

A low-angle, close-up shot of a person's legs from the knees down, wearing black athletic shorts, white socks, and grey and black running shoes. The person is running on a paved path. The background is a bright, hazy sunset or sunrise over a body of water, with a warm orange and yellow glow. The sky is filled with soft, white clouds.

SCAFF**STRONG**

# **SMALL CHANGES EQUALS BIG RESULTS**

## **HOW TO BUILD HEALTHY HABITS THAT STICK**

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# Hydration

## 1 Drink Plenty of Water

Hydrating first thing in the morning is one of the best healthy habits to adopt, and the best way to ensure that happens is to keep a nice tall glass of water on your night stand. It helps cleanse my digestive system and prepare it for the day.”

It can do so many good things for you. Staying hydrated is at the top of the list, but it may also help you lose weight. Another reason to go for H<sub>2</sub>O? Sugary drinks are linked to obesity and type 2 diabetes. If you aren't a fan of plain water, add flavour with slices of orange, lemon, lime, watermelon, or cucumber. There are health benefits to drinking more water. It helps keep your temperature normal, lubricates and cushions joints, protects your spinal cord and other sensitive tissues, and gets rid of wastes through urination, sweat, and bowel movements.

## 2 Drink Green Tea

Not black with whole milk and honey. Not sugary, bottled concoctions. Green tea, plain and simple! The EGCG—a super potent nutrient found almost exclusively in green tea—has been shown to help break down fat and discourage new fat cells.

Green tea is touted to be one of the healthiest beverages on the planet. Tea is rich in polyphenols, which are natural compounds that have health benefits, such as reducing inflammation and helping to fight cancer.

It's loaded with antioxidants that have many health benefits, which may include:

- Improved brain function
- Protecting against cancer
- Lowering the risk of heart disease
- Fat loss



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## 3 Have Breakfast

It's important for a bunch of reasons. It jump-starts your metabolism and stops you from overeating later. Plus, studies show that adults who have a healthy breakfast do better at work, and kids who eat a morning meal score higher on tests. If a big plateful first thing isn't for you, keep it light with a with simple fats and lean proteins. Just don't skip it.

Research continues to support the benefits of consuming healthy fats like those found in olive oil, nuts, and avocado. Fit people simply don't fear the fat—they just keep portions at bay. The American Heart Association emphasizes just how important it is to reduce trans fats and increase polyunsaturated fats in the diet to protect against heart disease. Healthy fats also contribute to greater feeling of satiety and can work to prevent unhealthy cravings as a result.

## 4 Plan Your Meals

It'll help you save time and money in the long run. Block out some time, then sit down and consider your goals and needs. Do you want to lose weight? Cut back on sugar, fat, or carbs? Add protein or vitamins? Meal prep keeps you in control. You know what you're eating and when. A bonus: It'll be that much easier to skip those doughnuts in the break room at work. Incorporate lettuce into your meals to add nutrients and water to your diet. The fibre in lettuce helps to fill you up, and it does so at just 20 calories per serving. Lettuces that are dark green and reddish in colour are the most nutritious and the most flavourful. But even the popular, pale iceberg lettuce provides water, fibre and folate. Snacking itself is not the enemy; it's the way in which you snack that either tips the scales in your favour or has you feeling discouraged. Snacking not only keeps your metabolism fired up, but it helps keep your hunger and energy levels steady throughout the day. The key here is in the preparation so that you can snack smart.



## 5 Stick To Natural

Artificial sweeteners may be tempting to toss in your coffee in the morning, but resist them at all costs. Just because they are sans calories does not mean they're doing your body any good. Fit minded folks avoid the fake stuff because artificial sweeteners have been found to disrupt normal body functioning and actually triggers a great hunger response in the body.

## 6 Count Colours, Not Calories

You'll hear time and time again from nutrition experts:

Not all calories are created equal. A handful of almonds versus the same amount of calories in potato chip have a tremendously different effect on your body. While keeping portions under control is crucial to keeping weight at bay, one of the best ways to put together a well-balanced plate is actually by observing the variety of colours before you. Filling your dish with greens and reds and yellows will help you craft a nutrient-rich meal that will help fuel your body better for your workouts, muscle recovery, and weight loss.



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## 7 Order It On The Rocks

Spirits often have the biggest bang for your buck: Just a shot of whiskey, gin or rum is likely to give you a buzz faster than downing beer or wine. They also are the lightest and lowest carbohydrate drinks of the group: A standard shot of whiskey, tequila, vodka, gin, or rum has about 97 calories.

Mixers are often sneaky vehicles for huge amounts of added sugar. A vodka cranberry and Jack and Coke, two popular cocktails, can contain over 30 grams of sugar, a number close to your daily recommendation, if you have to use a mixer try swapping to a sugar free version or using soda/tonic water. Cider is also a notoriously sweet option at about 20 grams of sugar per serving. Swapping these orders for a vodka soda with lime or traditional Martini.

Wine isn't the lowest calorie winner but does have some science-backed benefits when consumed moderately. Drinking a glass or two of red wine boosts healthy gut bacteria, which may help reduce cholesterol levels and could even help with, obesity, some research shows.

Along with your Malbec, you can also benefit from a flood of antioxidants or polyphenols derived from grape skins. Polyphenols can help protect the lining of the heart. White wine isn't as helpful health-wise as red wine, but it still has some cardio-protective benefits, research shows

Ultimately, overwhelming research suggests alcohol may do more harm than good. If we're being real with ourselves, the best way to get fit or maintain a healthy lifestyle is by drinking water or soda water.

Still, if you want to drink on a diet, some drinks are definitely healthier than others. Having a drink is like having a dessert — if you can safely drink it's a treat, but one that should be enjoyed in moderation.



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## 8 Skip The Holiday Specials

Fit people are just as human as anyone else; they still crave their lattes (and maybe need them to get through the morning), but they choose wisely when ordering from Starbucks, Costa or your local coffee shop. Some of them can be loaded with more than the daily recommendation of sugar. They still order that macchiato, but they skip the flavour and chemical-ridden syrups that go along with them. Sorry pumpkin spice, but we'll pass.

## 9 Dressing On The Side

It's one of the oldest tricks of the trade: Order your salad dressing or sauce on the side! Salads can be great ways to flood your body with fresh, healthy produce, but drowning them in dressing (or letting the restaurant do the honour) almost always pushes the calorie count sky high.

## 10 Cravings

One minute you're craving something sweet, and the next you've got your fist in a jumbo bag of M&M's. But are you really hungry? There are other ways to indulge our senses and ward off cravings besides just giving in to them. Boredom and stress can sometimes trigger unhealthy cravings, but it's worth exploring other ways to deal with those feelings — and that's exactly what healthy folks do. It may sound silly at first, but lighting candles, journalling, getting a massage, or even sitting outside can help calm stress and emotional eating.



# Sleep

## 11 Go Offline

Checking your email and social media a lot? Sure, your friends' and family's latest updates are just a click away, but do you really need to see pictures of your cousin's latest meal? Let it wait until morning. Set a time to log off and put the phone down. When you cut back on screen time, it frees you to do other things. Take a walk, read a book, or help your cousin chop veggies for her next great dinner.

## 12 Sleep Well

Do you sleep a solid seven or eight hours most nights?

Many of us don't but experts say this is a marker of good heart health. Solid sleep doesn't just give you more energy, it can also help with healthy eating goals. When you're short on sleep, it reduces your body's production of hormones that suppress appetite, which can contribute to weight gain.

There are almost too many benefits to list. A good night's sleep keeps you in a better mood, sharpens memory and focus, and helps you learn new things. In the long term, it lowers your risk of heart disease and helps you keep trim. Aim to get 7 to 9 hours a night. For the best rest, do it on schedule -- turning in and waking up at about the same times every day.

We're all guilty of staying up too late binge-watching Netflix. But if you want to commit to a healthier lifestyle, sleep has got to be one of your top priorities. If you're serious about getting healthier and losing a little weight, skip the late night television and get some sleep already.

It will make those morning workouts a lot more bearable too.



# Exercise

## 13 Take An Exercise Break

Don't just grab another cup of coffee -- get up and move. Do some deep lunges or stretches. It's great for your body and mind. Just 30 minutes of walking five times a week may help keep the blues at bay. And if you can't do those minutes all at once, short bursts help, too. If you have stairs at your home or office, take them every chance you get. But don't stop there. For a strong cardio workout, walk up and down the stairs repeatedly. Start with a limited number of repetitions, then increase them as you feel stronger.

We all have lazy days, but scheduling in your workouts helps ensure you won't skip them. At the end of the day, being in tune with your body's own version of "normal" is the best thing you can do. It's important to recognize when your body needs rest and even when your body needs more movement. Healthy people are in sync with their bodies and listen to signals that alert them to when they're hungry, dehydrated, inflamed, or even getting sick. By paying closer attention to your energy and how your body feels overall, you can better provide it with what it needs.



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# 14 Train Your Muscles

Strength training helps your body trade fat for muscle mass. That means you'll burn more calories even when you're being a couch potato. But these workouts can also help you slim down, strengthen your heart, and build up your bones.

Do strength-training exercises -- like push-ups, lunges, and weight lifting -- at least twice a week. Having good posture can prevent aches and pain and it can also reduce stress on your ligaments. You can try to leave yourself a note to sit up straight, until it becomes an unconscious habit. Walking with your shoulders back and head held high can also make you feel good about yourself.

On the flip side, fitness folks know that rest is just as important as activity. It's possible to overdo it at the gym and exhaust yourself to the point where you're no longer productive. Taking days off to rest your body and to allow your body to recover is equally as important as working it out in the first place. Don't be afraid to give yourself a day off in between your workouts.

# 15 Head Outdoors

A few minutes in the sunshine raises vitamin D levels, and that's good for your bones, your heart, and your mood. Plus, being outside means you're more likely to move your body instead of parking it in front of the TV or computer. Choose nature over city streets, if you can. One study found that people who strolled in urban green spaces were calmer than people who walked in built-up areas.

Making it to the gym a few times during the week is a task in and of itself. However, those who put a premium on living a healthy lifestyle don't stop there.

Healthy folks weave activity into their everyday by taking walks during lunch, playing tennis on the weekends, or playing tag with your kids.



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# 16 Steps

As in, have you walked 10,000 steps today? That's the minimum recommended amount so that you aren't considered a sedentary person. You don't even have to strap on a pedometer or other tracker; if you have an iPhone and have the new iOS system, your phone automatically counts your steps for you (so long as you have it on your person). Look for the white icon with the heart that's labelled "Health." Plus, walking for weight loss is one of the easiest and cheapest ways to get started down the healthy habits path, pun intended! Plain and simple: Don't sit if you want to be fit.

# 17 Keep Your Balance

If you're young and active, good balance will help you avoid injuries. If you're older, it will keep you active longer and lower the chances you'll fall and break a bone. No matter your age, good balance means better muscle tone, a healthier heart, and greater confidence. Yoga and tai chi are great ways to work on it, but just about anything that keeps you moving, even walking, can help.



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# 18 Don't Smoke

If you light up, quit. It's a big move toward better health. Your body repairs itself quickly. As soon as 20 minutes after your last cigarette, your heart rate and blood pressure drop. Why wait? Kick the habit, today. Your doctor will be happy to help you get started.

There are many good reasons to give up smoking:

- Smoking causes premature wrinkles.
- Giving up smoking stops brown teeth and bad breath.
- People who have quit smoking feel less stressed.
- Your breathing and general fitness will improve.
- Your fertility levels will improve, along with your chances of having a healthy pregnancy and baby.
- You will save money.
- You will reduce the chances of your children suffering from bronchitis, pneumonia, asthma attacks, meningitis and ear infections.
- Children who live with smokers are twice as likely to smoke.

## **Your body with start to feel better:**

### **After 20 minutes**

- Your heart rate will returns to normal.

### **After 8 hours**

- Nicotine and carbon monoxide levels in blood reduce by more than half and oxygen levels return to normal.

### **After just 2 days**

- Your ability to taste and smell is improves.
- Carbon monoxide will be eliminated from the body
- Lungs start to clear out mucus and other smoking debris there is no nicotine in the body.

**After 72 hours**

- Breathing becomes easier
- Bronchial tubes begin to relax
- Energy levels increase

**After 2-12 weeks**

- Your circulation improves.

**After 3-9 months**

- Coughs, wheezing and breathing problems improve as lung function increases by up to 10%.
- Your health will keep improving

**After 1 year**

- Your risk of heart disease is about half compared with a person who is still smoking.

**After 10 years**

- The risk of lung cancer falls to half that of a smoker.

**After 15 years**

- Risk of heart attack falls to the same as someone who has never smoked.



# Try Something New

## 19 Be Mindful

It can mean meditating or simply stopping to smell the roses. However you do it, studies show mindfulness slashes stress, relieves pain, and improves your mood. And scientists are beginning to understand how. One study found that 8 weeks of regular meditation can change parts of your brain related to emotions, learning, and memory. Even washing dishes can be good for your brain, as long as you do it mindfully.

## 20 Learn Something New

New skills help keep your brain healthy. Sign up for a dance class or a creative writing workshop. Better yet, master a new language. The mental work it takes can slow the signs of aging and may even delay the effects of Alzheimer's disease.

## 21 Don't Judge Others

One of the hardest parts about sticking to a diet is doing so while remaining social. Going to the bar or out to dinner with friends can make it difficult to say no to food and drinks that have the ability to derail your diet in a matter of sips or bites. However, those who do exercise their will power at social gatherings also choose to let those around them make their own dietary choices. Making your peers comfortable is just as important as finding balance and peace for yourself.

**NEVER STOP  
LEARNING**



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