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To: David Taylor

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Maximize Your Balance



The feet are very important in balance and posture because they are loaded with proprioceptive sensors. These sensors are constantly sending signals to the brain, which then sends signals back down the spinal column to the muscles telling them when to contract and when to relax. Every movement from standing to walking, running and jumping is controlled by this system.

Many chiropractors are specially trained to evaluate the structural integrity of the arches of the feet to see if they are a contributing factor to postural stress. Supporting the arches of the feet with a custom-made orthotic device (insert) that you wear in your shoes has been shown to block the abnormal foot motions that create a twisting stress in the knee, hip, pelvis and spine and that improves balance and posture. The messages sent from the feet to the brain are done so more efficiently when the arches are properly supported.

In addition to chiropractic adjustments and spinal pelvic stabilization with orthotic inserts, there are certain activities that promote balance and don't require any special equipment:

- Begin by standing on one leg for 30 seconds and then shift to the other side. Practice this until you can consistently stand on each leg without losing your balance.
- Stand on one leg with your arms crossed for 30 seconds and then do the same while standing on the other leg. Crossing the arms adds complexity to the amount of

information going to the brain from the sensors in the muscles and joints.

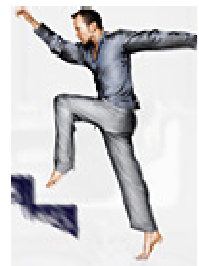
- Stand on one leg with your eyes closed for 30 seconds. (Be sure you are in an area where you can support yourself if needed. Stand next to a doorway or have a chair available to reach out to for support.) Repeat with the other side. Closing the eyes increases the difficulty of the exercise by removing one of the systems of balance.
- Stand on one leg, close your eyes and cross your arms for 30 seconds. Repeat with the other side.

Talk to your doctor about the importance of balance and proper posture, and how the two of you can work together to help maintain both for a lifetime.

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Steps to Better Health

Today, we know more than ever about how our bodies deteriorate over time and our vulnerability to diseases. Health practitioners are rapidly adapting this new knowledge to promote health and longevity. The "healthier you" is all about you at your physical, mental, and emotional best. Here are some of the steps you can take to help unleash better health.



- **Beat the Leading Cause of Death.** Johanna Parker, from the University of Warwick (United Kingdom), and colleagues conducted a systematic literature review of studies examining vitamin D (specifically 25-hydroxy vitamin D [25OHD] as an indicator of vitamin D status) and cardiometabolic disorders. The studies revealed a significant association between **high levels of vitamin D** and a decreased risk of developing cardiovascular disease (33 percent lower risk compared to people with low levels of vitamin D), type 2 diabetes (55 percent risk reduction) and metabolic syndrome (51 percent risk reduction).
- **Excite the Brain.** A large nationwide study by Brandeis University (Massachusetts) suggests that mental exercises aid cognitive skills. Margie Lachman and colleagues conducted the Midlife in the United States study, which assessed 3,343 men and women, ages 32 to 84 years, 40 percent of whom had at least a four-year college degree. Evaluating how the participants performed in two cognitive areas, verbal memory and executive function, the team found that those with higher education engaged in cognitive activities more often and performed better on the memory tests.

However, some subjects with lower education performed just as well; the researchers found that **intellectual activities undertaken regularly made**

a difference. Specifically, among individuals with low education, those who engaged in reading, writing, attending lectures, and doing word games or puzzles once a week or more had memory scores similar to people with more education.

- **Engage the Body.** In that physical activity is associated with reduced risks of chronic diseases and premature death, Qi Sun, from Harvard School of Public Health, and colleagues explored whether physical activity is also associated with improved overall health among those who survive to older ages. Analyzing data from 13,535 participants in the Nurses' Health Study, whereby the women reported their physical activity levels in 1986 (average age then: 60 years), the team found that women who survived to age 70 or older (10-plus years after the study began) were **engaged in higher levels of physical activity** at the beginning of the study and were less likely to have chronic diseases, heart surgery or any physical, cognitive or mental impairments.

Keep in mind, of course, that these aren't the only ways to maximize your health, but they're a great place to start. There's never a bad time to sit down and assess your current health and what you can do to improve it, especially when some simple behavior and lifestyle modifications can have a profound impact on your life span. Talk to your doctor for more information.

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Take the SMARTER Approach



The SMARTER approach to achieving your goals is similar to cooking. First you need to know what you are cooking (Specific). Then you pull together the amounts (Measurable) of each ingredient (Attainable), and bake everything at a specific temperature for a determined (Reasonable) length of time (Timely). Then you taste (Evaluate) the food and finally decide how you will modify (Reorganize) your recipe to improve on your next attempt. Learning how to doing things SMARTER has never been so easy!

Specific: When putting your goals to paper, make sure they are straightforward and free of ambiguity. For example, instead of: "I want to lose weight," try: "I will lose 10 pounds over the next 10 weeks." Instead of: "I want to save more money," try: "I will increase my savings by \$2,500 over the next 12 months."

Measurable: Reviewing your goals and documenting or measuring your progress daily will help you to make the choices that continually point you in the right direction. For example, documenting your workouts and the foods and drinks that pass through your lips, as well as

using the same scale to weigh yourself, are ways to measure your progress toward your weight-loss goal.

Attainable: Is your goal realistically attainable? Using weight loss as the example again, if you are naturally stocky or big-boned, for example, setting a weight-loss goal that would be difficult for a supermodel to achieve isn't realistic and probably not attainable. In fact, setting unrealistic goals likely will result in burnout and failure.

Reasonable: Part of your action plan for losing weight might include getting some form of exercise every day, drinking more water and using smaller plates. Are these lifestyle changes reasonable and sustainable? If so, you are on your way to permanently achieving your goal. If not, you'll need to determine what steps are reasonable to you.

Timely: To successfully achieve your goals, you must set completion dates. Setting timelines for each task gives you clear targets and deadlines. Without completion dates, your goal will always be open ended and much more likely to remain unachieved. Set a realistic time frame for completion and move forward every day until your goal is reached.

Evaluate: Continually evaluating your progress will help reveal your weak points and identify the areas that need improving. This process also helps you evaluate if your time and efforts are being spent wisely.

Reorganize: Once you have determined what works and what doesn't, make the necessary adjustments to your approach to maintain focus and stay on track. Continue to regroup and reorganize your efforts until you know you are on a stable path toward success. If something isn't helping you achieve a particular goal, rethink the process and find a better way.

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