

Fear is a genuine feeling that something negative will happen, not a contrived excuse to avoid taking action. It comes in all shapes and sizes and can lead to anxiety attacks, panic attacks, generalized anxiety and the overall belief that reaching for that brass ring will yield nothing, or worse, impending doom. But, by following the five steps outlined above, you can fight the fear of failure (or success) head-on – and win!



### 3. Read Food Labels before You Buy

For optimal health and wellness, get into the habit of reading the labels on foods before you buy. While they may have messages such as “Low Fat” or “Reduced Calorie” written all over the package, when you read the label and understand what you are looking at, you will probably be surprised.

Regardless of what the marketing claim may be, the actual nutritional label may tell another story. The FDA provides these important guidelines to help us make smarter food choices. If the marketing message and nutritional label don't jive, consider moving choosing a different product. Use this chart as a guideline to understanding the different terms found on food labels:

<b>Fat-Free</b>	Less than 0.5 grams of fat per serving, with no added fat or oil
<b>Low fat</b>	3 grams or less of fat per serving
<b>Less fat</b>	25% or less fat than the comparison food
<b>Saturated Fat Free</b>	Less than 0.5 grams of saturated fat and 0.5 grams of trans-fatty acids per serving
<b>Cholesterol-Free</b>	Less than 2 mg cholesterol per serving, and 2 grams or less saturated fat per serving
<b>Low Cholesterol</b>	20 mg or less cholesterol per serving and 2 grams or less saturated fat per serving
<b>Reduced Calorie</b>	At least 25% fewer calories per serving than the comparison food
<b>Low Calorie</b>	40 calories or less per serving
<b>Extra Lean</b>	Less than 5 grams of fat, 2 grams of saturated fat, and 95 mg of cholesterol per (100 gram) serving of meat, poultry or seafood
<b>Lean</b>	Less than 10 grams of fat, 4.5 g of saturated fat, and 95 mg of cholesterol per (100 gram) serving of meat, poultry or seafood



<b>Light (fat)</b>	50% or less of the fat than in the comparison food (ex: 50% less fat than our regular cheese)
<b>Light (calories)</b>	1/3 fewer calories than the comparison food
<b>High-Fiber</b>	5 grams or more fiber per serving
<b>Sugar-Free</b>	Less than 0.5 grams of sugar per serving
<b>Sodium-Free or Salt-Free</b>	Less than 5 mg of sodium per serving
<b>Low Sodium</b>	140 mg or less per serving
<b>Very Low Sodium</b>	35 mg or less per serving

#### 4. A Berry Good Idea

Although this health and wellness strategy is short – it’s also sweet! Literally. Eat more fresh berries! Berries are very good for you and contain plant nutrients called anthocyanidins, which are powerful antioxidants. In addition, some berries also have high levels of resveratrol, which helps fight heart disease and cancer.

So, the next time you want something sweet, juicy, *and* good for you, reach for guilt-free blueberries, blackberries, raspberries, strawberries and grapes!

*Fast fix ideas:*

- Add fresh berries to whole grain cereal for added fiber, vitamins and flavor
- Turn your standard smoothie into a berry beneficial fruit shake
- Add a handful of berries to mixed greens and veggies for a delicious alternative to simple salad



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- Top low-fat frozen yogurt with the berries of your choice for a healthy dessert
- Make blueberry pancakes or waffles with sliced strawberries for a special Sunday breakfast treat

## 5. Let Go of Anger

Of all human emotions, no other is more puzzling or troublesome than anger. Nobody likes to be angry and yet we can't seem to prevent ourselves from feeling this way sometimes.

Have you ever been told "it's nothing to get angry about" while simultaneously feeling angry? We're taught from a young age that we must learn to 'control our anger' and yet we all 'lose it' from time to time.

While it is normal and healthy to experience anger, how we react when angered can have a significant impact on our relationships, our work, and our health.

A Chinese proverb states, "By controlling the anger of a minute, you may avoid the remorse of a lifetime." But how can you control anger, especially when it seems to be such an automatic response? Anger management experts suggest the following:

- **Understand why you get angry.** Anger is an emotion that helps us to defend ourselves in the face of threat. If you become angry, it is because something has occurred that you perceive as a threat to your physical safety, or more frequently, to your psychological well-being?



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Usually it is easy to identify the events that lead us to experience anger. It is more difficult to identify why we perceive these events as a threat. Think about the last time you became angry. Review the events that led you to feel this way. Perhaps the actions of another person made you feel unimportant, worthless, or invalid. Once you have acknowledged the threat, you are better able to defend yourself without getting angry.

- **Take ownership of your anger.** A common belief is that anger is the direct result of the actions of others. This belief implies that our anger will not go away until others change how they are acting. The fact is, our anger results from *our perception* of the events in our lives or actions of other. Maybe you've noticed that the exact same event evokes an anger response from you sometimes, but not always. Much of whether you experience anger depends on whether or not you perceive these events as a threat. In other words, we create our own anger (just as we create our own happiness, sadness, or any other emotion). This means that we are in control of how much anger we experience. By changing your perception of a situation, you can control how angry you feel.
- **Interrupt the anger response.** Most of us have heard the advice, "If you are angry, count to ten before you say or do anything." This is good advice. By focusing your attention on a mundane task like counting, you give yourself a chance to calm down. Once you are calm, you can think more clearly about what you are feeling and why. More importantly, you can plan a course of action to resolve the situation more effectively.
- **Re-evaluate the situation.** Unfortunately, when we are angry, our thinking often become irrational. We make assumptions about what others are thinking (e.g. "he thinks he's better than me") or what their



motives are (e.g. "she is doing this because she knows it will bother me"). We also tend to make rash judgments about others (e.g. "he's an idiot") and overgeneralizations (e.g. "she always acts this way"). Problems arise when we act as if these assumptions, judgments, and overgeneralizations are true. The next time you become angry, evaluate your thinking. Are you making irrational assumptions, rash judgments, or overgeneralizations? Review the situation and see if you can come up with another interpretation. Consider alternative explanations for why somebody did what they did. Evaluate whether your judgments and generalizations are true. By re-evaluating the situation, you broaden your interpretation of events that you initially perceived as threatening. As a result, they may not seem so offensive.

- **Avoid venting about your anger.** Research shows that "venting" or repeatedly reviewing and discussing the offending event, may not lead to a reduction in feelings of anger. In fact, excessive venting can actually prolong your anger response. While it can be helpful to discuss your feelings with others, it is not helpful to rehash the offending event over-and-over once the situation has been resolved. If you find yourself repeatedly replaying an anger-provoking situation, try thought stopping. This technique involves saying the word "STOP" to yourself anytime you catch yourself rehashing the event. Then, say to yourself, "I've already dealt with this and it is time I move on." This may be difficult at first, and you may find that you quickly return to talking or thinking about the offending event. Stick with it, and eventually your anger will fade.



- **Take constructive action.** If you find that you are frequently unhappy or angry, it may be time to take action to correct your overall situation. After all, the responsibility for your happiness (and your anger) is yours. If, after evaluating the situation, you feel a change is needed, formulate a plan to bring about that change. First, clearly identify what the problem is and how it can be solved. Next, identify the specific steps you need to take and the order in which you need to take them. Then, set a specific date by which you will initiate each step and follow through. As you progress through your plan, you can feel good about the fact that you are actively taking steps to correct the situation.

You will probably never eliminate anger from your life entirely. And, given the importance anger plays in self-protection, you probably don't want to. However, by using the right tools and techniques, you can control your anger and use it constructively to improve your quality and enjoyment of life.

## **6. Make Personal Time Just for YOU!**

For most busy women, personal time is the first thing that goes when racing against the clock to get everything on the to-do list done. The problem is, this is your time to regroup and find focus. If you never take time to stop and do something that you enjoy, you'll quickly lose sight of the things that are important in both your personal and professional life. To take back your personal time, make a list of the things that you enjoy doing and try to do at least one or two of them every week.



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On a daily basis, try and carve out personal time for relaxation. Consider learning to use meditation as a method of relaxation and for clearing your mind so that you can think more clearly once your break is over. Another idea is using visualization as a great technique for relaxing while, at the same time, reaffirming your goals and dreams.

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