

Grace's Guide to Improving Your Health Today!

1. ***Stand up!***

There is a good chance that you are sitting at this very moment...well, sitting is the new smoking. Prolonged sitting is associated with a decreased life span. Recent research has shown that despite a daily exercise routine too much sitting causes premature death. Humans are sitting more than ever and those living in industrialized countries are easily spending 12 hours or more sitting on their tushes.

The human body is designed to work easily and efficiently in an upright position. Our legs and feet are made to bear and be strengthened by the weight of the entire body.

Think of your cardiovascular system as a hose. What happens when you kink a hose? The water inside is either drastically slowed or completely stopped. The same concept applies to your veins and arteries, they are much more pliable than a garden hose so blood flow is not stopped, but it is greatly slowed. This causes your heart to need to work harder. Glucose is not used up by your cells as efficiently thus sitting contributes to high blood glucose levels. Additionally, unused glucose is converted into stored fat. Prolonged sitting increases your risk for heart disease, obesity and type-2 diabetes.

I have been standing at my work station for years and noticed increased energy after just a few weeks of standing all day. I didn't feel beat down on Friday evenings anymore. And my productivity has kinda gone through da roof!

2. ***Consume a fermented food or beverage.***

A sterile environment is not ideal for health as we have been taught. The past two decades of microbiome research has shown that we have a symbiotic relationship with the bacteria, yeast, viruses and fungi living in and on our bodies. We need to take care of our microbiomes and they will take care of us.

Probiotics (sometimes referred to as cultures) are the helpful bacteria, yeasts, viruses & fungi that work together to keep harmful strains of bacteria, yeasts, viruses and fungi under control or eliminated. Prebiotics are food for probiotics. Probiotics in the gut microbiome are responsible for programming immune system cells by telling them what to destroy. Probiotics pre-digest much of our food to make it easier for our intestinal cells to absorb nutrients. These magical bacteria also send emotion signals directly to our brain.

Probiotics are best obtained from fermented foods and beverages. Prebiotics are obtained from the fiber in fruits, vegetables and seeds and our body is designed to utilize probiotics from fermented foods and beverages and raw produce rather than pills.

Some of the more familiar fermented foods and beverages to try include:

apple cider vinegar	sauerkraut	kefir	pickles	yogurt
kombucha	chutney	kimchi	kvass	miso

Cultured sour cream and butter are also readily available in most grocery stores.

But watch out! Our modern pickles and sauerkraut are canned in vinegar and/or pasteurized. Fermented foods are widely available in health food stores or in the organic section of many supermarkets. Make sure vinegar is not included on the ingredient list and the label uses the words “fermented,” “raw” or “live cultures.”

And if you are new to fermented foods and beverages start out with just a tablespoon or so and increase your intake daily. Fermented foods will promote healthy digestion and if your system has not digested properly for a long time too much fermented foods too soon could cause some discomfort.

3. ***Sit alone in a quiet spot for 10 minutes.***

But you just told me not to sit! Yes, this is true but sitting for a very short while, alone in a quiet room is a very good way to give your brain a meditative rest. Meditation does not require one to “clear their mind.” Although this is the goal of some meditation practices, most meditation techniques teach us to be present and accept the thoughts that come and go.

I suggest choosing a mantra and repeat that in your mind for 10 minutes. Any mantra will do. Say for example it makes you happy and relaxed to watch ocean waves. Then let the term “ocean waves” be your mantra and sit alone in a quiet room for ten minutes with your eyes close while you repeat “ocean waves” in your head. If you notice your mind has wandered from ocean waves then gently go back to repeating your mantra. After a few times, I bet ten minutes will just fly by and you might be eager to increase your time spent sitting alone in a quiet spot.

4. ***Turn off the computer, phone and television ½ hour before bedtime.***

Ideally you’ll want to avoid electronics for one hour before bedtime but ½ hour is a good start. Electronics emit a high concentration of blue light. And this blue light negatively effects the production of melatonin, which is the hormone that makes you feel sleepy & helps you fall asleep. Low melatonin production can knock your whole circadian cycle (built in 24 hour clock) out of whack and can cause long term sleep disturbances. Just 20 minutes of sleep loss results in poor memory function and lowers productivity. Chronic sleep loss creates exhaustion and brain fog.

Some of you might be thinking, ‘well, I can fall asleep just fine with the television on.’ While that might be true, the blue light emissions are preventing you from producing adequate amounts of melatonin and the quality of your sleep is being compromised. Humans not only need to get their optimal number of hours of sleep each night but this sleep also needs to be quality sleep. Blue light is anti-quality sleep. You will fall asleep quicker and sleep more soundly by not exposing yourself to blue light 30-60 minutes before bed time.

5. ***Drink water.***

Many, many people are dehydrated and they have no clue. And many people mistake thirst for hunger. Water controls this whole earth and humans are no different, we too are controlled by water. We can live for a few months without food, but only for a few days without water.

I’ve heard every excuse in the book for not drinking water. I have been told that water does not taste good. People say they don’t like water. Someone once told me that she could only drink crystal light (water with chemical flavoring and artificial sweeteners) but she absolutely was not

able to drink plain water... None of these excuses are valid. There are one billion people on this planet without access to clean water. And when it falls from the sky for free in industrialized countries, we call that a bad day...

Water does not have a taste so if it doesn't taste good then there is something in the water making it so, but it is not the water itself that tastes bad. It takes less than 30 seconds to drink an eight ounce glass of water.

You can do it, drink water!

6. **Walk.**

It is possible to obtain your daily exercise simply by living everyday life. And walking is one of the easiest and best forms of exercise. I do realize that there are some people who are unable to walk, and generally they would give anything to be able to walk. Meanwhile, many folks who are able to walk, generally would give anything to walk less...hmm, crazy.

Park your car in the spot furthest from the door you need to enter so that you use your legs more to take you where you need to go. Walk to the store or restaurant if you can. Take the stairs instead of taking the elevator every chance you get.

Walking decreases your risk for injury and is an easy spontaneous exercise. There is no expensive equipment or gear to invest in. Walking reduces the risk of cardiovascular events. Walking reduces the risk of dying. Walking improves digestion, cholesterol, blood pressure, diabetes, obesity, vascular stiffness, inflammation and stress (just a 15 minute walk decreases stress). Walking protects against dementia, peripheral artery disease, depression, obesity, diabetes and colon cancer.

7. **Take ten belly breaths.**

Many cultures teach proper breathing to their youngest members and place a high value on the power of breath. I am quite certain that if you are reading this you are breathing. But are you breathing correctly and effectively?

Belly breathing will improve your digestion, decrease stress and improve your overall breath. Stand with both hands on your belly. I usually place one hand above my navel and the other below my navel. Take a deep breath in using your diaphragm muscle and expand your belly as far as you can. Slowly exhale while contracting your belly as much as you can. Repeat this ten times slowly.

You should be able to feel and hear your intestines digest if you are belly breathing correctly. Your heart rate will slow and any anxiety should decrease.

Small, every day healthstyle changes can have a huge, positive impact on how you feel and look. Finding your personal healthstyle will take time and is an individual process. I hope that by sharing over a decade of research and trial and error to find what works best for me I can help you find what works best for you.

Be Well and Love the Earth,
Grace