

A starter's guide to health and wellness

Registered dietician Matt Kansy believes that addressing the lifestyle fundamentals most directly related to diseases, metabolic disorders and general ailments can start you on the path to healthier living.

Kansy recommends focusing on the following four areas one at a time. Keep at it, and you should experience solid improvements.



Nutrition: You are what you eat

Enjoy

Nutrient-dense, real foods, with a foundation of vegetables and plants (fresh or frozen, organic when possible).

- Lean protein: Beef, lamb, pork, poultry, eggs and seafood.
- Fats: Olive oil, coconut oil, avocados, pastured butter, ghee, seeds and nuts.
- Carbohydrates: Starchy roots and tubers, legumes (dried beans and lentils soaked for 24 hours, NOT canned), fruits (berries are best, fresh or frozen, organic when possible).
- Beverages: Water, seltzer, teas (herbal, green, white and black), black coffee in moderation.

Note: Although healthy, most fruits and nuts should be consumed in moderation. Too much can lead to weight gain and other possible issues.

Avoid

Processed and packaged products, sugar, refined grains, vegetable oils, artificial ingredients (colors, flavors and preservatives), and most convenience/fast foods. Avoid drinking your calories (soda, juice, sweetened teas, etc.) and enjoy alcohol in moderation.



Sleep: Restore and refresh

Before bed

“Unplug” for an hour before bed. Light from electronic screens disrupts your circadian rhythm and sleep. Bedtime herbal tea, a hot shower and reading before bed can also help. Consistency is key. Unwind and relax your body and mind to perform at your best the next day.

Your room

Make your room as dark as possible by eliminating any sources of light such as TV or lit alarm clocks. Use your cellphone as an alarm clock and use blackout curtains to keep it dark.

During sleep

Avoid turning on any lights or checking the time. Both can stimulate your brain and keep you from falling back to sleep.

Note: If you have trouble falling asleep, it could be due to stress. If you fall asleep and then wake up, it's possibly either low blood sugar or a circadian imbalance due to light exposure.

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Movement: For a healthy body and mind

It's important to check with your doctor before starting any physical activity for the first time. If you can only do one thing, walking is the place to start. For other activities, start slowly and build as you progress. Do what you can. Something is better than nothing!

Daily

Walk for 30 minutes ideally outdoors. Treadmills or ellipticals are acceptable, but avoid going too hard. This is to establish a solid movement foundation. It's amazing what walking every day can do for your body and mind.

2-3 times per week

Get moving with resistance or weighted exercises. Free weights, body weight exercises, resistance bands and machines will help develop and maintain strength, muscle mass, mobility and a healthy nervous system.

Once per week

Raise your heart rate with some sort of play like soccer or basketball. Go for a run or some other type of vigorous exercise. You don't need much. Do short bursts, recover and repeat. Look up Tabata or HIIT training as examples, but any type of movement that gets your heart rate up will work.



Mindset: Unleash your full potential

Meditation is a powerful means of establishing a calm and balanced mind and body. There are several methods and practices, so the key is to find one that works for you and to do it each morning if possible.

Spend less time watching TV or on social media. Diaphragm breathing exercises, meditation, yoga, and reading spiritually and mentally uplifting material can help you develop a better sense of well-being and happiness.

Check out apps such as **HeadSpace**, **Calm**, **Oak** or **Insight Timer** for motivation and tracking.

Suggested books include **The Power of Now** by Eckhart Tolle, **Wherever You Go, There You Are** by Jon Kabat-Zinn, and **Awareness** by Anthony De Mellow.

Health and wellness coach Matt Kansy is a registered dietician and fitness trainer with 18 years of experience. For more information, go to mattkansy.com



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