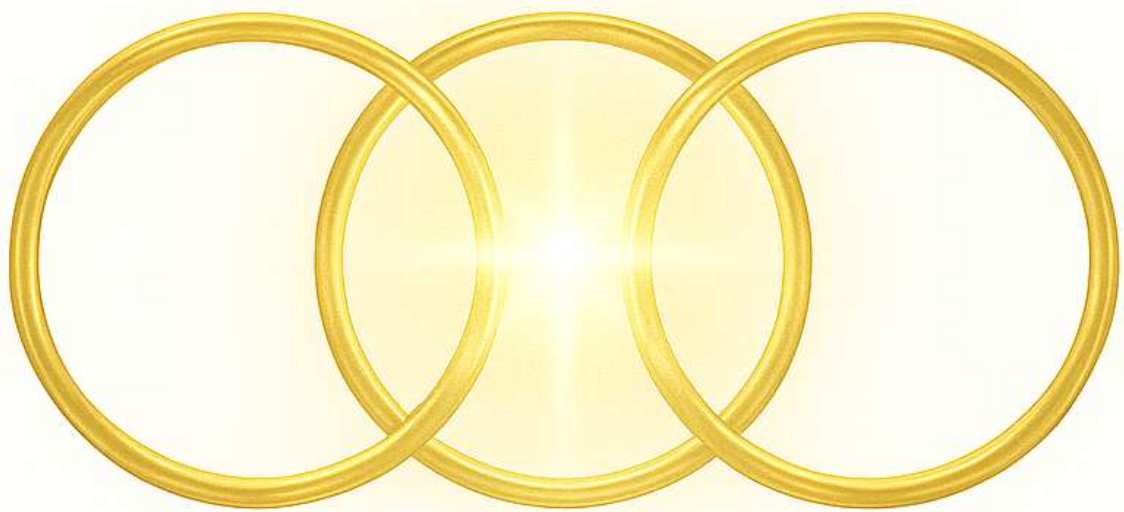


# THE WHOLENESS MANDATE

A Blueprint for healthy living  
using the principles of lifestyle medicine



Oyinkansola Ogundimu, MD

*THE  
WHOLENESS  
MANDATE.*

# Copyright

The Wholeness Mandate

1<sup>st</sup> Edition

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# Dedication

*To Ola Mi,*

*My Superman, My fiercest supporter.*

*Although you didn't get to see this book,*

*I know you're in the grandstands of Heaven cheering me on.*

*I can imagine your proud smile.*

*I miss you.*

*See you when I'm done.*

*Your Ayanfe.*

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# Introduction

## Designed for Wholeness

***The thief does not come except to steal, and to kill, and to destroy. I have come that they may have life, and that they may have it more abundantly.***

John 10:10 (NKJV)

If I were to pick one verse that has changed my life, it would be John 10:10. It radically changed my view of who God is and what He wants for me. It made me understand that there is a clear demarcation between what is of Him and what is of the enemy. There is no intertwining of the desires of God and the devil. The devil (the thief) comes to steal, kill, and destroy. None of these words denotes anything good. The devil wants 'bad things' for me, and he will do all he can to ensure this happens. On the other hand, God (through Jesus, the good shepherd) wants me to have life and have it more abundantly. He wants me to have, not just 'plain old life', but abundant life! Now that sounds good to me. My simple conclusion was that God is good, and He wants good for me; the devil is evil, and he wants evil for me.

This foundational knowledge of knowing that God is good, and He wants good for me, brought me to an understanding that He is interested in me.

Then I saw the same verse in the amplified version-

***The thief comes only in order to steal and kill and destroy. I came that they may have life, and have it in abundance [to the full, till it overflows].***

My mind was blown. God wants me to have a full, overflowing, abundant life. He wants me to have a life that is so full of Him that it overflows and spills over into my world, everything and everyone around me.

Permit me to dig a little deeper. Looking at Strong's concordance, the Greek word for abundance is **Perissos**, meaning -Abundant, exceeding, extraordinary, more than sufficient. Strong's states the following about the word's usage in the bible.

*The Greek word "perissos" is used to describe something that is beyond the usual or expected measure. It conveys the idea of abundance, excess, or **something that is extraordinary in quantity or quality**. In the New Testament, it often refers to the abundant life that Jesus offers, the overflowing grace of God, or the surpassing righteousness expected of believers.*

Do you see that? Something that is extraordinary in quantity or quality. God wants me to have an extraordinarily good quality of life! I saw that God wanted me to have an extraordinarily good quality of life that I can spread to the world around me. This brought me so much joy and confidence in God. I had heard and even said that God is good, but I could now **see** that God is good and He wants good for me.

I use this verse as a foundation for everything else I will be conveying in this book. I want you to have an understanding, first, that God is good, and He wants good for you in such a dimension

that it overflows into your world. The good that God wants for us includes the entirety of our being. This brings me to the second foundation I would like to lay.

***Now may the God of peace Himself sanctify you completely; and may your whole spirit, soul, and body be preserved blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.***

1 Thessalonians 5:23 (NKJV)

Man is a tripartite being as described in the verse above. Man is a spirit that has a soul and lives in a body. The discussion on the tripartite nature of man is beyond the scope of this book; however, if you would like to study this truth more, I would recommend Andrew Wommack's book titled Spirit, Soul, and Body.

If God wants us to have an abundant life, as established earlier, then this abundant life needs to flow through each part of our being- Spirit, Soul, and Body. God wants us to thrive, flourish, and glorify Him in all that concerns us.

The third foundation I would lay is that God has a plan for each one of us.

***For I know the plans I have for you," declares the Lord, "plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future.***

Jeremiah 29:11 (NIV)

God has a plan for each one of us, each family, community, city, country, and continent. He has a plan for the world, the dispensation of time we are in, and an overarching agenda. He is the ruler over everything, and He has a plan. As He is a good God, He has good plans for His Kingdom and, by default, for us also. Each one of us has a part to play in God's Kingdom agenda.

When we combine these foundational truths, we see that God is a good God who wants good for us in our spirit, soul, and body. He has a good plan for us, and He has a kingdom agenda which we are invited to be a part of.

This book was laid on my heart because God wants to let His children know that He cares about our health in totality. He is not just concerned about the spirit and the soul, but He is also interested in the health of our bodies. Our passport and legal right to be on this earth is our body. It is our 'earth-suit'. If the body is not well cared for, it 'ejects' the spirit and the soul, and we must leave this earth. Too many Christians are dying prematurely because their bodies were not intentionally protected and strengthened.

We need to realize that in this end-time dispensation, God needs an army that is strong in spirit, soul, and body to carry out His agenda on earth. God has an agenda for His Kingdom, and we are His chosen tools in carrying this agenda out.

A lot of times, we focus on the gifts, passions, and talents that He has given us to help further His Kingdom, but what about other things He has given us? Like our time, resources, relationships, even our bodies and minds. Reading through the Bible, we see clearly that God is very intentional in all that He does; therefore, everything He has given us is for a purpose. He designed each one of us for a specific job, and so He equipped each one of us for that purpose.



***For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them.***

Ephesians 2:10 (NKJV)

Have you noticed that there are certain things that you are uniquely able to do? Does it surprise you sometimes that others don't see things the way you do? He specifically designed you! He knows what He is doing. Now, it is up to us to align with Him so we can do what He wants to do through us.

Our highest calling is to God, and if we allow Him, He will work through us these good works which He had planned for us to walk in. How can we then allow God flow unhindered through us when we worsen our limitations by not caring for ourselves? Let's face it- as human beings, we are limited. Knowing this, shouldn't we be more intentional in removing these limitations, understanding that God's plan is at stake? He has given us the honor of choosing to work through us; shouldn't we honor Him by ensuring we develop the capacity to work His will on earth?

As a physician, I see a lot of people, including Christians, who have health conditions that can be solved by changing their lifestyle, but would prefer medications, so they don't have to change anything. Sometimes, they would even suggest that it is God's will that they are sick, and I wonder how they think a good God is their problem when they have smoked a pack of cigarettes daily for the last thirty years.

This book intends to shed some light on what healthy lifestyle practices are and how they influence our entire being (spirit, soul, and body). As we have already established, our good God, who has good plans for us and wants us to live an abundant life, has chosen us to fulfill His agenda, here on earth, and we should choose to respond to His goodness by allowing Him to fulfill His plan through us by being healthy.

To be clear, this book is not just about our bodies. It is about how the six pillars of lifestyle medicine can be used to ensure health in our spirit, soul, and body.

## What is Lifestyle Medicine?

According to the American College of Lifestyle Medicine,

*Lifestyle medicine is a medical specialty that uses therapeutic lifestyle interventions as a primary modality to treat chronic conditions.*

These therapeutic interventions are broadly divided into 6 pillars, which we will review in greater detail. The pillars are-

Nutrition

Movement

Restorative sleep

Stress management

Social Connections

Avoidance of risky substances

Although the specialty uses these pillars primarily to address chronic medical conditions, I believe it can be employed to achieve whole-person health. We will be looking at each of these pillars and developing a blueprint for actionable changes that you can implement to create a life fit for purpose.

### **How to use this book**

I wrote this book with as much information as I could safely provide. It is designed to be a guide to help you lead a healthy life, starting where you are. I do not go into specifics for each medical condition, so you may need to consult with your doctor before implementing my suggestions. This book is NOT a source of medical advice. It is a (somewhat) gentle pointer to healthy lifestyle practices that can elevate your quality of life.

I recommend that you read through the book, looking for healthy practices that you can start implementing as soon as possible, ideally today. I provide reflection points that I invite you to pause and think on. For further exploration of the topics presented, I have compiled some of my favorite resources and included them at the end of the book. In addition, the content page is clickable, so you can 'jump' to your chapter of interest.

For some, it may seem like there is so much information provided, and there could be a tendency to feel overwhelmed. I encourage you to work on your changes in bits and come back frequently to refresh your memory and pick another thing to work on. The journey of health is long and requires constant evolution depending on your phase of life per time.

My desire is that the eyes of your understanding will be enlightened as you interact with the pages of this book. You would see what you need to do to manifest who God wants you to be. I pray that you would be able to discern how God sees you, what God has called you into, and who God has designed you to be.

I love you,

Doctor O.

# 1. Connections

If you observe, most lifestyle or behavior change recommendations start with nutrition. For this book, we will start with connections.

I start with connections because I believe this pillar powers everything else, and not getting it right here will keep you from getting better with the other pillars. It is the pillar where I talk about your relationship with God, others, and yourself. Making a lasting change in your health practices has to start from being healthy within.

**28 One of the teachers of the law came and heard them debating. Noticing that Jesus had given them a good answer, he asked him, "Of all the commandments, which is the most important?"**

**29 "The most important one," answered Jesus, "is this: 'Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one.**

**30 Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength.'**

**31 The second is this: 'Love your neighbor as yourself.' There is no commandment greater than these."**

**32 "Well said, teacher," the man replied. "You are right in saying that God is one and there is no other but him.**

**33 To love him with all your heart, with all your understanding and with all your strength, and to love your neighbor as yourself is more important than all burnt offerings and sacrifices."**

**34 When Jesus saw that he had answered wisely, he said to him, "You are not far from the kingdom of God." And from then on no one dared ask him any more questions**

Mark 12:28-34(NIV)

When Jesus was asked what the greatest commandment was, His response shows us the three directions our love is to flow- God, self, and others. If you are wondering where I got the love of self from, look at verse 31, we are to love our neighbor **as** we love ourselves.

Based on the scripture above, our first point of action should be to love God, or as I would like to put it, connecting with God.

## God-Connection

Our connection with God is the foundation of everything we do. He is our life source, so when we spend quality time with Him, we are charged up to do everything else that is necessary for this life. We spend time with God in worship, in prayer, and being in His word by reading, studying, meditating on the Bible, and listening to Bible based sermons.

Being in a relationship with God is the key that unlocks it all. That is why this is my first point: Understanding and receiving God's love for us is the fuel that powers our lives. We convert this fuel source to activated energy when we spend time fellowshiping with Him. It seems like we

come out of communion with God with the power to do things! Have you ever been in a situation that seemed hard or nearly impossible, then you remembered that you have a good God and spent some time just talking to Him or being in the Word? You came out feeling like you could handle the situation or that it had been sorted out. What happened? You received an energy boost from the giver of life!

As spirit beings made in the image of God, our real strength comes from Him. The strength received from external sources is always counterfeit. It would either fade away or you would have to pay dearly to keep it going.

A healthy life begins with a healthy spirit. A healthy spirit is a born-again person, a person who has accepted Jesus as their savior. A Christian. The Christian has the life of God and the nature of God in them, which allows them direct access to God. This means that you can allow the life of God in your spirit to flow into your soul and your body. How do you let this flow happen? By spending time with God. It is simple: keep God as your focus, and His power will work in your life, causing things to fall into place.

In your journey to a healthy life, first fix your foundation. Turn your attention to God, the one who has you and loves you beyond your imagination. He cares for you and wants you to be with Him. It is your number one calling to commune with Him. If you seek Him, you will find Him. He is never far.

## Self-Connection

After the foundation of the God-connection is laid, the next step is to love yourself. Now, I am not talking about being selfish or self-centered. I am talking about loving yourself as God loves you. This is why the foundation has to be God first. As you walk with God, you begin to see yourself clearly. You begin to recognize the worth that God has placed on you. You do not think of yourself as too little or too large. You develop healthy self-esteem.

In my practice, I have encountered numerous individuals who struggle with low self-esteem. There is a sense of unworthiness that I believe translates to not caring for themselves appropriately. The way a person treats a cheap pair of shoes is not the same way they would treat an expensive pair of shoes that cost an arm and a leg to purchase. The difference is the value that is placed on the shoes. In the same way, if you see yourself as valuable, you will treat yourself that way. You would not consider yourself stupid, worthless, or undeserving.

Your value is not what you see right now or your past; your value is in what was paid for you! Jesus paid for you with His life, and God was pleased to give up His son for you so He could save you from destruction and call you to Himself. Understand this, in the eyes of God, you are worth it! All you need to do is agree with God. Paraphrasing a beloved mentor, she would say, "Borrow God's thoughts about you and use them for yourself".

One of the best ways to fix a negative mindset about yourself is to call yourself what God has called you. Search the scriptures and you would see clearly how highly God thinks of you. In the resource section, I share scriptural affirmations with you about speaking the things God says about you. Start with this simple one- I am the beloved of God.

# People-Connection

***We love because he first loved us.***

1 John 4:19 (NIV)

Loving God and allowing that love to flow to your soul, healing you and giving you healthy self-esteem, gives you the space to love others. You may have heard the phrase “hurt people, hurt people.” Allow me to spin that into “loved people, love people”. You can only give what you have received. The purest form of love between two human beings is a love that is received from the Father and directed to another.

I absolutely love the books of John, simply because I believe he is the apostle who understood the love of the Father the most (or at least, he is the one who spoke about it most thoroughly; he even named himself the one whom Jesus loves). We see in John 15 where John is recounting the last exhortation of Jesus to His disciples. What does Jesus talk about? Loving one another as the way to obey His commands. Jesus goes back and forth between talking about remaining in God’s love and expressing that love to others (see John 15:1-17). I believe this is the perfect picture of how our Christian walk should be- Spend time with God, receive His love, let that love change you, then go change the world by loving people.

You cannot love people without spending time with them. I understand the place of loving people from a distance, but you cannot have the majority of the people in your life categorized as ‘loved from a distance’. Loneliness is a killer. The COVID pandemic taught us that. Isolation can lead to ill or worsened health and not just mentally.

Man was not designed to be alone. God intended for each man to be in a community to allow for growth, support, accountability, and the flow of love. I have come across a lot of people who are so isolated, and it hurts my heart because they may be the answer to someone else’s problem. Or if they just allowed it, they could receive a solution to their own issues through another person.

***Instead, speaking the truth in love, we will grow to become in every respect the mature body of him who is the head, that is, Christ.***

***From him the whole body, joined and held together by every supporting ligament, grows and builds itself up in love, as each part does its work.***

Ephesians 4:15-16 (NIV)

We were designed to work together, that the body of Christ may become mature. You holding out will keep certain things from happening in the lives of others.

In addition, for your own benefit, be part of a community of believers. No matter how hot a piece of coal is, when it is separated from the pile, it cools off quickly and becomes ineffective. Being part of a bible-based church is key for any Christian who wants to lead a healthy life.

## Summary

1. God's love is the foundation of a healthy life (spirit, soul, and body).
2. There are three connections we need- God, Ourselves, and People.
3. Receive and understand God's love as the first step in building a healthy life
4. Loving yourself as God loves you is the second step in building a healthy life
5. Loving and connecting with people is the third step in building a healthy life
6. Be part of a community, especially one of believers, to enable growth as God has designed.

## Reflection Points

1. Do you think of yourself as a tripartite being?
2. On a scale of 1-10, with 10 being the best, how would you rate your connection with God?
3. Using the same scale, rate your self-connection
4. Using the same scale, rate your people connection
5. Where do you need to make improvements? What can you start today/tomorrow?

## 2. Nutrition

Now that we understand that God loves us, wants us well, and wants us to have a balanced three-directional connection, we can start the conversation about food and what we put into our bodies.

The food and fitness industry has become such a massive beast with different sectors, each giving us information that is sometimes conflicting. It has become difficult to know what is fact and what is fad. It is alarming how varied the information is and how quickly people jump on the next viral trend.

People would follow highly restrictive, complicated plans and systems because someone on social media had great weight loss from the plan. There are so many names for so many plans with different spin-offs from each plan, and all of them promise to be 'the right way', 'the one thing you have been missing', 'every other plan is doing it wrong', but with **their** plan, you are guaranteed results! If you have fallen victim to the marketing and trends, this chapter is for you. If you have been paralyzed by information overload and you do not know what is truth, this is for you.

Ask yourself this: Why would something as natural as nourishing your body be complicated? The basic needs of the body are typically not complicated; they are easy to understand and obtain. For example, we do not argue about the type of air we need; we need clean air. Simple. Why is the type of food we eat such a big deal? We need real food. Simple.

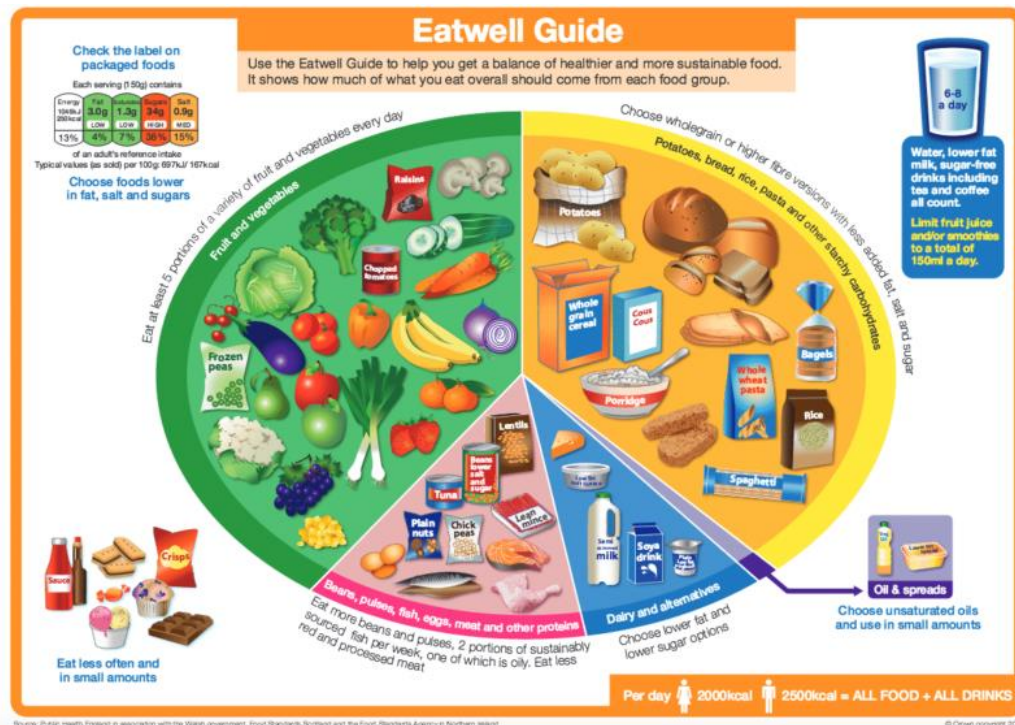
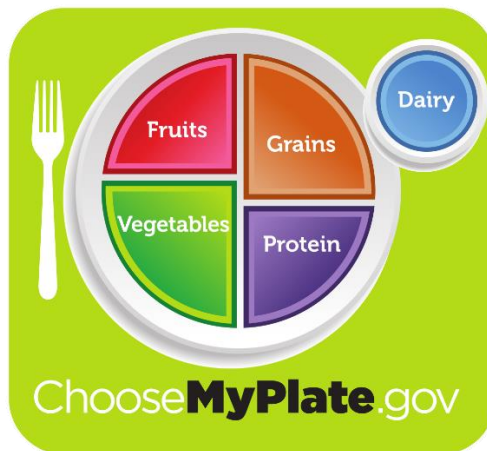
This is why I align with the principles of lifestyle medicine. There is no confusion. The recommendations are to eat a whole food plant predominant diet. This simply means eat food that is mostly plants, grown in the soil, as natural as possible, with as little processing as possible. Real food!

I describe ultra-processed foods as foods you cannot tell what the original form is, for example, soda. These foods are typically engineered to be highly palatable, so you keep coming back for more. The thing is, it's not good for your body. It typically has too much sugar, salt, fat, and/or calories. We need the sugar, salt, fat, and calories for daily life, but it's the 'too much' that is the issue. The vehicle with which these nutrients are supplied also matters. For example, sugar is delivered to your body when you drink grape soda and when you eat grapes; however, eating grapes also supplies you with antioxidants, fiber, vitamins, and minerals that you will not get from soda. Furthermore, the sugar released from grapes is at a slower, more manageable rate that the body can easily process when compared to the sugar spike and crash that you will get from the soda.

One easy way to understand how to eat healthy meals is by looking at your meals through the lens of the nutrient classes. A balanced diet should contain all of the nutrient classes, so let's look at each nutrient class and see the recommendations.

This is a big one. I think the biggest one and therefore the most confusing. There is so much out there about why carbs are bad for you and multiple dietary recommendations teaching you to avoid this food group. One thing I note, however, is that these recommendations hardly come from nationally or internationally recognized organizations. What professional bodies typically recommend is getting a healthy source for your carbs; remember, it's the vehicle that matters!

Review the pictograms of some governments and professional organization recommendations below

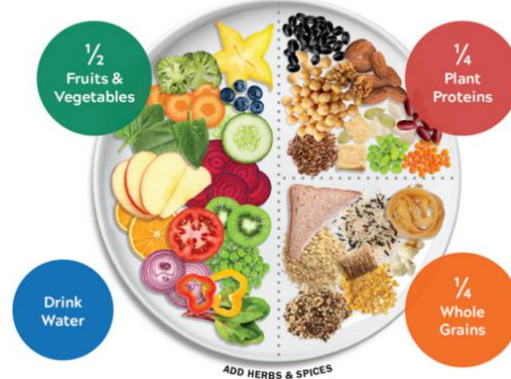










## A WHOLE FOOD, PLANT-BASED PLATE

Nutrition Prescription for Treating & Reversing Chronic Disease

The Dietary Position of the American College of Lifestyle Medicine (ACLM) is defined as: Eating a whole food, plant-based diet helps treat and reverse chronic diseases. ACLM endorses a minimally processed diet that is predominantly fruits, vegetables, whole grains, legumes, nuts and seeds.



DAILY AMOUNTS		
	<b>Vegetables</b> fresh, frozen, canned and dried	<b>5 servings</b> or 1.5 to 2.5 cups
	<b>Fruits</b> fresh, frozen, canned and dried	<b>4 servings</b> or 1 to 2 cups
	<b>Whole Grains</b> 6 servings of grains recommended; at least half should be whole grains	<b>3 to 6 servings</b> or 3 to 6 oz
	<b>Dairy</b> low-fat (1%) and fat-free	<b>3 servings</b> or 3 cups
	<b>Proteins</b> poultry, fish, lean meat, eggs, nuts, seeds, beans and legumes	<b>2 servings</b> or 5.5 oz
	<b>Oils</b> polyunsaturated and monounsaturated	<b>3 Tbsp</b>

Compare nutrition labels. Choose products with the lowest amounts of sodium, saturated fat and added sugars.

Servings are based on AHA's Healthy US-Style Eating Pattern for 2,000 calories/day. Your calorie needs may be different. Cup/oz equivalent may vary depending on form of food.

Find out more about serving sizes at [heart.org/servings](http://heart.org/servings).

Be physically active. Balance the calories you eat with the calories you burn.



The US Department of Agriculture's (USDA) Myplate, Canada's Canadian plate, United Kingdom's Eat well guide, the American college of Lifestyle medicine (ACLM) as well as the American Heart Association (AHA) and American Diabetes association (ADA) ALL have a sizable portion of their plates consisting of carbs. This is NOT coincidental; these organizations are backed by rigorous, high-quality research. These recommendations are to give guidance to the general population on healthy eating habits, and carbs are a big part of it.

Here's the balance. The type of carb you eat is the key. Healthy carbs are obtained from whole foods like fruits, starchy vegetables, legumes, and whole grains. Simple, easy-to-obtain foods. ACLM has a shopping list with a variety of foods, which I have provided in the resource section.

Talking about whole foods always leads to talking about fiber, which I believe is so important and lacking in our diets, yet is much overlooked. I think it deserves a class of its own, but it is a complex carb, so here it is!

Fiber is not just for going number 2. Yes, it does help with bowel movements, but the healthy movements are only a product of a healthy eating pattern. Your poop is healthy when your food is healthy! Here are some other benefits of a good amount of fiber in your diet.

- It helps with weight loss- You eat fewer calories because fiber increases satiety.
- It helps promote the growth of healthy gut bacteria
- It improves your response to blood sugar, reducing the risk of diabetes
- It reduces your risk of heart disease, stroke, and obesity
- It lowers the risk of cancer
- It helps improve sleep, energy, and mood.

The recommended amount of daily fiber intake is at least 40g. This is really not that hard to do. For example,

#### **Breakfast: Berry Chia Overnight Oats**

- **½ cup rolled oats** – 4g fiber
  - **1 tbsp chia seeds** – 5g fiber
  - **½ cup raspberries** – 4g fiber
  - **½ banana** – 1.5g fiber
  - **Almond milk (¾ cup)** – 1g fiber
- Meal total:** ~15.5g fiber

#### **Lunch: Chickpea Kale Salad**

- **1 cup cooked chickpeas** – 12g fiber
  - **1.5 cups chopped kale (massaged)** – 2.5g fiber
  - **½ cup cherry tomatoes** – 1g fiber
  - **¼ avocado** – 2g fiber
  - **1 tbsp hemp seeds (optional)** – 1g fiber
  - **Lemon-tahini dressing (1 tbsp tahini + lemon + water)** – 1.5g fiber
- Meal total:** ~20g fiber

**Snack: Apple** – 4g fiber

#### **Dinner: Loaded baked potato**

- **1 medium baked potato with skin** – 4g fiber
- **1 cup steamed broccoli** – 5g fiber
- **1 cup beans** – 13g fiber
- **¼ cup salsa** – 1g fiber

**Meal total:** 23g fiber

**Daily Fiber Total:** ~62.5g

Sometimes, just being intentional with our meals is all it takes to meet our nutritional goals.

# Proteins

This is another big one that I personally think is overrated. Granted, in some third-world countries, there is a protein deficiency crisis which needs to be addressed- protein energy malnutrition IS a killer, and they do need to focus on getting adequate protein in their diets. However, if you live in the Western world or follow a Western diet, then you are probably over-consuming protein. It is a fact that the average American gets up to twice as much protein as they need.

The recommendation for optimal health is 0.8g per Kg per day. So, for an 80 kg (176lbs) person, they need about 64g of protein daily. The recommendations also change if you are older or more active, or on a weight loss journey.

- ✓ If you are older (40 and above), you may start to lose muscle mass, so increase your protein intake to 1g per kg per day
- ✓ If you regularly exercise or are working on weight loss, aim for 1.2g per kg per day
- ✓ If you are a bodybuilder, you can aim for about 1.5g per kg per day. To build muscle, you need more strength training as opposed to more protein intake.

As you can see, your protein needs are dependent on your age and lifestyle goals. Aiming for higher protein needs when your goals do not align leads to protein excess, which is then converted to fat. The way our body stores energy is as fat, so excess carbs and protein are stored as fat (typically in places you do not want them!)

Say a 200lbs (90 kg) 45-year-old woman is moderately active, getting 3-5 days of moderate intensity exercise, her daily protein intake should be about 108g (90 x 1.2). Let's work out a meal plan

## Breakfast: Protein Oats with Chia & Berries

- **½ cup rolled oats** – 5g protein, 4g fiber
  - **1 scoop plant-based protein powder** – 20g protein, 2g fiber
  - **1 tbsp chia seeds** – 3g protein, 5g fiber
  - **½ cup blueberries** – 0.5g protein, 2g fiber
  - **Almond milk (unsweetened)** – 1g protein, 1g fiber
- Meal total:** 29.5g protein / 14g fiber/~400 kcal

## Lunch: Tofu Quinoa Veggie Bowl

- **½ block extra-firm tofu (150g)** – 21g protein, 2g fiber
  - **½ cup cooked quinoa** – 4g protein, 2.5g fiber
  - **1 cup steamed broccoli** – 4g protein, 5g fiber
  - **½ cup black beans** – 7g protein, 7g fiber
  - **1 tbsp tahini (for dressing)** – 2.5g protein, 1.5g fiber
- Meal total:** 38.5g protein / 18g fiber/~545 kcal

### **Snack: Protein Smoothie**

- **1 scoop plant protein powder** – 20g protein, 2g fiber
  - **1 cup soy milk (unsweetened)** – 7g protein, 2g fiber
  - **1 tbsp ground flaxseed** – 2g protein, 3g fiber
  - **½ frozen banana** – 0.5g protein, 1.5g fiber
  - **Spinach (1 cup)** – 1g protein, 1g fiber
- Snack total:** 30.5g protein / 9.5g fiber/~289kcal

### **Dinner: Lentil & Veggie Stir-fry**

- **¾ cup cooked lentils** – 13g protein, 10g fiber
  - **1 cup mixed vegetables (carrots, bell pepper, zucchini)** – 2g protein, 3g fiber
  - **1 tsp olive oil** – 0g protein, 0g fiber
  - **½ cup brown rice (cooked)** – 2.5g protein, 1.5g fiber
- Meal total:** 17.5g protein / 14.5g fiber/~380 kcal

**Daily Total- Protein: 116g // Fiber: 56g // Calories: ~1614**

I recognize that some of the foods I mentioned above may not be readily available in certain parts of the world. Looking to my Nigerian roots, here is a meal plan that also meets the protein and fiber recommendations.

### **<sup>1</sup>BREAKFAST: Bean Moi-Moi, Ogi & Fruit**

- **2 medium moi-moi (steamed bean pudding)** – 16g protein, 10g fiber
  - **1 cup ogi (corn or millet pap)** – 2g protein, 1g fiber
  - **½ cup pawpaw or banana slices** – 0.5g protein, 1.5g fiber
  - **Optional: Add 1 tbsp ground flaxseed (mixed into ogi)** – 2g protein, 3g fiber
- Meal total:** ~20.5g protein / 15.5g fiber

### **LUNCH: Beans, Brown Rice & Ugu Stir-fry**

- **1 cup cooked brown beans** – 14g protein, 10g fiber
  - **¾ cup ofada (brown local) rice** – 4g protein, 2g fiber
  - **1½ cups steamed ugu (fluted pumpkin leaves)** – 3g protein, 3g fiber
  - **1 tbsp red palm oil or groundnut oil for flavor** – 0g protein, 0g fiber
- Meal total:** ~21g protein / 15g fiber

### **SNACK: Soy Milk Smoothie with Peanut & Banana**

- **1 cup unsweetened soy milk** – 7g protein, 2g fiber
  - **1 tbsp ground flaxseed** – 2g protein, 3g fiber
  - **1 tbsp blended peanut** – 4g protein, 1g fiber
  - **½ banana** – 0.5g protein, 1.5g fiber
  - **1 tbsp oats** – 2g protein, 1g fiber
- Snack total:** ~15.5g protein / 8.5g fiber

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<sup>\*</sup>Meal plans created with the assistance of ChatGPT. AI is wonderful, put in the prompts that meet your nutrition goals, and it creates a plan that is perfect for you.<sup>1</sup>

### **DINNER: Lentil & Veggie Stir-fry with Quinoa or Fonio**

- **1 cup cooked lentils** – 18g protein, 15g fiber
- **1 cup mixed stir-fried vegetables (carrot, green pepper, onions)** – 2g protein, 3g fiber
- **½ cup quinoa or fonio (acha/ millet)** – 4g protein, 2g fiber
- **1 tsp coconut oil or olive oil** – 0g protein, 0g fiber

**Meal total:** ~24g protein / 20g fiber

**DAILY TOTAL: Protein: ~108.5g // Fiber: 59g // Calories: ~1,995 Kcal**

Did you notice that there is no animal source in the meal plans? This is intentional. You do not need animals to meet your protein goals! No beef, eggs, poultry, fish, or dairy, and you can easily meet your target. I know that most people find it hard to eat fully plant-based, and they give the reason of needing to meet protein requirements, but I hope you can see that this argument does not hold water when put to the test.

I am not fully plant-based, but I eat animal sources with the understanding that I don't NEED to eat this, I just WANT to, and I do this in limited quantities.

Then, the argument that plants lack complete proteins comes up. Complete proteins are foods that supply all nine essential amino acids that our body cannot produce on its own. True, animal sources, especially eggs and dairy, give you complete proteins by themselves. Plant proteins are typically incomplete, except quinoa, which is a complete protein. The workaround is to eat a variety of plant proteins throughout the day, and you will get all the amino acids you need. For example, the combination of rice and beans gives you a complete protein package. Or just add quinoa to one meal per day! Soy is also considered a complete protein, even though it's missing one essential amino acid (tryptophan). Including soy in the form of tofu, soybeans, or soy milk can also help with meeting the protein target.

The reason we focus more on plant proteins is because of all the other benefits that come with it. Remember, the vehicle of nutrient delivery matters. If we focus only on the protein component of foods, then animal sources are better. But food comes in nutrient packages, and our bodies will be exposed to the entire package and not just what we think they will be exposed to. To clarify, let me use cholesterol as an example. All animal foods have cholesterol, while all plant-based foods are cholesterol-free. With the rise in morbidity and mortality due to cardiovascular diseases, a lot of research has gone into this condition, and a major risk factor is elevated cholesterol levels. We need to watch our cholesterol consumption for a healthy heart and blood vessels, regardless of our age.

When we stick with animal foods as our main protein source, then we expose ourselves to both high protein AND high cholesterol. Even when you eat organic, grass-fed, farmer-raised beef and eat the healthiest cuts, it doesn't eliminate the cholesterol. It may lessen the cholesterol exposure, but there is no evidence that this significantly reduces your risk. If you were to eat beef, I would recommend organic, grass-fed, farmer-raised, healthy cuts, but in moderation- Like 3oz once a month (that's about the size of a deck of playing cards). Poultry and fish are better for you (than all red meats, including pork), but even that should be in moderation, depending on your health and nutrition goals. We will talk more about cholesterol next, but I wanted to explain why

decreasing the amount of animal sources in our diet is essential for better overall health. Here are a few more reasons in support of plant sources-

- **Lower in Saturated Fat:** Plant proteins are typically lower in saturated fats compared to animal proteins, which can support heart health.
- **Rich in Fiber & Prebiotics:** Plant proteins come with fiber, which is important for digestive health and regulating cholesterol. There is no fiber in animal sources. Many plant proteins feed beneficial gut bacteria, supporting a healthy microbiome.
- **Micronutrients & Antioxidants:** Plant foods provide vitamins, minerals, and antioxidants that animal products lack, supporting overall health and reducing inflammation.
- **Easier on Digestion:** Plant proteins often come with fiber, which aids digestion and supports gut health, whereas animal proteins can sometimes cause bloating or discomfort.
- **Lower Cholesterol & Blood Pressure:** Plant-based diets are linked to lower cholesterol and reduced blood pressure, lowering the risk of heart disease.
- **Anti-Inflammatory:** Many plant proteins are packed with antioxidants that help reduce chronic inflammation, which is linked to various diseases. Some studies link processed and unprocessed red meats to increased inflammation.
- **Reduced Risk of Disease:** Plant-based diets are linked to lower risks of chronic conditions like heart disease, diabetes, and certain cancers.
- **Weight Management:** Plant-based foods are often lower in calories, making them beneficial for weight control and metabolic health.
- **Lower Carbon Footprint:** Plant-based proteins have a significantly smaller environmental impact than animal farming, reducing greenhouse gas emissions.
- **Reduced Water Usage:** Plant-based foods generally use less water compared to animal farming, helping conserve vital resources.
- **Animal Welfare:** Choosing plant proteins supports animal welfare by avoiding the exploitation and cruelty involved in factory farming.
- **Sustainability:** Plant-based diets promote more sustainable food systems, reducing the strain on land and water resources.

# Fats

Fats are the other group of 'bad guys', the first being carbs. Even though it is an essential nutrient, we only need it in moderation. Ideally, our total daily fat intake should be about 30%; some organizations would recommend less. Of this 30%, less than 6% should be from saturated fats. Saturated fats raise the levels of the bad (LDL) cholesterol. You find saturated fats in these foods-

- **meats** like beef, lamb, and pork
- **processed meats** like bacon and sausage
- **chicken skin**
- **full-fat dairy products** like cream, cheese, and butter
- **tropical oils** like coconut oil and palm oil
- **baked foods** like cakes and pastries
- **ultra-processed snack foods**

If you notice, these are the foods that are widely consumed in a standard Western diet. This means a lot of people are getting a large chunk of their fats in the saturated form.

Another fat to mention is trans-fat. Trans-fat lowers your good (HDL) cholesterol, raises your bad (LDL) cholesterol and triglycerides, causes inflammation in your body, and increases the risk of heart disease, diabetes, and stroke. It's a bad one, folks!

Naturally occurring trans-fat is found in small amounts in some animal products due to bacteria in the stomachs of ruminant animals (like cows and sheep). Some common sources are:

- **Beef and lamb**
- **Butter**
- **Milk and cream**
- **Cheese**

Artificial or industrial trans fats are created through the partial hydrogenation of vegetable oils and are the most harmful type. This type of fat is bad- ALL THE TIME. Avoid it. They're found in:

- **Margarine and shortening** (especially older formulations)
- **Baked goods** like cakes, pies, cookies, and pastries
- **Fried foods** like doughnuts, french fries, fried chicken
- **Snack foods** like crackers, microwave popcorn, chips
- **Ready-made frostings**
- **Non-dairy creamers**

The natural trans-fats are slightly different chemically from industrial trans-fats and may not have the same negative health effects, but research is still ongoing. Please note that legally in the U.S, a product can say "0 grams trans-fat," even though it contains up to 0.5 grams per serving! If you see a food that contains "partially hydrogenated oils"- RUN!

We talked about the bad fats- get rid of trans fat in your diet and limit saturated fats to no more than 6% of your total calorie intake. How then do you get the remaining 24% of fats in a healthy form? There are two more types of fats that we **actually** want and need for a healthy diet.

The first group is the monounsaturated fats, which are good for heart health, decreasing the bad (LDL) cholesterol, and improving our body's sensitivity to insulin. Some good sources are-

- **Avocados**
- **Olive oil and olives**
- **Nuts** like almonds, cashews, pistachios
- **Nut butters**
- **Sesame oil, canola oil**

The second group is the polyunsaturated fats, which help with improving brain function and heart health and reducing inflammation. This is where the popular omega-3 and -6 fatty acids fall. You can find them in-

- **Fatty fish** like salmon, mackerel, sardines
- **Chia seeds**
- **Flaxseeds and flaxseed oil**
- **Walnuts**

Omega-6 Fatty Acids (sources include- Sunflower oil, Corn oil, Soybean oil, Pumpkin seeds) are good in moderation, but too much can promote inflammation if not balanced with omega-3s.

Pre-empting your question about high-fat diets like keto, let's talk about it briefly. In Keto diets, the recommended fat intake is about 70-80% of the total calorie intake. Honestly, that makes my head spin. I am NOT a big fan of keto. I am uncomfortable with the fact that it pushes so much fat. It doesn't help that it is taken as a license to binge eat all the meats, eggs, and dairy. Minimal fruits and veggies? That seems wrong to me. I see a few of my patients doing keto, and their cholesterol levels are through the roof. It makes me think of being stuck between a rock and a hard place- a heart attack from keto or from obesity.

Don't get me wrong, there could be a place for it. For example, the keto diet was originally designed for epilepsy management. If you do not have epilepsy, could it still be beneficial for you? I reserve my right to doubt. I have heard that it could improve mental clarity (but this is after the 'keto flu' period marked by brain fog). It also touts rapid fat loss, appetite control, and acne reduction.

My advice would be, first, avoid keto because it is not a sustainable dietary pattern, and I have not seen convincing evidence from high-quality studies encouraging the general population to follow this dietary pattern. If you do feel like you can sustain it, and want to pursue this dietary pattern, then I would say focus on a more plant-based version using these food items-

**Avocados** (Whole avocados, guacamole) **Berries** (Blueberries, blackberries, raspberries and strawberries) **Coconut products** (Full-fat coconut milk, coconut cream, unsweetened coconut) **Condiments** (Nutritional yeast, fresh herbs, lemon juice, salt, pepper, spices) **Non-**



**starchy vegetables** (Leafy greens, Brussels sprouts, zucchini, broccoli, cauliflower, peppers, mushrooms) **Nuts, seeds and their butters** (Almonds, Brazil nuts, walnuts, hemp seeds, chia seeds, macadamia nuts, pumpkin seeds, Peanut butter, almond butter, sunflower butter, cashew butter) **Oils** (Olive oil, nut oil, coconut oil, MCT oil, avocado oil) **Vegan protein sources** (Full-fat tofu, tempeh) **Vegan full-fat “dairy”** (Coconut yogurt, vegan butter, cashew cheese, vegan cream cheese).

## Water

Did you know most human beings cannot survive without water for more than 3-5 days? Water is essential for the human body to function appropriately. That's why 60% of our body is made up of water. We need water for all cellular processes that occur in the body; this means it literally runs on water. But how much you need can vary based on your gender, body weight, activity level, climate, and more.

We get water from the foods we eat, but this only accounts for up to 20% of our daily requirement, especially if we eat lots of fruits, vegetables, and soups. On average, most adults need to drink at least 2.4 liters of water. A common tip is to drink half your body weight in ounces of water per day. Example: If you weigh 160 lbs, aim for 80 oz of water. I would recommend drinking an extra 10 – 20 oz if you

- **Exercise a lot**
- **Live in a hot or dry climate**
- **Are pregnant or breastfeeding**
- **Have a fever or illness**
- **Eat a high-protein or high-fiber diet**

Caffeine and alcohol can be a little dehydrating due to their effect of increasing urination. You can take an extra cup of water to balance out their effect.

When patients tell me they do not drink water because they don't like it, I wonder at how their body has been trained to dislike something that is so natural. Also, water is tasteless, so how do you NOT like it? When I am told this, I typically try to find a way to get some flavoring in their water, usually with fruit, or tell them to drink flavored sparkling water, just so they can get water in them. You can also include herbal teas, coconut water, and broth-based soups.

# Minerals

Minerals are essential nutrients our bodies need in small amounts to function properly. They support everything that happens in the body, including *Everything!*

We have 2 classes

## 1. Major Minerals or Macrominerals, which are needed in larger amounts, including

- **Calcium** – important for bones, muscles, nerves (found in dairy, leafy greens)
- **Potassium** – important for fluid balance, heart & muscle function (found in beans, bananas, potatoes)
- **Magnesium** – important for energy, nerves, and muscle function (found in nuts, whole grains)
- **Sodium** – important for fluid balance, nerve signals (found in table salt, processed foods)
- **Phosphorus** – important for bones, energy (found in meat, dairy, legumes)
- **Chloride** – important for fluid balance, digestion (found in salt)

## 2. Trace Minerals or Microminerals, which are needed in tiny amounts, including

- **Iron** – important for oxygen transport (found in red meat, spinach, legumes)
- **Zinc** – important for immunity, healing (found in meat, seeds, whole grains)
- **Iodine** – important for thyroid function (found in iodized salt, seafood)
- **Selenium** – important for antioxidant defense (found in Brazil nuts, seafood)
- **Copper, Manganese, Fluoride, Chromium**, and a host of others.

The thing about minerals is that they are needed in a fine balance. Too little and we get deficient, meaning these important processes do not work well. Too much, which happens when we take too many supplements, and it becomes toxic to us, causing issues in our bodies.

I believe that if we can get a good variety of foods, especially plants, in our diet, we would attain this balance without the need for supplements. This is assuming you do not have a medical condition that causes low levels of a certain mineral, for example, heavy menstrual flow, causing iron deficiency.

To get a good balance of minerals in the diet, eat whole, unprocessed foods consisting of vegetables, fruits, legumes, nuts and seeds, whole grains, and if desired, small amounts of seafood, dairy, and lean meats.

# Vitamins

Vitamins are organic compounds our bodies need in small amounts to function, grow, and stay healthy. Most must come from food, since our bodies can't make enough on their own.

Similar to minerals, we have 2 classes

**1. Fat-Soluble Vitamins**, which are stored in the body's fat tissues and liver. Too much can build up and be harmful.

- **Vitamin A** – important for vision, immune function (found in carrots, liver, eggs)
- **Vitamin D** – important for bones, calcium absorption (found in sunlight, fish, fortified dairy)
- **Vitamin E** – important antioxidant, protects cells (found in nuts, seeds, oils)
- **Vitamin K** – important for blood clotting, bone health (found in leafy greens)

**2. Water-Soluble Vitamins** are not stored in the body's fat tissues, so the excess is usually excreted in urine. Because of this, they need regular replenishment.

- **Vitamin C** – important for immune support, skin health (found in citrus fruits, bell peppers)
- **B Vitamins** (like B1, B2, B6, B12, folate, niacin) – important for energy, brain function, red blood cell production (found in whole grains, meat, eggs, leafy greens)

All the vitamins are necessary for health, and just like with minerals, a good balance is needed, especially the fat-soluble ones, because they can cause ill health. Too much of a good thing leads to bad results, right? Vitamins, in particular, are found in a variety of colorful fruits and vegetables. This is why we recommend eating a rainbow of foods (and no, Skittles do NOT count!).

Vitamin D is one that some people struggle with. It is super important for bone strength, immune health, and mood. Our skin makes vitamin D when exposed to UVB rays from the sun.

- Aim for 10–30 minutes of sun exposure a few times a week (arms, face, or legs uncovered). Spend a little more time if you are darker-skinned.
- Best time: midday when the sun is strongest.
- Works better without sunscreen—but don't overdo it! Skin cancer is real.
- Eat Vitamin D—Rich foods like fatty fish (salmon, mackerel, sardines, tuna), fortified foods (dairy, plant milk, and orange juice)
- Consider a Supplement if your levels are low; optimal levels are 60–80 ng/mL. D3 (cholecalciferol) is more effective than D2 (ergocalciferol).

If you are fully plant-based, you may struggle to maintain your B12 levels as all natural sources are from animals. Vitamin B12 is *crucial* for nerve health, red blood cell formation, and energy. Its deficiency can lead to fatigue, nerve damage, anemia, and even memory issues. To increase your intake, eat B12-fortified foods. Look for labels that say, "fortified with B12." Common sources include

- **Fortified plant milks** (almond, soy, oat, etc.)
- **Fortified breakfast cereals** (this is an example; I do not recommend these because they are typically highly processed and sweetened)
- **Fortified nutritional yeast** (delicious cheesy flavor—great on popcorn, pasta, or salads)
- **Fortified meat substitutes** (tofu, tempeh)

Aim for 2–3 servings of B12-fortified foods per day to meet needs.

Another option to increase your levels is to take a B12 Supplement, which is the most reliable way to ensure you get enough B12. I typically recommend 1000 mcg daily in either the cyanocobalamin or methylcobalamin form. It is water soluble, so your body flushes out what it doesn't use.

## A biblical perspective

I would like to turn your attention to the first chapter of the Bible. After God had given man the dominion mandate, He addressed his need for food.

***Then God said, “I give you every seed-bearing plant on the face of the whole earth and every tree that has fruit with seed in it. They will be yours for food. And to all the beasts of the earth and all the birds in the sky and all the creatures that move along the ground—everything that has the breath of life in it—I give every green plant for food.” And it was so.***

Genesis 1:29-30 (NIV)

According to our original design, we were created to be vegan! Even all the animals, including lions and vultures. So, what changed? It was sin and the fall of man. After sin came and messed things up, God decided to start again with Noah and his family, wiping the rest of the world out with the flood. It was during this period of resetting that God changed man's diet to include animal flesh.

***The fear and dread of you will fall on all the beasts of the earth, and on all the birds in the sky, on every creature that moves along the ground, and on all the fish in the sea; they are given into your hands.***

***Everything that lives and moves about will be food for you. Just as I gave you the green plants, I now give you everything.***

***“But you must not eat meat that has its lifeblood still in it.***

Genesis 9:2-4 (NIV)

Man was given all animals to eat, but WITHOUT the blood in it (attention, rare steak eaters!). When you read through the bible, you would notice that animals were eaten on special occasions, parties, or celebrations. Most of their meals were still from plants. The western diet has somewhat flipped that, and we eat more meat than plants. I trust that after reading this, you will adjust your diet to include more plant sources.

I do not think it is a sin to eat animal flesh, based on Genesis 1, nor do I think it is wrong to avoid it based on Genesis 9. I believe that by grace and wisdom, we can make a decision either way based on what works for us and what the spirit of God inspires us to do. Moreover, Jesus fed the 5000 with bread and fish; when He ate in people's homes, He ate meat and fish. He also prepared fish for His disciples when He appeared to them after His resurrection. (see John 21:9-12).

On a lighter note, being vegan now may prepare you for eating in heaven. I am not sure there are cows, chickens, or fish there. Remember the Israelites during the time of the exodus? When they complained about not having food and meat to eat, what did God do? He rained down manna from heaven, but He sent a wind on earth to bring in the quail. Also, when Jesus reigns and order is restored in the new earth, it doesn't look like there would be much feasting on meat. Take a look at this portion of scripture from Isaiah.

***The wolf will live with the lamb, the leopard will lie down with the goat,  
the calf and the lion and the yearling together; and a little child will lead them.  
The cow will feed with the bear, their young will lie down together,  
and the lion will eat straw like the ox.***

***The infant will play near the cobra's den, and the young child will put its hand into the  
viper's nest.***

***They will neither harm nor destroy on all my holy mountain, for the earth will be filled with  
the knowledge of the Lord as the waters cover the sea.***

Isaiah 11:6-9 (NIV)

Like I said, that was on a lighter note. My point is, if you are avoiding animal sources of food, fantastic! Keep it up, just make sure you are eating whole foods. If you want to enjoy animal sources in your diet, great! No issues with that, I will caution, however, that you watch the quantity and quality of your sources. Moderation is key- plants should still be your main source of nutrition.

All in all, God has given us all things to enjoy. But as the apostle Paul said, *All things are lawful for me, but all things are not helpful. All things are lawful for me, but I will not be brought under the power of any* (1 Corinthians 6:12, NKJV). We, as believers, have the wisdom of God to guide us in caring for our bodies using the wisdom of food and science He has given us to help us live long and healthy so that we can fulfill His purpose here on earth.

## Summary

To achieve a sustainable, healthy eating pattern, focus more on the food source and aim for whole foods so you can get the complete package in the food. I believe I have made a suitable case for plant versus animal sources. For overall health, the main points are

1. Eat mostly plants
2. Eat a variety of plants- aim for 30 different plants per week
3. Carbs are NOT your enemy
4. Balance is key for every nutrient group
5. Please, DRINK WATER!

## Reflection Points

1. Do you think your current dietary pattern is where you want it to be? Why or why not?
2. Do you consume up to 30 different plants in your diet weekly?
3. What changes could you make to improve your diet starting today?
4. Would you consider going fully plant-based? Why or why not?
5. What new information about nutrition are you going to share with a loved one?

### 3. Movement

***“For physical training is of some value, but godliness has value for all things, holding promise for both the present life and the life to come.”***

1 Timothy 4:8 (NIV)

We cannot talk about movement in the life of a Christian without quoting this scripture, right? I have heard people downplay movement because they felt Paul was saying- ‘don’t focus on your body, focus on spiritual things’. Truly, spiritual development is of utmost importance, and nothing should take its place, but he did say physical training or exercise is of **some** value.

I also want you to bear in mind that in Paul’s time, people were not sedentary. They walked everywhere, did physical labor, farmed, kept animals, and were always moving. Every part of their bodies experienced use daily. Setting out time to exercise was likely reserved for gladiators and warriors. Compare that to our time. Not a lot of daily movement is going on, especially if we work from home. We can just roll out of bed and into work, spend 8 hours sitting, walk to the refrigerator to get some food, or order food to be delivered. We then proceed to sit in front of the TV to relax, fall asleep, and then start all over again the next day.

This may not be your daily experience; however, this is not far from what a lot of people are doing. We spend a lot of time not moving, and I am sure some muscles in our bodies only get rare use.

More and more, we are finding out that a lack of movement is associated with an increased risk of heart disease. Have you heard the saying ‘sitting is the new smoking’? Being sedentary can have just as much adverse effect on the human body as smoking tobacco. In this age of convenience and results at the speed of thought, we need to be more intentional with moving our bodies.

In the minds of some, you only need to add exercise to your lifestyle if you are trying to lose weight. This couldn’t be further from the truth. Some reasons to support movement for life-

#### **Mental & Emotional Benefits**

- Reduces stress, anxiety, and depression
- Boosts mood through endorphin release ("feel-good" hormones)
- Improves sleep quality
- Enhances brain function, memory, and focus
- Increases self-esteem and confidence

#### **Physical Health Benefits**

- Strengthens the heart and improves circulation
- Lowers blood pressure and cholesterol levels
- Helps maintain a healthy weight
- Boosts immune system function
- Increases muscle strength and endurance
- Improves flexibility, balance, and coordination

## **Long-Term Health & Longevity**

- Reduces risk of chronic diseases (e.g., diabetes, heart disease, stroke)
- Strengthens bones and helps prevent osteoporosis
- Supports joint health and reduces pain (especially in arthritis)
- May extend lifespan and improve quality of life

## **Energy & Lifestyle Benefits**

- Boosts overall energy levels
- Increases productivity and daily performance
- Encourages better posture and mobility
- Can be a fun and social activity
- Builds discipline and goal-setting habits

Regular movement is always a good idea. It's not just about exercise in the traditional sense. It's about building a life where movement is embedded into your daily rhythm.

The reason I am using the word *movement* and not *exercise* is because there is a difference. The word movement is a broad term encompassing its two types. Physical activity is a type of movement that is unstructured and typically geared towards carrying out an activity of daily living, for example, walking from the garage to your office building. Exercise, on the other hand, is structured movement and geared towards strengthening your body, for example, jogging for cardiovascular health.

## **Physical activity for a healthy lifestyle**

Increasing our overall physical activity is what helps us combat sedentarism. Sedentarism is simply prolonged periods of inactivity by sitting or lying down while awake—without intermittent movement. You fit the bill for a sedentary lifestyle if you sit for 6 or more hours. Even if you work out for 30–60 minutes a day, you can still be “sedentary” if the rest of your day is mostly inactive.

This means that if you have a desk job and you do not move from your desk for the 8-hour workday, you are sedentary and you are at increased risk of health issues such as

### **1. Cardiovascular Disease**

Lack of movement contributes to poor circulation, elevated blood pressure, higher LDL (“bad”) cholesterol, and lower HDL (“good”) cholesterol—all of which increase the risk of heart disease and stroke.

### **2. Obesity and Metabolic Disorders**

Sedentary lifestyles slow metabolism and impair the body's ability to regulate blood sugar and fat, possibly leading to:

- Weight gain and obesity
- Type 2 diabetes
- Metabolic syndrome



### **3. Muscle and Bone Deterioration**

Inactivity leads to muscle atrophy and reduced bone density, contributing to:

- Loss of strength and stability
- Increased risk of falls and fractures
- Sarcopenia (age-related muscle loss)

### **4. Mental Health Issues**

Movement stimulates endorphins and improves brain function, so a lack of it can leave you feeling mentally drained and emotionally flat.

Physical inactivity is closely linked with:

- Increased risk of depression and anxiety
- Lower self-esteem
- Poor sleep quality and fatigue

### **5. Increased Cancer Risk**

Sedentarism is associated with a higher risk of certain cancers, including:

- Colon cancer
- Breast cancer
- Endometrial cancer

The mechanisms include increased inflammation, hormone imbalances, and insulin resistance.

### **6. Shortened Lifespan**

Several large studies have found that sitting for more than 6–8 hours per day is associated with a higher risk of early death—even among people who exercise but are otherwise sedentary for long periods.

### **7. Postural and Musculoskeletal Problems**

Extended sitting can cause:

- Back and neck pain
- Poor posture
- Joint stiffness, especially in the hips and shoulders

Sedentarism silently chips away at health over time. The antidote isn't just formal exercise—it's moving more throughout the day. Small changes like standing every 30 minutes, walking during calls, or doing light stretches at your desk can offset many of the risks.

## Tips to increase physical activity

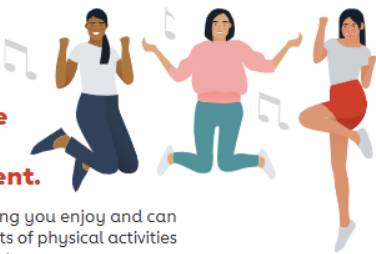
- **Set Movement Reminders:** Use alarms or apps to prompt you to stand or stretch every 30 minutes.
- **Invest in a standing desk:** Using a standing desk helps limit the amount of time spent sitting at work.
- **Take the Stairs:** Opt for stairs instead of elevators to engage your muscles.
- **Walk or Bike for Short Trips:** Choose walking or biking over driving for nearby errands.
- **Stand During Calls:** Use phone calls as an opportunity to stand or walk around.
- **Stretch During Breaks:** Incorporate stretching into your daily routine to improve flexibility.
- **Dance to Music:** Turn on your favorite tunes and dance around the house.
- **Active Chores:** Engage in household tasks like vacuuming or gardening to stay active.
- **Play with Pets:** Interact with your pets to add fun movement to your day.
- **Stretch While Watching TV:** Do simple stretches during commercial breaks.



American Heart Association  
Healthy for Good™

# MAKE MOVEMENT A HABIT.

Tips to get active – and stay active.



### Choose the right kind of movement.

Make it something you enjoy and can repeat easily. Lots of physical activities are good for you!



### Start small: Stepping stones, not boulders.

Don't set yourself up for failure. Instead of a two-hour hike, start with a 20-minute walk.



### Choose a cue. We all need a reminder.

A cue is anything that helps you remember your movement habit. Put your sneakers by the door or your hand weights near your computer – that's a cue.



### Get tips from your very own "Habit Coach."

Check out these six short "Habit Coach" videos. These science-based habit hacks will help you keep those healthy habits!



### Reinforce the habit. Make it rewarding.

Have fun while you move. Invite a friend, listen to music or treat yourself to a healthy snack after!

[heart.org/HealthyForGood](https://heart.org/HealthyForGood)

EAT SMART MOVE MORE BE WELL

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# Exercise for a healthy lifestyle

Not only do we need to increase our physical activity, but we also should add exercise, which is structured movement, to our lifestyle. Think of physical activity as a way to improve health, and exercise as a way to strengthen or solidify what we have improved. The two go hand in hand. It doesn't do you much good if you exercise for 1 or 2 hours a day and are sedentary for the next 8 hours.

Just as with any healthy habit, exercise needs to be intentional. You need to set time out for it; you do not build muscle or endurance by happenstance.

There are different types of exercises, each with a different goal. The recommendation is to hit each type of exercise for a minimum amount of time weekly.

## 1. Cardiovascular Activity:

Walking, running, cycling, swimming—these activities get your heart pumping and improve lung capacity. Just 150 minutes of moderate aerobic activity a week is enough to lower your risk of heart disease and stroke. 150 minutes per week comes down to 30 minutes, 5 days a week of moderate intensity exercise. If you have less time available, you can perform a vigorous intensity exercise and shorten the time to 75 minutes per week, which is 15 minutes 5 days a week.

Comparison of Moderate vs. Vigorous Intensity Exercises

Moderate Intensity	Vigorous Intensity
Brisk walking (3–4 mph / 4–5 km/h)	Running or jogging
Leisure cycling (<10 mph / <16 km/h)	Fast cycling (>10 mph / >16 km/h)
Water aerobics	Lap swimming
Doubles tennis	Singles tennis
Ballroom or line dancing	Zumba or aerobic dance classes
Gardening / light yard work	Hiking uphill or with a heavy backpack
Flat terrain hiking	Jumping rope
Light swimming	HIIT (High-Intensity Interval Training)
Playing catch	Competitive sports (e.g., soccer, basketball)

One simple way of determining your level of intensity is to use the **Talk-Test**.

Light intensity- You can talk and sing easily

Moderate intensity- You can talk but not sing

Vigorous intensity- You can only say a few words before stopping to catch your breath

## 2. Strength Training:

Lifting weights or using resistance bands builds muscle, improves metabolism, and increases bone density. As we age, maintaining strength becomes critical to prevent falls and maintain independence.

### Types of Strength Training

- **Bodyweight exercises:** Push-ups, squats, lunges, planks
- **Free weights:** Dumbbells, kettlebells, barbells
- **Resistance bands:** Elastic bands for progressive resistance
- **Weight machines:** Gym equipment that targets specific muscles

Strength training should target all major muscle groups to ensure balanced development, injury prevention, and overall functional fitness.

Muscle Group	Primary Exercises
Chest (Pectorals)	Push-ups, bench press, chest flys
Back (Lats, Traps, Rhomboids)	Rows (barbell or dumbbell), pull-ups, lat pulldown, reverse flys
Shoulders (Deltoids)	Shoulder press, lateral raises, front raises
Arms (Biceps & Triceps)	Bicep curls, tricep dips, tricep extensions, hammer curls
Core (Abs, Obliques, Lower Back)	Planks, crunches, Russian twists, bird-dogs, back extensions
Legs (Quads, Hamstrings, Calves)	Squats, lunges, step-ups, deadlifts, calf raises
Glutes (Gluteus Maximus, Medius)	Glute bridges, hip thrusts, donkey kicks, resistance band side steps

To effectively train all major groups, aim for **2–3 full-body strength sessions per week** or alternate between **upper-body and lower-body** training sessions.

When building strength, some principles must be followed to ensure that you get the best out of your workout. Some of these are

**Progressive overload:** As you become more comfortable, gradually increase weight, reps, or intensity

**Rest & recovery:** Allow 48 hours before training the same muscle group again

**Form is key:** Good technique prevents injury

**Consistency:** 2–3 sessions per week for optimal benefits

I would recommend working with a personal trainer if you are new to strength training. If that is not accessible to you, use an app or watch a video that demonstrates the exercise you are about to do. It is **NOT** helpful if you try to be healthy and hurt yourself in the process! See the resource section at the end of this chapter for recommendations.

### 3. Flexibility and Mobility:

Stretching, yoga, and mobility exercises enhance joint health, prevent injury, and reduce aches and stiffness. These movements may not burn many calories, but they add fluidity and comfort to your daily life. I recommend stretching before and after every exercise session, and a full session of 15- 20 minutes per week to just stretch. You can use a gentle stretching exercise as your active recovery day.



## Overcoming Barriers to Movement

Have you noticed that when something is good for you, there is a plethora of reasons why you can't do it? "I don't have time." "I'm too tired." "I don't know where to start." These are common barriers, and are sometimes valid, but they can be overcome with a shift in mindset.

Start small. Exercise 1 day a week and increase as able. Park farther from the store. Take the stairs instead of the elevator. Set a timer to stretch every hour. You don't need a gym or fancy gear—just commitment and consistency. Don't wait for perfect circumstances, just start!

The key is to find movement that feels good to *you*. Dance in your kitchen. Play with your kids. Hike or walk with a friend. When movement is fun, it stops being a chore and becomes a habit.

Here's how to start crafting your movement lifestyle along with a balanced weekly exercise plan that fits within the framework of a healthy lifestyle. It is suitable for most adults at a beginner-to-intermediate level and is designed to balance cardio, strength, flexibility, and active recovery.

- **Set a goal.** Whether it's walking 30 minutes a day or taking a Zumba class twice a week, define what success looks like for you.
- **Schedule it.** Put movement on your calendar like any other priority.
- **Track your progress.** Use a journal, app, or step counter. Progress fuels motivation.
- **Listen to your body.** Rest when needed. Movement should challenge, not punish.
- **Celebrate milestones.** Every step counts. Honor your commitment.

### Weekly Exercise Plan: Cardio + Strength + Balance

Day	Focus	Activity example
Monday	Cardio + Core	- 30 min brisk walk, cycling, or light jog. Core circuit: planks, crunches, leg raises
Tuesday	Full-Body Strength	- 3 sets each: squats, push-ups, lunges, dumbbell rows, glute bridges. 5–10 min stretching after
Wednesday	Balance + Light Cardio	- 20–30 min walk or swim. Balance drills: single-leg stand, heel-to-toe walk, standing knee lifts
Thursday	Strength (Upper Body)	- 3 sets each: shoulder press, bicep curls, tricep dips, side planks.
Friday	Cardio	- 5 min warm-up. 30 min brisk walk, cycling, or swimming. Cool down stretch
Saturday	Lower body Strength + Balance	- Strength circuit: step-ups, deadlifts, resistance band pulls. Balance: standing yoga poses (tree, warrior III)
Sunday	Active Recovery or Rest	- Gentle yoga, tai chi, or slow nature walk (20–30 min) - Deep breathing/stretching (10 min)

## Weekly Movement Goals

- **Physical activity:** At least 10,000 steps daily
- **Cardio:** 150+ minutes of moderate or 75 minutes of vigorous activity
- **Strength:** 2–3 sessions targeting all major muscle groups
- **Balance:** At least 2 sessions per week (especially for adults 50+)
- **Flexibility:** Gentle stretching after workouts or on rest days

## Summary

1. Our bodies are designed to move for health
2. Engage in physical activity and exercise; both are important for improving health
3. Physical activity is the antidote for sedentarism. Just keep moving!
4. Have a structure to your exercise program, be intentional.
5. Make a decision to start- and start now!

## Reflection Points

1. Consider your typical day. Where would you place yourself on a sedentary-active spectrum?
2. Do you meet the recommendations for healthy movement? (see weekly goals above)
3. What part of your daily movement can you improve starting today?
4. What forms of exercise do you enjoy? How can you incorporate it into your exercise routine?
5. Is there a loved one who can serve as an accountability partner to meet your movement goals?

## 4. Mental Health and Stress

It seems like life is becoming more stressful, and people are under a lot more mental pressure than in previous generations. I believe it is a sign of the end times. The enemy is working overtime and exerting his influence over the world and its systems. However, as children of God, we have been called out of the darkness into the marvelous light of His beloved son!

We have a way out and a way through; we have Jesus! I cannot imagine living in this dispensation without the help of our Savior. Without Jesus, we have no hope, no assistance, no advantage, no light at the end of the tunnel, and worst of all, nothing to look forward to.

Before we dive into what the believer can do to lead a life full of vitality, especially in the mind, let us talk about what mental health and stress are.

### Mental Health

The mental health space is such a huge public health concern, and rightly so. It has gained a lot of attention now due to its effects on society, culture, and economy. Mental health is not just the absence of depression and anxiety—it's also the presence of clarity, emotional balance, and resilience. It is such an integral part of the whole person that, if affected, can halt the life of a person, and not just by death, but also by creating within the person a feeling of being stuck.

It is a highly misunderstood and stigmatized field of medicine, which is heartbreaking because I believe that getting the mind healthy is key to getting the body healthy. I will say that the mind takes second place to the reborn spirit in Christ to determine good health, but it is still important.

Although criticized, I appreciate the World Health Organization's definition of health as ***a state of complete physical, MENTAL, and social well-being and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity.***

Taking care of the mind is one of the most important investments we will ever make in our long-term health.

### Stress

Stress is the body's response to a perceived threat or demand. It is a normal part of life. It will always be present in some form. To function appropriately, we do need some level of stress in our lives, or we would be bored, unproductive, and unmotivated.

If we are threatened, we want our body's stress response to kick in so we can get away from the source of danger.

You can say there is good stress, like planning a wedding or starting a new job. There is also bad stress. This is the type we want to avoid. Bad stress is when stress gets out of hand, it is prolonged and unmanaged, like caring for a sick loved one *in a way that the caregiver forgets to care for themselves.*



Unmanaged stress is where the problem lies. While short-term stress can help you focus or react quickly, long-term stress, without recovery, leads to burnout and mental fatigue.

The normal physiology of a stress response is designed to last for as long as the danger or need is present. After this, the body is supposed to go back to its normal state.

What happens when the body's stress response persists? What happens when we lead our lives like a fast-paced movie, something is always happening, with no time to decompress? The short answer is that we wear out physically and mentally. Chronic stress has widespread effects on the entire body, including-

- 1. Nervous System-** Impaired memory and concentration, increased risk of anxiety, depression, and insomnia
- 2. Endocrine System-** Persistently elevated cortisol levels, Insulin resistance, leading to a higher risk of type 2 diabetes
- 3. Cardiovascular System-** Hypertension, elevated cholesterol, increased risk of heart attack and stroke
- 4. Immune System-** Increased susceptibility to infections, contributes to autoimmune disease, cancer, and other chronic illnesses
- 5. Digestive System-** Stomach ulcers and acid reflux (GERD), Irritable bowel syndrome (IBS)
- 6. Musculoskeletal System-** Chronic muscle tension causing headaches, back/neck pain
- 7. Reproductive System-** Disrupted menstrual cycles, fertility issues, Reduced libido, Erectile dysfunction in men
- 8. Skin and Hair-** Worsening of acne, eczema, and psoriasis, Hair thinning or hair loss
- 9. Sleep and Fatigue-** Difficulty falling or staying asleep, Daytime fatigue and poor recovery

## Managing Stress & Mental Health – The Mind-Body Connection

The strategies for managing your mental health and stress are similar, except for the use of medication in certain mental health conditions. Focusing on the other pillars of lifestyle medicine actually boosts your mental juices and helps alleviate stress.

**Nutrition-** Eating a well-balanced, whole food plant-based diet has been linked to better mental health. Serotonin, the mood stabilizing hormone, is mostly produced in the gut, and when we eat healthy, high fiber foods, it enables our bodies to produce a healthy supply of this hormone

**Exercise-** All types of exercise have been associated with improved mood. Some studies have shown that a combination of exercise and medication doubles the effectiveness of the medication. Moderate to high intensity exercises also support the release of endorphins, a 'feel good' hormone which improves mood.

**Sleep-** Poor or inadequate sleep has been linked to poor stress management, increased risk of depression, and anxiety.

**Recreational substances-** Sometimes, unmanaged stress can lead people to use substances to 'escape'. However, when they 'return', they realize the problem is still there. Tobacco, Marijuana, and alcohol are commonly used to relieve stress and anxiety, but these substances can also cause rebound anxiety and depression. Avoiding them is always a good idea. Coffee can be good for you, but too much can cause anxiety, so take note of how much your body is able to tolerate and stay within limits.

**Social connections-** Research has shown that simple social and emotional support from friends and family is an effective buffer against stress and mood disorders. I will say this again: Loneliness is a killer. Spend time with people doing activities you love. This boosts the mood and helps relieve stress.

Managing stress also improves mental health, and managing our mental health helps improve stress. I would like to draw your attention to three more things that can help

1. Be mindful- First, you need to recognize when you are under stress. What do you feel when you are stressed? Do you know your stressors? Are you experiencing any of the symptoms of chronic stress as listed above? Do you feel burned out? What are your predominant emotions? Take note of what is going on internally. You can't fix a problem you don't know exists.
2. Build resilience- Resilience is the ability to handle stress when it arises and to protect oneself against future stress. It is both a fix and a form of prevention. Research has shown that there are some qualities that contribute to resilience, including *social support, optimism, a sense of humor, spirituality, self-esteem, and adaptability*. As believers, our spirituality is our anchor. If you lead a good Christian life, you will develop resilience. You will spend time with people, you will have a positive outlook on life, you will laugh because you have joy, you will recognize that your self-esteem is based on what Christ did for us, and you will be able to adapt to the situations in life by the leading of the Spirit. Spending time with God will help alleviate mental pressure and help you de-stress. Every time I start to feel pressured, I take a walk and start singing to my Father with the earnest expectation that my burden will be lifted, and it always works! Sometimes I figure out a solution, other times I just feel better, like I can do all things! (Philippians 4: 13)
3. The concept of the locus of control- The **locus of control** is a psychological concept that refers to a person's belief about what causes the outcomes in their life. People with an **internal locus of control** believe they have control over their own fate — that success or failure results from their own efforts, choices, and abilities. People with an **external locus of control** believe their lives are largely controlled by external forces — such as luck, fate, other people, or circumstances beyond their control. In general, an internal locus is linked to greater personal responsibility, motivation, and better stress management.

An example scenario: **Failing an Exam**

- **Internal Locus of Control:**
  - The student thinks: *"I didn't study enough or use the right methods. I need to manage my time better and prepare more next time."*
  - Result: They take responsibility and change their behavior to improve future outcomes.

- **External Locus of Control:**

- The student thinks: *“The test was unfair, the teacher doesn’t like me, or I just have bad luck with exams.”*
- Result: They feel less empowered to change or improve and may not alter their approach.

This belief system affects how people cope with challenges, take initiative, and maintain motivation. To handle stress, you have to recognize the part you play, shift the control internally, and determine to do what you can ***in the midst of*** the stressor. The Holy Spirit is our teacher and counselor. He can show us what we need to do, correct, or stop if we turn to Him and invite Him into the situation. Having an understanding that we are powerful according to God’s grace at work in us is liberating. If a situation comes our way that we do not have the grace to fix, we leave it and seek God’s wisdom in handling that situation. But if we have the grace to change it, then, by all means, full speed ahead.

I know the Serenity Prayer is not directly from scripture, but I think the concept fits well into having the right mindset. The first part of the prayer is my focus.

"God, grant me the serenity to accept the things I cannot change,  
Courage to change the things I can,  
And wisdom to know the difference."

If it is a situation you cannot change, don’t let it weigh you down because you cannot change it.  
If it is a situation you can change, then don’t let it weigh you down because you can change it!

I understand that having a mindset change is hard work, but that’s why you are reading this book! Here are some tips to develop resilience and an internal locus of control.

### **1. Practice Personal Accountability**

- Ask yourself: “What role did I play in this outcome?”
- Avoid blaming others or circumstances by default. Focus on what *you* can change next time.

### **2. Challenge Limiting Beliefs**

- Watch for thoughts like “I can’t do this” or “Things never go my way.”
- Reframe them: “I haven’t mastered this yet” or “I can influence the outcome with effort.”

### **3. Set Goals and Take Action**

- Break large goals into manageable steps and track your progress.
- Seeing cause-and-effect between your efforts and results builds internal control.

### **4. Reflect on Past Successes and celebrate them**

- Recall times you achieved something through your own effort.
- Remind yourself that *your actions have power*.
- Reward yourself for succeeding at something you set your mind to do.
- Practice gratitude to God, yourself, and the people around you.

## 5. Learn from Failure, Don't Fear It

- Instead of seeing setbacks as signs of external doom, treat them as feedback.
- Ask: "What can I learn?" and "How can I improve?"

## 6. Surround Yourself with Growth-Oriented People

- People who focus on growth, responsibility, and effort can reinforce those values in you.

## 7. Build Stress Tolerance

- Internal control grows when you feel capable under pressure.
- Use tools like mindfulness, journaling, or breathing exercises to handle challenges calmly.
- Writing down thoughts and feelings helps process emotions and identify stress triggers.
- Mindfulness and meditation help train your brain to stay present, lowering anxiety and improving focus.

*Try this: Sit quietly, focus on your breath, and gently return your attention every time your mind wanders. Just 5 minutes a day makes a difference.*

In addition to the natural means of managing the mind and stress, use the Word. Oftentimes, the stress and mental health challenges we experience are a result of our unchecked thoughts. We allow situations and demonic forces to whisper in our ears, and we meditate on these things, which then creates a mindset that is contrary to what the Word of God says. This mindset then leads to a life that is different from the picture that God desires for us. Thinking on thoughts of worthlessness, futility, and inadequacy will ensure your life is full of stress and poor mental health.

***For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal but mighty in God for pulling down strongholds, casting down arguments and every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God, bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ,***

2 Corinthians 10:4-5 (NKJV)

Our war is in the mind. Our enemy is wrong thoughts. Our weapon is the Word of God. If you catch yourself thinking along lines that contradict what God has said about you, your job is to attack it vehemently with what God has said about you.

Look in the mirror, shout it out loud, drown out the wrong thoughts, tell yourself that you are the beloved of God, a Child of the Most High, full of grace and peace. Tell yourself what God has told you in His word!

One portion of scripture that has shaped my mindset about what God has said and done for me in Christ is found in Isaiah.

***But he was pierced for our transgressions, he was crushed for our iniquities; the punishment that brought us peace was on him, and by his wounds we are healed.***

Isaiah 53:5 (NIV)

When Jesus died, He died for our entire being- Spirit, Soul, and Body. In this scripture, we see the 3-fold nature of our deliverance in Christ. He was pierced and crushed for our sins (Spirit), He was punished to bring us peace (Soul), He was wounded for our healing (Body). If Jesus died

and took care of all these things for us, why should we still experience them? When you believe in Jesus and His finished work, these things are available to you. I believe I have received a new spirit, reborn in the image and likeness of God. In the same way, I believe, so I have received the peace of Christ. Jesus was punished so I could have peace. I choose peace because it is part of the package He bought for me with His blood. I also believe, so I have received supernatural health in my body. Healing is mine because Jesus' body was broken for me.

Remember, God wants you well, Spirit, Soul, and Body!

### Summary

1. Mental health is the foundation of a vibrant, purposeful life. When you care for your mind, everything else becomes easier—and you can care for your body as well
2. Stress isn't always bad; unmanaged stress is.
3. Make stress management a daily practice, not just a reaction. You deserve peace, not just productivity.
4. Practicing all 6 pillars helps manage your mind and stress levels.
5. Be mindful, build Resilience, and create an internal locus of control.
6. God wants you well in your spirit, soul, and body.

### Reflection Points

1. On a scale of 1-10, with 10 being the greatest, how much stress do you feel now?
2. How do you typically cope with stress? Is it a healthy strategy?
3. What are your peculiar tell-tale signs when you are under stress? Note them and be more intentional with stress management when you experience them
4. What stress management technique(s) can you incorporate into your daily routine to keep your stress levels from building up?
5. What other lifestyle pillar can you improve that would also improve your stress? For example, exercise by running will improve cardiovascular health and also lower stress.

## 5. Restorative sleep

*“Sleep is the golden chain that ties health and our bodies together.”*

This quote by Thomas Dekker is a beautiful summary of the importance of sleep. Sleep is often the first thing that is sacrificed when we want to be more productive. I am guilty of this, and more than likely, so are you. Yet, it's one of the most powerful tools we have for physical, mental, and emotional well-being. Restorative sleep is not simply about time spent in bed—it's about quality rest that allows your body to repair, your brain to reset, and your entire system to recharge.

We seem to think having good quality sleep is a luxury we do not need when, in fact, it is a necessity of life. If you ace all the other lifestyle pillars and your sleep is not great, your health can still be negatively affected.

***Unless the Lord builds the house, the builders labor in vain.***

***Unless the Lord watches over the city, the guards stand watch in vain.***

***In vain you rise early and stay up late, toiling for food to eat—for he grants sleep to those he loves.***

Psalm 127:1-2 (NIV)

A lot of what we are chasing after is toil, hard work, not designed by God for us to embark on. There is a work that God has for each of us, and when we do what is assigned to us, it comes with ease because He supports us. I am not saying God's work is not hard, I am saying He gives us grace to do the hard work, and at the end of the day, God gives His beloved sleep.

The Bible talks about sleep being a gift from God and encourages rest, peace, and trust in God as foundations for good sleep.

***“When you lie down, you will not be afraid; when you lie down, your sleep will be sweet.”***

Proverbs 3:24 (NIV)

***“In peace I will lie down and sleep, for you alone, Lord, make me dwell in safety.”*** Psalm 4:8 (NIV)

Having good sleep is not an excuse to be lazy! The Bible speaks a lot about the effects of laziness and how it leads to poverty.

***“Do not love sleep or you will grow poor; stay awake and you will have food to spare.”***

Proverbs 20:13 (NIV)

***“A little sleep, a little slumber, a little folding of the hands to rest— and poverty will come on you like a thief and scarcity like an armed man.”*** Proverbs 24:33–34 (NIV)

We are encouraged to have a good balance of work and restful sleep.

***“The sleep of a laborer is sweet...”*** Ecclesiastes 5:12 (NIV)

God rested after He completed the work of creation. In the new covenant, He has brought us into His rest. This rest does not mean we sleep all the time, but it does include sleeping because we know that we are safe in the hands of God. Good sleep is a sign of absolute trust in God, regardless of our external situation. Let's look briefly at our perfect example, Jesus, sleeping in the middle of a storm.

***That day when evening came, he said to his disciples, "Let us go over to the other side." Leaving the crowd behind, they took him along, just as he was, in the boat. There were also other boats with him. A furious squall came up, and the waves broke over the boat, so that it was nearly swamped. Jesus was in the stern, sleeping on a cushion. The disciples woke him and said to him, "Teacher, don't you care if we drown?" He got up, rebuked the wind and said to the waves, "Quiet! Be still!" Then the wind died down and it was completely calm. He said to his disciples, "Why are you so afraid? Do you still have no faith?"***

Mark 4:35–40 (NIV)

Every time I read this portion of scripture, the imagery my mind creates always brings a smile to my face. Imagine the scene: thunder cracks, lightning flashes, waves crash into the boat, the boat is flooding, possibly sinking, experienced fishermen panic—and Jesus is sleeping, maybe even snoring softly...or loudly. I don't think Jesus was unaware of the storm. He had just said, *"let us go to the other side"*, so He expected to get to the other side regardless of what was happening. I think He didn't care what the storm was doing because He had complete trust in the Father. He was calm **despite** the circumstances.

He was able to sleep because He had faith in God. We see this from the way He gently corrected the disciples, *"Do you still have no faith?"*. Jesus equated their panic to a lack of faith. I have come to learn that what we get anxious about are things we do not trust our Father to take care of. This causes stress, mental distress, and poor sleep. Anxiety and worry are major sleep stealers. But we have a solution-

***"Cast all your anxiety on him because he cares for you."*** 1 Peter 5:7 (NIV)

Turning it over to God and building our faith in Him by spending time in His word and worship is the key to living a life of rest. A life where sleep is sweet and refreshing.

All that is to emphasize God's desire for us to have good sleep because He cares for us and has brought us into His rest. In light of this, we can have faith for restorative sleep.

We always have a part to play because faith works according to the grace we have been given, and faith without works is dead! Let's delve into the scientific aspect of healthy, restorative sleep.

## What Is Restorative Sleep?

Restorative sleep is sleep that leaves you feeling refreshed, alert, and mentally sharp. It includes enough time in the deep and REM (rapid eye movement) stages of sleep, where most recovery, healing, and memory consolidation occur.

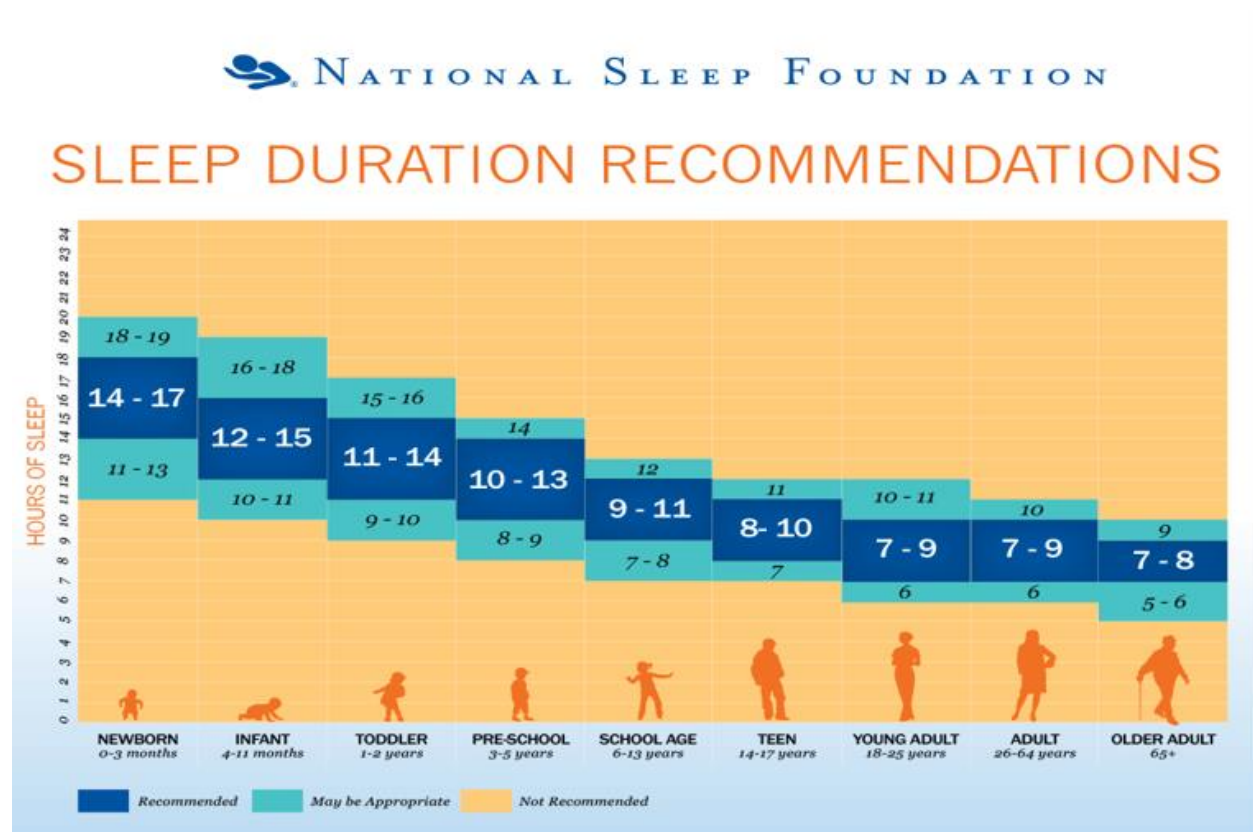
Key characteristics of restorative sleep:

- You fall asleep within 15–20 minutes
- You sleep mostly uninterrupted
- You wake up naturally or feel rested upon waking
- You function well during the day without relying on caffeine or naps

Sleep is a complex process that is regulated by an internal clock called the circadian rhythm, which is strongly influenced by our exposure to light. This internal clock works by creating a balance of hormones in our sleep-wake cycle, including melatonin and cortisol, with melatonin getting us to sleep and cortisol for wakefulness.

Although we do not have a full grasp on *how* the benefits of sleep happen and *why* we need certain amounts of sleep, there has been extensive research into this field, and a consensus has been reached.

## How Much Sleep Do We Need?





As sleep is essential for good health, we need to aim for optimal amounts of sleep. Getting too little or too much sleep can have negative effects on the body, as summarized in the table below.

Aspect	Too Little Sleep (<6 hrs/night)	Too Much Sleep (>10 hrs/night)
Immune Function	Weakened immune system, higher risk of infections	Possible immune dysregulation
Heart Health	Higher risk of heart disease and high blood pressure	Increased risk of heart disease and stroke
Metabolism & Weight	Hormonal imbalance, increased risk of obesity, and diabetes	Increased risk of diabetes and weight gain
Mental Health	Increased anxiety, depression, irritability	Linked to depression and low energy
Cognitive Function	Impaired memory, focus, decision-making	Cognitive decline, mental fog
Performance & Safety	Slower reaction time, higher accident risk	Sleep inertia (grogginess), reduced productivity
Longevity	Shorter lifespan in long-term studies	Also linked to shorter lifespan
Quality of Life	Fatigue, reduced motivation, emotional instability	Fatigue, low motivation, poor overall well-being

Instead of focusing on the countless dangers of poor sleep, let's turn our eyes to the benefits instead.

## Benefits of Restorative Sleep

### Cognitive & Mental Health Benefits

- Improves memory and helps with learning retention
- Enhances focus, concentration, and decision-making
- Promotes emotional stability and reduces mood swings
- Lowers risk of depression and anxiety
- Boosts creativity and problem-solving (especially during REM sleep)

### Physical Health Benefits

- Supports muscle repair, tissue growth, and overall recovery
- Strengthens the immune system to fight infections
- Helps maintain heart health and reduce blood pressure
- Regulates metabolism and hunger-related hormones (ghrelin and leptin)
- Balances critical hormones, including cortisol and melatonin

### Daily Performance Benefits

- Increases energy levels and reduces daytime fatigue
- Sharpens reaction time and mental alertness
- Enhances physical coordination and motor skills

## **Long-Term Benefits**

- Slows the aging process through cellular repair
- Reduces risk of chronic diseases like heart disease, diabetes, and Alzheimer's
- Improves overall quality of life and resilience

Now that we agree that sleep is important scripturally and scientifically, here are some tips to help you fall asleep faster, sleep deeper, and wake up feeling refreshed.

## **Tips for Better Sleep**

### **Set a Consistent Sleep Schedule**

- Go to bed and wake up at the same time every day, even on weekends.
- Helps regulate your body's internal clock (circadian rhythm).

### **Create a Sleep-Friendly Environment**

- Keep your bedroom cool, quiet, and dark.
- Use blackout curtains or a sleep mask.
- Reduce noise with earplugs or a white noise machine.
- Reserve your bed for sleep and intimacy only—no work, eating, or screen time in bed.

### **Limit Screen Time Before Bed**

- Avoid TVs, smartphones, tablets, and computers for at least 30–60 minutes before bed.
- Blue light from screens can suppress melatonin (the sleep hormone).

### **Watch What You Eat and Drink**

- Avoid caffeine (coffee, tea, soda, chocolate) at least 6 hours before bedtime.
- Limit alcohol—it can disrupt deep sleep.
- Don't go to bed overly full or hungry.
- Avoid large meals close to bedtime.

### **Wind Down with a Bedtime Routine**

- Do calming activities like reading, stretching, deep breathing, or meditation.
- Take a warm bath or shower to relax your body.
- Try progressive muscle relaxation or guided sleep audio.

### **Stay Active (But Not Right Before Bed)**

- Regular daytime exercise helps you fall asleep faster and sleep deeper.
- Avoid vigorous activity 1–2 hours before bed.

### **Get Natural Light Exposure**

- Spend time outside in natural daylight, especially in the morning.
- Helps reset your circadian rhythm and improves melatonin production.

### **Avoid Naps Late in the Day**

- Limit naps to 20–30 minutes and avoid napping after 3 PM.
- Long or late naps can interfere with nighttime sleep.

## **If You Can't Sleep, Get Up**

- If you're awake for more than 20 minutes, leave the bed and do a quiet activity.
- Return only when you're sleepy—this helps break the cycle of insomnia.

## **Bedtime Routine Checklist for Restorative Sleep**

Use this routine 30–60 minutes before bedtime to help your mind and body wind down.

### **1. Power Down Screens**

- ☐ Turn off phones, tablets, and TVs at least 30–60 minutes before bed
- ☐ Use blue light filters or glasses if screen use is unavoidable

### **2. Create a Calm Environment**

- ☐ Dim the lights in your home or room
- ☐ Set your bedroom temperature to ~65°F (18°C)
- ☐ Use blackout curtains or an eye mask for darkness
- ☐ Reduce noise with earplugs or a white noise machine

### **3. Follow a Relaxing Ritual**

- ☐ Take a warm shower or bath
- ☐ Do light stretching, breathing, or meditation
- ☐ Read a book (preferably non-stimulating)
- ☐ Listen to calming music or a sleep-focused podcast

### **4. Prep for Tomorrow**

- ☐ Write down next-day tasks or worries to clear your mind
- ☐ Lay out clothes or pack items for the next day

### **5. Sleep Hygiene Essentials**

- ☐ Avoid caffeine or alcohol in the evening
- ☐ Finish eating at least 2–3 hours before bed
- ☐ Go to bed and wake up at the same time daily

If you can't fall asleep within 20 minutes, get up and do something calming (like reading) in low light—then return to bed when drowsy.

See your medical provider if you're consistently waking up tired, struggling to fall or stay asleep, or experiencing daytime fatigue despite getting 7+ hours of sleep. It may indicate a sleep disorder such as:

- Sleep apnea
- Insomnia
- Restless leg syndrome

Sleep issues are treatable and should never be ignored.

### Summary

1. Sleep is necessary for optimal health
2. Too little or too much sleep can negatively affect your well-being
3. Restorative sleep is a gift and a sign of peace, trust, and faith in God's goodness
4. Have a consistent sleep schedule and bedtime routine to achieve better sleep
5. Most adults need 7-9 hours of sleep daily

### Reflection Points

1. Are you sleeping well? Do you feel rested when you wake up from sleep?
2. What is the optimal duration of sleep YOU need? Are you consistently getting that amount?
3. What is stealing your sleep? How can you break its effect on your sleep?
4. What can you do, starting today, to improve your sleep hygiene?
5. What changes in your routine can you easily make to improve your sleep health?

## 6. Avoiding Risky Substances

In this chapter, we will discuss the sixth pillar of lifestyle medicine. You may think that you do not partake in any risky substances, but I have also included some surprise substances that we need to be mindful of.

Here's what we will be focusing on

Tobacco

Alcohol

Recreational drugs

**Salt**

**Sugar**

The last two may have surprised you, but when we delve deeper, you will understand why I have added them here.

First, why do we need to talk about risky substances? Well, risky substances are risky because they affect your health negatively. These are substances that, when consumed in excess quantities, could cause you to live at less than your best.

I think that taking the time to talk about this topic is important because leading a healthy lifestyle goes beyond eating, moving, and sleeping properly. It also means making choices that protect our body and mind from harm. Tobacco, alcohol, and recreational drugs may offer short-term relief or pleasure, but their long-term consequences are often severe and life-limiting. Sugar and salt, on the other hand, may not seem like the rest; however, excess consumption has actually been linked to increased morbidity and mortality.

People often turn to substances to manage situations in their lives, such as stress, trauma, social pressure, anxiety, boredom, pain, or even sleep issues. But these are temporary fixes that often make things worse over time. Healthier strategies include getting involved in all the other healthy lifestyle pillars we have talked about, particularly -

- Exercise and movement (natural mood boosters)
- Talking with a friend or therapist
- Practicing mindfulness or breathwork
- Creative activities like music, journaling, or art

Sometimes, people want to stop certain substances but find it difficult. A lot of times, it is because we haven't distanced ourselves from the situation(s) that lead(s) us down that road. Protective habits to develop to help avoid substances include-

- Surround yourself with people who support your healthy choices
- Have a plan to handle social situations involving substances
- Learn to say no with confidence and without guilt
- Replace harmful habits with meaningful routines
- Seek professional support if you're struggling—it's never too late to change
- Create structure and purpose in your day

Now, let's look at each substance in more detail.

### **Tobacco: Avoid use - No Safe Level of Use**

Tobacco use—whether smoked, chewed, or vaped—is one of the leading causes of preventable death worldwide. Even occasional smoking carries serious risks. There is primary exposure (when you use it), secondary exposure (when someone around you uses it and you inhale directly), and tertiary exposure (when someone else has smoked, the particles remain on their clothes and you are exposed to it). Tertiary exposure is particularly important for smokers with infants and small children. Going outside to smoke does not stop the exposure as they are still coming in contact with the harmful chemicals on your clothes.

Health Risks of Tobacco Use:

- Lung cancer, throat cancer, and many other cancers
- Chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD) and asthma
- Heart disease and stroke
- Weakened immune system and reduced healing
- Early skin aging and dental problems
- Worsens blood pressure and blood sugar control

Quitting Helps at Any Age:

- Within 20 minutes: blood pressure and heart rate normalize
- Within weeks: lung function begins to improve
- Long term: risk of cancer and heart disease significantly drops

Nicotine in tobacco is the most addictive substance in the world. It stimulates receptors in the brain that cause the release of dopamine, the happy hormone, reinforcing the habit. It also causes a change in brain chemistry, leading to you require more to get the same happy effect. This is called building tolerance. It can be difficult to quit, but more attempts at quitting results in a higher chance of you quitting. Seek support, it will always be beneficial for you to quit.

### **Alcohol: Use in Moderation—Or Not at All**

Alcohol is socially accepted in many cultures, but regular or excessive use has serious physical and mental health consequences. Other than regular or excessive use is the binge drinking pattern. This is where you consume more than 5 drinks at a time. Yes, drinking a 6-pack of beer while watching a game once a month qualifies as binge drinking, and the consequences to your health are sometimes even worse.

Risks of Heavy or Frequent Drinking:

- Liver damage, including cirrhosis and fatty liver
- High blood pressure and cardiovascular disease
- Increased risk of certain cancers (especially breast, liver, and colon)
- Depression, anxiety, and poor sleep
- Poor judgment and increased risk of accidents or violence

The healthiest choice is to avoid alcohol altogether, but if you drink:

- Limit to **1 drink per day for women, 2 for men OR 7 per week for women, 14 for men**
- Have alcohol-free days every week
- Avoid drinking as a stress-coping method
- Avoid binge drinking

One note I would like to make is what one drink qualifies as. When drinking at home, some people would just pour into a glass without thinking about the quantity. If you do want to drink, be aware of the quantity you are consuming so you can expose yourself to the recommended quantity or less. Here's a picture describing what one drink looks like-

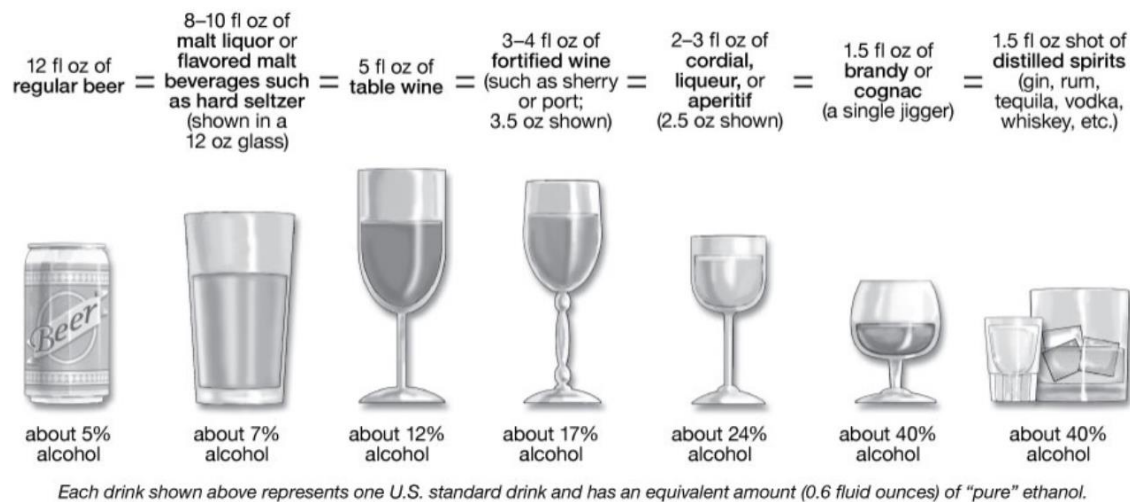


Figure courtesy of the National Institutes of Health.

Alcohol is an addictive substance that I have seen cause disruption and destruction of life. I personally do not think it is worth it, so I avoid alcohol totally.

Alcohol dependence—also called alcohol use disorder (AUD)—is a medical condition marked by a strong, often uncontrollable desire to drink alcohol despite negative consequences. It ranges from mild to severe and can develop gradually over time.

Here are the key signs and symptoms of alcohol dependence:

#### Behavioral Signs

- Drinking more or longer than intended
- Unsuccessful attempts to cut down or stop drinking
- Spending a lot of time getting, using, or recovering from alcohol
- Neglecting responsibilities at work, school, or home due to drinking
- Giving up or reducing activities you used to enjoy in favor of drinking
- Continuing to drink despite problems in relationships or health

## Psychological Signs

- Strong cravings or urges to drink
- Increased tolerance—needing more alcohol to feel the same effects
- Drinking to relieve stress, anxiety, or emotional pain
- Feeling irritable, anxious, or depressed when not drinking
- Drinking in dangerous situations (e.g., driving, swimming)

## Cognitive & Emotional Signs

- Memory blackouts (periods of amnesia while intoxicated)
- Impaired decision-making or judgment
- Loss of control over how much or how often you drink
- Denial or minimizing the seriousness of drinking habits

## Physical Signs & Withdrawal Symptoms

- Shaking/tremors, especially in the morning
- Sweating, rapid heartbeat, nausea, or insomnia when not drinking
- Seizures or hallucinations in severe withdrawal (delirium tremens)
- Physical deterioration—weight loss, poor hygiene, or fatigue

If you or someone you know shows signs of alcohol dependence, it is always best to seek help. Alcohol withdrawal can be deadly, a rehab center may be needed. There are also support groups available like AA (Alcoholics Anonymous) or SMART Recovery. **Don't wait for a crisis**—early intervention is far more effective.

## Recreational Drugs: Avoid use- High Risk, Low/No Reward

Illicit or unregulated drugs, including marijuana, ecstasy, cocaine, opioids, and synthetic drugs, carry a high risk of addiction, mental health deterioration, and life-threatening effects. Despite government regulations in the US relaxing a little bit on marijuana use, I typically caution against its use. I have seen patients get worsening anxiety and sleep issues with medical marijuana use. Adolescent psychiatrists are observing withdrawal anxiety from its use. Also, it causes the 'munchies'! If you are on a weight loss journey, this may work against you.

## Potential Harms:

- Brain chemistry disruption and long-term cognitive decline
- Increased risk of depression, psychosis, and anxiety disorders
- Dangerous physical effects (heart attack, overdose, organ failure)
- Legal consequences, damaged relationships, and financial instability

I believe this is pretty straightforward. Most people know to avoid recreational drugs. Even occasional use can have long-lasting effects, especially on young people, whose brains are still developing. The best course of action is to avoid use in the first place.

Avoiding risky substances isn't about being perfect—it's about being *intentional*. Every step you take to reduce or eliminate tobacco, alcohol, or drugs gives you more energy, more clarity, and more freedom to live fully. Your mind and body are with you for life—treat them with the respect they deserve. Every small step to reduce or eliminate risky substances adds years to your life—and life to your years.



Next, we would be talking about the atypical substances that are ubiquitous in our diet- sugar and salt. You may be wondering why I have added these common and necessary food items to the list, it's simple- they can be highly addictive. They are also substances that can be risky when consumed in excessive amounts. I like to think of them as silent assassins. It usually does not occur to us how much we are consuming because they are often hidden, sometimes even in plain sight.

Making simple changes to limit sugar and salt can dramatically reduce the risk of chronic disease and improve energy, mood, and long-term well-being.

### **Salt: Limited use – necessary for life**

When we look at salt, our focus is actually on what it contains- sodium. Sodium is essential for innumerable bodily functions, but in small amounts, about 500mg, which is about a quarter teaspoon of salt. What has been observed, however, is that a lot of people consume about 7x as much as what the body needs, leading to high blood pressure, increased risk of stroke and heart disease, kidney strain, and fluid retention.

The recommended daily salt intake is less than 2300mg (about 1 teaspoon of salt), with most adults requiring about 1500mg (about two-thirds teaspoon of salt).

Certain foods have naturally occurring sodium, such as celery, beets, spinach, seaweed, meat, seafood, and certain dairy products. These typically have smaller amounts, but they should be considered when monitoring sodium intake. Highly processed and packaged foods are the major contributors of salt in our diet. Some examples include-

#### **Processed & Packaged Foods**

- Canned soups and vegetables
- Processed meats (bacon, ham, sausage, deli meats, hot dogs)
- Snack foods (chips, pretzels, popcorn)
- Frozen meals and pizzas
- Instant noodles and boxed meals
- Bread, bagels, and rolls (surprisingly high in sodium)
- Cheese, especially processed and hard cheeses
- Salty condiments (soy sauce, ketchup, salad dressings, barbecue sauce)
- Pickles, olives, and sauerkraut

#### **Restaurant and Fast Food**

- Burgers, fries, chicken nuggets, and sandwiches
- Pizza and pasta dishes
- Takeout Asian food (especially with soy sauce or MSG)

#### **Hidden Salt Sources**

- Baked goods (cakes, muffins, cookies)
- Breakfast cereals and instant oatmeal
- Sports drinks and electrolyte beverages
- Breaded or fried items

Salt itself is not chemically addictive like drugs or alcohol, but it can have an addictive-like effect on behavior and brain reward systems. If you crave salty snacks regularly or you feel unsatisfied with low-salt foods, you may have developed a dependence on salt.

### Why Salt Feels Addictive

1. **Dopamine stimulation:** Salt activates the brain's reward system, releasing dopamine, which makes salty foods pleasurable and reinforces the desire to eat them again.
2. **Conditioning:** People often develop strong habitual preferences for salty flavors, especially from highly processed foods.
3. **Combination craving:** Foods combining salt with fat or sugar (like chips or fries) are particularly crave-worthy and hard to resist.

While true salt addiction isn't recognized medically, its role in overeating and poor dietary habits is significant, especially in diets that contain mostly processed food. Reducing salt gradually can help reset taste preferences and decrease dependence.

Here are some practical tips to help you cut back on salt cravings and reset your palate:

**1. Cut Back Gradually:** Slowly reduce the salt in your food over 1–3 weeks. Your taste buds will adjust—what tastes bland at first will taste normal later.

**2. Avoid Processed and Packaged Foods:** These are the biggest sources of hidden salt. Choose “low-sodium” or “no salt added” products when available. Cook from scratch with fresh or frozen ingredients as much as possible. If using canned foods (such as beans), rinse them prior to use.

**3. Replace Salt with Flavorful Alternatives:** One trick is to add other seasonings first, taste, then, if needed, add salt. Other flavor enhancers are- Herbs and spices (e.g., garlic, basil, rosemary, cumin); Citrus juices (lemon or lime); Vinegars (balsamic, apple cider, rice vinegar); Aromatics (onions, garlic, ginger); Pepper, chili flakes, smoked paprika. In addition to adding flavor, these also add antioxidant benefits to the meal. You can also replace table salt with potassium salt or a half-and-half version of sodium and potassium salt. *Caution in cases of high blood potassium levels and chronic kidney disease.*

**4. Stay Hydrated:** Sometimes salt cravings are linked to dehydration. Drink enough water, especially if you've been sweating or eating salty meals.

**5. Watch Out for "Hidden Salt":** Read food labels. Anything over 300 mg of sodium per serving is considered high. Aim for less than 140mg per serving. Be cautious with: salad dressings, breads and cereals, sauces (soy, teriyaki, BBQ), frozen meals.

**6. Eat More Whole Foods:** Need I say more? Fruits, vegetables, legumes, and unsalted nuts help retrain your palate. Whole foods are naturally low in sodium and high in potassium, which balances salt in the body.

**7. Be Mindful of Emotional Eating:** Cravings may be tied to stress or boredom. Pause and ask: *Am I hungry, or just looking for comfort?* Substitute with healthier habits—drink tea, move, or use a distraction.

## **Sugar: Limited use- naturally occurring in most foods**

Not all sugar is bad. Naturally occurring sugars in fruits, vegetables, and dairy come packaged with fiber and nutrients. The concern lies mostly with *added sugars*—those added during processing or preparation. I personally think sugar is the most addictive substance in the world, and I am patiently waiting for science to confirm this. Just like salt, sugar does not cause a chemical addiction, but it can cause some dependence in the form of emotional or habitual eating.

When we eat too much sugar, we stimulate a dopamine release, telling our pleasure centers to register that food as something we like and should eat often. Our blood sugar spikes, then crashes, making us feel tired and crave more of that *good stuff*. Then we eat more sugar to get some energy, reinforcing in our brains that the sugar is good for us and our energy levels. As we pile on the sugar, the excess is stored as fat, causing weight gain, which then leads to increased risk of Type 2 diabetes, insulin resistance, heart disease, liver problems, tooth decay, and inflammation.

Signs of sugar overload may include:

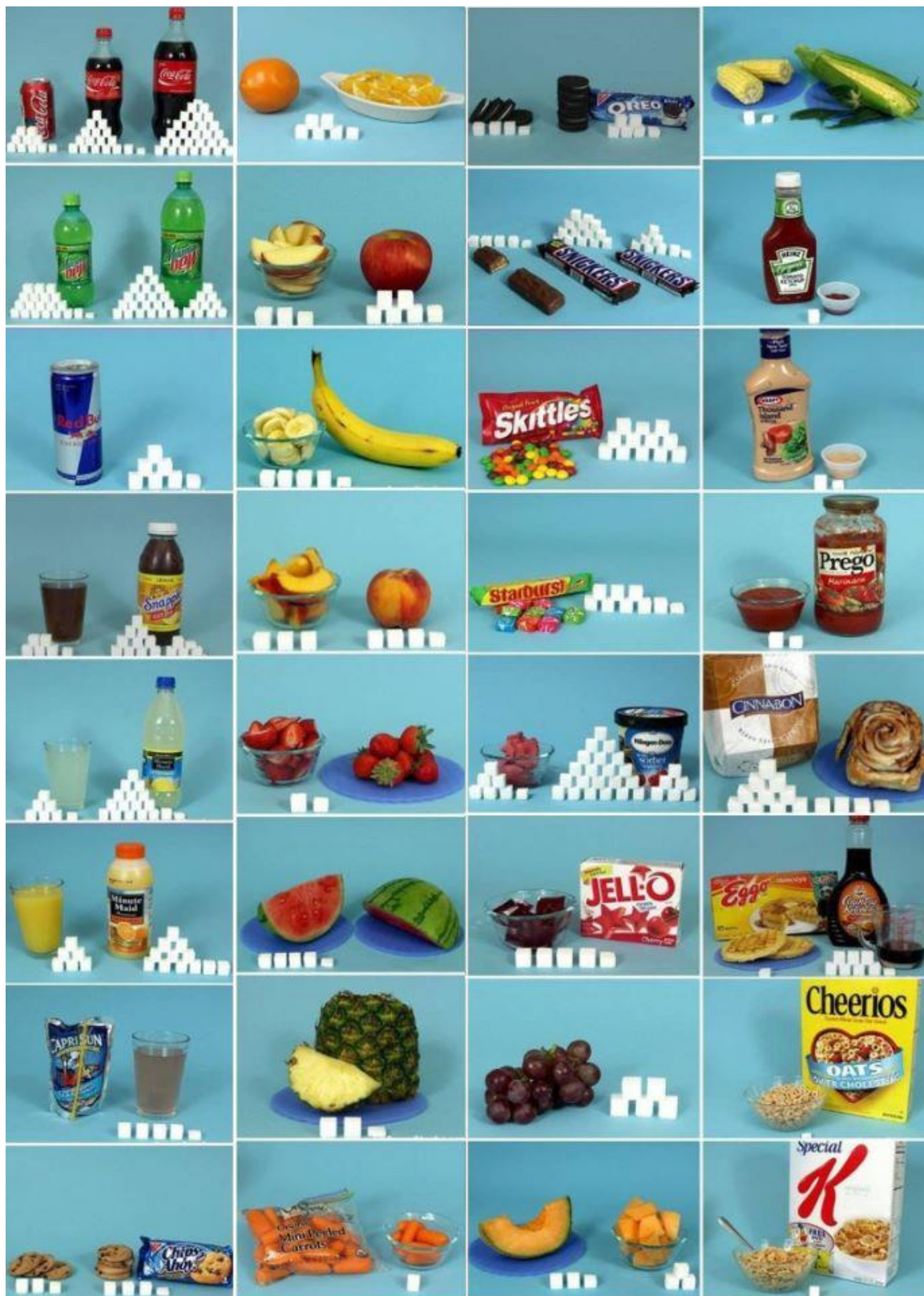
- Regular cravings, especially for sweets or carbs
- Energy crashes during the day
- Mood swings or irritability
- Skin breakouts or inflammation
- Difficulty losing weight

Recommended daily allowance according to the American Heart Association is 6 teaspoons (25 grams) for women and 9 teaspoons (36 grams) for men. For context, one can of soda contains about 8–10 teaspoons of sugar! The average consumption in the US is about 17 tsp (68 grams) for adults and as high as 25 tsp (100 grams) in teens and children. It is so easy to hit these numbers because we sometimes aren't mindful of what is in the foods we are eating. Take a look at the common foods we eat and their sugar content.

<b>Food Item</b>	<b>Sugar (g)</b>	<b>Sugar (tsp)</b>	<b>Note</b>
Flavored yogurt (1 small cup, ~150g)	12–20g	3–5 tsp	Even “low-fat” types often have added sugar
Granola or cereal (1 cup)	10–18g	2.5–4.5 tsp	Often marketed as “healthy” but sweetened heavily
Instant oatmeal packets	10–15g	2.5–3.5 tsp	Pre-sweetened flavors like maple or fruit
Ketchup (1 tablespoon)	4g	1 tsp	Sugar is often the 2nd or 3rd ingredient
Barbecue sauce (2 tablespoons)	10–12g	2.5–3 tsp	Very high in added sugar and syrup
Salad dressing (2 tablespoons)	5–8g	1.5–2 tsp	Especially creamy or “light” versions

<b>Food Item</b>	<b>Sugar (g)</b>	<b>Sugar (tsp)</b>	<b>Note</b>
Sports drinks (1 bottle, 500ml)	20–34g	5–8.5 tsp	Marketed as healthy, but can rival soda
Flavored plant-based milk (1 cup)	7–14g	2–3.5 tsp	Choose unsweetened versions instead
Pasta sauce (½ cup)	6–12g	1.5–3 tsp	Some brands add sugar to cut acidity
Protein bars or energy bars	10–20g	2.5–5 tsp	Check labels—even “healthy” bars can be sweetened
Bread (1 slice, white or soft wheat)	2–4g	0.5–1 tsp	Some breads use sugar for taste and browning
Canned baked beans (½ cup)	5–12g	1.5–3 tsp	Look for “reduced sugar” or “no added sugar” labels
Coleslaw or deli salads (½ cup)	4–8g	1–2 tsp	Often contains sugar in the dressing
Frozen meals (1 entrée)	5–15g	1–4 tsp	Especially sweet/savory sauces or glazes
Crackers or rice cakes (5–6 pieces)	3–7g	0.75–1.75 tsp	Often lightly sweetened—even if not dessert

Still not convinced? Pictures speak louder than a million words, so I scoured the internet for this pictograph for you. 1 cube = 1 teaspoon = 4g.



Source- [Avancecare.com/discovering hidden sugars in your diet/](http://Avancecare.com/discovering-hidden-sugars-in-your-diet/) November 16, 2016.

## How then do we limit sugar in our diet?

The number 1 rule is **READ THE FOOD LABEL** and toss what has too much sugar! Look for words that end with -ose (sucrose, glucose, fructose), high fructose corn syrup, cane sugar or syrup, brown rice syrup, honey, agave, molasses. Aim for foods with less than 5g per serving of added sugar.

Different countries have their own specified ways of reporting ingredients on the food label. You want to look for total carbohydrates, and the next line is usually something along the lines of 'of which sugars' \_\_\_\_\_. The higher the sugar number, the more likely there is added sugar, and it is a processed or ultra-processed food.

Sometimes total sugar is mentioned, followed by the added sugar quantity. You want as little added sugar as possible. Remember, the AHA recommendation is a daily maximum of 25g for women and 36g for men. The total sugar represents naturally occurring and added sugars. In the US, some food items only document total sugars, which means the sugar is all naturally occurring. If the total and added sugars are the same, then all the sugar in that food is added. I typically avoid these types of foods. Please see the resource section at the end of this chapter for more information about reading a food label.

Other strategies to decrease sugar in the diet include making choices based on what you read on the food label. Choose unsweetened versions of yogurt, nut butters, and drinks. Limit sugary beverages—opt for water, herbal tea, or sparkling water with fruit. Satisfy sweet cravings with fresh fruit, cinnamon, or dark chocolate (in moderation). Do some swaps in your diet

Instead of...	Try This...
Sugary cereal	Oats with fruit and cinnamon
Soda or energy drinks	Sparkling water with lemon or mint
Flavored yogurt	Plain Greek yogurt + berries
Salted snacks (chips, etc.)	Unsalted nuts or air-popped popcorn
Store-bought sauces	Homemade tomato or pesto sauces

As you may realize, I am passionate about limiting sugar in the diet. This is because I personally dealt with a sugar addiction. It is not just a knowledge of the effects of sugar that keeps you from it; it is also being intentional, and I am still learning this.

At the start of the year 2025, I went on a 90-day sugar fast. I avoided all desserts and sweets. It helped me cut down drastically on my sugar consumption. I wasn't looking for any particular health benefits, I just knew I couldn't keep eating as much sugar as I was consuming. My palate changed in that time- I wasn't craving sweets; I wasn't having sugar crashes, and I overall felt better.

I cut all the sugar out because I was somewhat punishing myself for being too lax over the Christmas holiday. I sent myself into a 'sugar rehab' and came out having achieved my goal of less sugar consumption and no cravings. You do not have to do this for overall health purposes. Here is a gentle guide on going into a sugar reset where you adjust your taste buds and eliminate cravings.

### Step 1: Know Your Intake

- Track everything you eat and drink for 3 days
- Highlight or circle foods with added sugar
- Learn to spot hidden sugars (e.g., maltose, dextrose, syrup, cane juice)

### Step 2: Eliminate High-Sugar Culprits

- Remove sugary drinks (soda, juice, energy drinks)
- Skip obvious sweets (candy, pastries, ice cream) for the week
- Toss or store away ultra-processed snacks with >8g sugar per serving

### Step 3: Eat for Balance

- Include protein with every meal (e.g., beans, tofu, lean meat)
- Add fiber-rich foods (veggies, whole grains, legumes)
- Use healthy fats to curb hunger (e.g., avocado, nuts, olive oil)

### Step 4: Replace, Don't Restrict

- Replace sugary cereals with oats + fruit
- Choose dark chocolate (70%+ cacao) in moderation
- Use cinnamon or vanilla for sweetness in drinks or foods

### Step 5: Manage Cravings

- Practice the 5-minute pause before giving in
- Create a non-food coping list (walking, music, journaling, stretching)
- Stay hydrated—thirst often disguises itself as hunger

### Step 6: Support Your Mind & Body

- Get 7–8 hours of sleep each night
- Move daily to stabilize blood sugar and mood
- Reflect: What triggers your cravings most—stress, boredom, fatigue?

You do not have to do this perfectly. As someone who enjoys sweet foods, I will not deny myself 100% of the time. I will allow myself to eat sweets **sometimes**. My goal is to eat sweets occasionally and, more importantly, get rid of cravings. If you have a health condition that demands you eat less sweets, then your goal has to be to decrease sweets for optimal health.

Please understand, sugar isn't "evil," but it's easy to overconsume—especially when it's hidden in everyday foods. Taking time to reset your sugar habits gives you the power to choose how you feel, function, and fuel your life.

## Substances and the Christian

As you can tell by now, this book is not just about the science of being healthy but also our deeper reason for being healthy, which is to glorify God in our bodies. What do you think God thinks about these substances? Obviously, there is not a lot of information in the Bible about tobacco, salt, sugar, and recreational drugs, but there is a lot about alcohol, and it is not painted in the greatest light. For example,

**"Wine is a mocker and beer a brawler; whoever is led astray by them is not wise."** Proverbs 20:1 (NKJV)

I do not think the Bible outrightly forbids alcohol consumption; in fact, Jesus turned water into wine (and I bet you it was not grape juice!). It does, however, speak against drunkenness. The first

time I noted in Proverbs that alcohol is not recommended for kings, it made me pause and think, 'Well, if I am royalty and I have been made a king and a priest unto God, then I also should avoid alcohol.'

***It is not for kings, Lemuel—not for kings to drink wine,  
not for rulers to crave beer, lest they drink and forget what has been decreed,  
and deprive all the oppressed of their rights."***

Proverbs 31:4-5 (NIV)

***and from Jesus Christ, the faithful witness, the firstborn from the dead, and the ruler over the kings of the earth. To Him who loved us and washed us from our sins in His own blood, and has made us kings and priests to His God and Father, to Him be glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen.***

Revelation 1:5-6 (NKJV)

I believe that some things are left up to each believer to determine what they will allow in their walk with God. Alcohol is one of them. It is not a sin to have a glass of wine. God is more interested in why you are having that glass of wine. You see, if a substance has you, it means God doesn't have you completely. It means this substance can take the place of God in your life.

You may wonder how this can apply to sugar or salt. Imagine you are fasting to deepen your relationship with God. You drive by a donut shop. Will you break your fast to satisfy a craving? If so, sugar has you and not God. The same applies to tobacco and recreational drugs. Your mind is so full of getting the next hit that you do not think about what God has to say to you.

Substances have the potential to compete with God. If you notice this in your life, before the substance starts to harm your health, get rid of it. This is why I went on a sugar fast- not because I had health reasons, but because my mind was constantly going to my next sugar hit and not focusing on what my Father had to say to me.

Life is beautiful when lived within reasonable limits. Let God be Lord over your life and appetite.

## Summary

1. Risky substances can affect your health negatively
2. Salt and sugar are surprise risky substances because when used in large quantities can be detrimental to health.
3. Tobacco and recreational drugs do not benefit the body in any way.
4. Alcohol, salt, and sugar should be used in moderation, or not at all in the case of alcohol.
5. God cannot have all of you if a substance has some of you.



## Reflection Points

1. Could you be over-consuming any of the substances discussed?
2. What steps could you take to limit your consumption?
3. Could your use or overuse of these substances be related to stress? How can you address this?
4. Do you think you are addicted to sugar, salt, alcohol, tobacco, or drugs?
5. If you do have an addiction to a substance, what could you do instead when you get a craving?

## 7. Preventive Care and Lifestyle Medicine

I find preventive medicine fascinating. Medical school teaches its students how to identify a problem, and most of the time, how to address the problem. With preventive medicine, you get to focus on stopping the problem from even happening. I believe this is the future of medicine, where we help the majority of people attain health before they can get sick. In preventive medicine, there are multiple levels, but we will focus on three.

### Primary prevention

Here, the key is to stop the disease before it starts. Primary prevention aims to reduce the incidence of disease by eliminating or minimizing risk factors and enhancing protective health behaviors. This is the main objective of this book: teaching you to be healthy so you do not develop a disease.

#### Strategies

- **Immunizations:** Prevent communicable diseases (e.g., polio, measles). For example, administering the HPV vaccine to adolescents to prevent cervical cancer.
- **Health education:** Encourage exercise, balanced diets, and smoking cessation. For example, promoting daily physical activity and healthy meals in schools.
- **Environmental interventions:** Ensure clean water, pollution control, and safe workplaces.
- **Public policies:** Enforce seat belt laws, tobacco taxes, and food labeling.

A note on immunizations. I will say this plainly: I am pro-vaccines. As a medical professional who was trained in a country where a lot of deaths are from vaccine-preventable diseases, I do not see the wisdom in avoiding vaccines. Granted, you have the right to put into your body what you will, but bear in mind that certain diseases do not occur anymore because of vaccines. For example, smallpox.

The idea that the government is trying to control or monitor you by forcing you to get vaccines brings me concern because if you think about it, there are easier and cheaper ways for them to achieve this, case in point, social media, or the news. I will not delve into the matters of politics or conspiracy theories, but I will say that vaccines are designed with the intention of protecting you from deadly diseases.

Whether you choose to be vaccinated or not is obviously your choice. I would encourage you to think objectively and pray about whether it is right for you.

### Secondary prevention

Here, the key is to find a disease early and nip it in the bud. Secondary prevention focuses on early detection and prompt intervention to halt the progression of disease before symptoms become severe or complications develop. This is the second objective of this book. If you are at risk of certain diseases based on family history or current unhealthy practices, lifestyle changes can help limit or eliminate those risks so you can live a long and healthy life.

## Strategies

- **Screening programs:** Mammograms, blood pressure checks, cholesterol testing. For example, detecting high blood pressure through screening and starting antihypertensive treatment.
- **Risk assessments:** Identifying individuals with family histories or known risk factors. For example, using colonoscopy to identify and remove precancerous polyps.
- **Health checkups:** Routine exams and lab work for asymptomatic patients. For example, diagnosing prediabetes via glucose testing and initiating lifestyle modifications

If I were asked, 'What is the most important preventive health practice to start?' my response would be SEE YOUR PRIMARY CARE DOCTOR! A visit to your doctor is not a sign of weakness or endorsing sickness. You should have a yearly check-up to ensure everything is in good working order. Some people take better care of their cars than their bodies. In the same way you do not wait for your car's dashboard to light up before getting an oil change, you shouldn't wait until you are ill to see your doctor.

Do you know that commercial airplanes get a safety check before every departure? This is because if anything goes wrong mid-flight, hundreds of people could die or be seriously hurt. So why wouldn't you, the temple of the Holy Ghost, get a check-up? Is the vision God put in your heart not worth it? Is the blood Jesus paid for you not worth it?

I have had friends tell me, 'I don't go to the doctor because there is nothing wrong with me'. Internally, I smile and say, 'You *think* there is nothing wrong with you, prove it by going to get a check-up!' Give us evidence of your good health. Every healing miracle Jesus performed was evident to all. There was no 'go and come back to tell your testimony'; everyone could see the healing. We believe Christ died for our healing and health, so let's have the evidence in our hands!

One thing your doctor would recommend is age-appropriate screening tests. This includes mammograms, colonoscopies, pap smears, and blood work. I strongly recommend getting these tests. If there is a disease brewing, it is always better to nip it in the bud by changing lifestyle practices or taking medications, or getting surgery. It is easier to reverse prediabetes than diabetes. It is easier to lose 10 lbs in weight than 100 lbs. It is also easier for us to have faith for healing of a pre-cancer or early-stage cancer than for metastatic disease. *Enough said.*

## Tertiary prevention

Here, the key is managing chronic illnesses aggressively to prevent worsening. Tertiary prevention is applied after a disease has been diagnosed. It focuses on limiting disability, improving function, and preventing further complications or disease progression. This is the third objective of this book. If you already have a chronic illness, lifestyle changes would help manage and sometimes even reverse the disease.

## Strategies

- **Rehabilitation services:** Physical therapy after injury or stroke.
- **Chronic disease management:** Monitoring and controlling diabetes, heart disease, or asthma.
- **Support services:** Counseling, medication adherence programs, and lifestyle coaching.

Unfortunately, a large number of people wait until this point to start considering changes in their health practices. Sometimes, even at this point, they still wouldn't consider changing because they feel it is too late or that they can just be on more medicine. I once had a patient with uncontrolled diabetes continue eating chocolate, even in her sleep. She would wake up in the morning and find chocolate all over her pillowcase because she would sleep-eat. The simple change I advised was to avoid keeping chocolate at her bedside, but she refused. I have several patients in a similar situation, unwilling to change to manage their health. I refuse to give up on them because I have a lot more patients who have improved their health by making the simple changes we have discussed throughout this book.

Whichever category of health you fall into, you can always make changes to stop it from getting worse. Trust me, there is always a worse state of health until death. Every sickness, regardless of how big or small you think it is, has one endpoint – death, *if* nothing is done to stop it. Even the common cold, if our immune system does not fight the virus, could lead to death. My kid's pediatrician used to 'scare' me with the story of a perfectly healthy 13-year-old girl who died from contracting the flu so I would give my kids the flu shot. Even though the scare tactic was lost on me because I intended to get them shots, it made me realize the frailty of our bodies without the knowledge of the finished work of Christ and our works of faith in caring for our bodies.

I want to leave you with this charge: It is never too late to take care of your body, and no step is too small to improve your overall health.

## Summary

1. Preventive medicine is a specialty of medicine that focuses on maintaining your optimal health.
2. Vaccines are helpful; consider updating your shots
3. It is important to see your doctor for regular check-ups
4. Healthy lifestyle habits can help prevent, reverse, or manage chronic illnesses
5. Lifestyle improvements are beneficial regardless of when you start and how much you start with.

## Reflection Points

1. Do you have a primary care doctor? Do you trust them to help manage your health?
2. What level of prevention do you need to focus on?
3. What preventive practice would you begin? For example, routine screening for secondary prevention
4. Do you know which health conditions are common in your family line? How can you begin to make intentional lifestyle choices today to reduce your risk and break that cycle?
5. Where do you think the trajectory of your health is headed? What will you do to make it go in the right direction?

# Final Thoughts

While writing this book, I had the opportunity to listen to a minister talk about what worship is. He essentially defined worship as the giving of yourself as **the gift**. It stems from a relationship with God. The more you recognize God's love for you, the deeper your love for Him, and the easier it is to present yourself as a gift to Him. Singing worship songs to Him then becomes a symptom of true worship. In meditating more on this, the Spirit of God reminded me that worship is defined in the scriptures.

***“Therefore, I urge you, brothers and sisters, in view of God’s mercy, to offer your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God—this is your true and proper worship.”***

Romans 12:1 (NIV)

The King James version translates the same word as service. According to Strong's concordance, the original Greek word can be translated into both service and worship. So, Paul is saying here that our service to God and our worship of Him are one and the same. When we present ourselves to God for Him to lead and direct to fulfill His purpose on the earth, this is our worship.

Looking back in the Old Testament, when God was presenting the Levitical order to Moses, we see how specific God was about the sacrifices that were to be made to Him for the cleansing of sin and for worship. They were to be without blemish, spot, or wrinkle. They were to be perfect.

Now we know in the New Testament that Christ was the perfect, spotless lamb that was sacrificed for us once and for all, so we do not need to sacrifice lambs anymore. Knowing and believing what Jesus did for us allows us to come before God to give our bodies as a gift in worship to Him. Even though Jesus has made a way for us, do we not have a part to play? The sacrificial lambs weren't perfect by chance, they were intentionally kept perfect. The sheep were bred in a certain way and mated to produce offspring that met standards. Jesus, the Son of God, was the perfect sacrifice, not because He was God in flesh, but because He lived a sinless life **while** in the flesh. Should we not also, looking unto Jesus as our example, present healthy bodies as a living sacrifice to God as our act of worship and service?

The more we walk with God, the more we realize that everything He has given to us, we need to dedicate back to Him in worship. We should honor Him with healthy bodies because it is truly the way to worship Him.

Am I saying you have to follow all the healthy practices perfectly? No! I honestly cannot say I know of a person who scores 100% on all six pillars every single day of their life. Just like in the Christian journey, start now and aim for growth. A desire to grow and consistency are more important than being perfect once in a blue moon. It is highly unlikely you will achieve a linear growth pattern; it is more likely that your journey would be a path with twists, turns, and forks in the road. This is where the power of the Holy Spirit comes in, to lead, guide, and strengthen us to do good works, including caring for our entire being- Spirit, Soul, and Body.

## PRAYER OF SALVATION

As explained in the introduction of this book, the beginning of a healthy life is a healthy spirit. A healthy spirit is one that is alive in Christ. To be alive in Christ, you must be born again. Being born again does not just grant you access to a healthy life; it also means you are saved from eternal separation from God, who is the source of life and all things good.

In the book of Romans, we see how to be born again

***If you declare with your mouth, "Jesus is Lord," and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. For it is with your heart that you believe and are justified, and it is with your mouth that you profess your faith and are saved. As Scripture says, "Anyone who believes in him will never be put to shame." For there is no difference between Jew and Gentile—the same Lord is Lord of all and richly blesses all who call on him, for, "Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved."***

Romans 10: 9-13 (NIV)

The bible promises that you will be saved when you call on the name of the Lord. All you need to do is believe in your heart and say it with your mouth! By the goodness of God, eternal life has already been provided for you, waiting for your acceptance. If you would like to be born again, saved, and become a Christian, say this prayer-

**I recognize that I am a sinner in need of a savior. I believe that Jesus died to save me from my sins so I can receive eternal life and become a child of God. I declare that Jesus is now my Lord and savior, and I rejoice because I am now accepted in the beloved! Thank you, Jesus, for saving me.**

If you said this prayer, congratulations and welcome to the family!

Just like every newborn baby, you need to be fed and cared for. Please reach out to me so I know you made a decision to follow Christ and I can help you on this new and exciting journey of faith.

***info@yourbodyisthetemple.com***

# Resources

Explore my website- [www.yourbodyisthetemple.com](http://www.yourbodyisthetemple.com). Also, subscribe to my mailing list!

## Introduction

Read the book -Spirit, Soul, and Body by Andrew Wommack. Or you can watch an abbreviated version in 3 short parts on YouTube to get the general gist of it

Part 1: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=b5aAGTNWNBA>

Part 2: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VsSom12Wba0>

Part 3: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1rd8pRxlCcg>

## 1. Connections

Read Knowing and Experiencing God by Arthur Meintjes.

If you are looking for a time-intensive, structured teaching on God's word, check out

-Faith School with Keith Moore [www.faithschool.org](http://www.faithschool.org) (This is 100% free)

-Charis Bible College (Andrew Wommack) <https://www.charisbiblecollege.org>. This school changed my life, not free, but worth it!

Two books of the Bible that have helped shape my mindset about who I am in Christ are the books of John and Ephesians. Start here in learning about who you are in Christ.

If you have affirmations/ confessions, add these to it!

### Affirmations from the Book of John

1. **I am deeply loved by God.**  
*"For God so loved the world that He gave His one and only Son..." (John 3:16)*
2. **I am a child of God, born of His will.**  
*"To all who did receive Him...He gave the right to become children of God." (John 1:12-13)*
3. **I have eternal life through Jesus.**  
*"Whoever hears my word and believes...has eternal life." (John 5:24)*
4. **I am never alone—God is always with me.**  
*"I will not leave you as orphans; I will come to you." (John 14:18)*
5. **I am chosen and appointed by God to bear fruit.**  
*"You did not choose Me, but I chose you and appointed you..." (John 15:16)*
6. **The truth sets me free.**  
*"Then you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free." (John 8:32)*
7. **I have peace that the world cannot give.**  
*"Peace I leave with you; My peace I give you..." (John 14:27)*

## Affirmations from Ephesians

1. **I am blessed with every spiritual blessing.**  
*"He has blessed us in the heavenly realms with every spiritual blessing..." (Ephesians 1:3)*
2. **I am chosen, holy, and blameless in God's sight.**  
*"He chose us...to be holy and blameless in His sight." (Ephesians 1:4)*
3. **I am redeemed and forgiven.**  
*"In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins..." (Ephesians 1:7)*
4. **I am sealed with the Holy Spirit.**  
*"When you believed, you were marked in Him with a seal, the promised Holy Spirit." (Ephesians 1:13)*
5. **I am God's workmanship, created with purpose.**  
*"We are God's handiwork, created in Christ Jesus to do good works..." (Ephesians 2:10)*
6. **I have access to the Father through the Spirit.**  
*"Through Him we both have access to the Father by one Spirit." (Ephesians 2:18)*
7. **I am strengthened with power through His Spirit.**  
*"That He may strengthen you with power through His Spirit in your inner being." (Ephesians 3:16)*

For connecting with people, think about becoming part of a community like a Church, a gym class, a hobby group

## 2. Nutrition

Sources of nutrients, especially minerals and vitamins <https://nutritionsource.hsph.harvard.edu/>

Looking for plant-based recipes? Check out my favorite sources

[Affordable and Easy Plant-based Recipes | Plant-Based on a Budget  
https://plantbasedonabudget.com/](https://plantbasedonabudget.com/)

Forks over Knives has some free and paid recipes <https://www.forksoverknives.com/>

Center for Nutrition Studies - <https://nutritionstudies.org/recipes/>

Old Ways - website dedicated to traditional diets - <https://oldwayspt.org/recipes/>

This site provides free resources showing you how to add more plants in your diet, not recipes.  
The big switch - <https://thebigswitch.com>

This site is a free online community to help increase your fiber and lose weight!  
[www.fullplateliving.com](http://www.fullplateliving.com)





### Beans & Peas • Frijoles & Legumbres

- ☐ Black Beans / Frijoles Negros, Habichuelas Negras
- ☐ Black-eyed Peas / Frijoles de Ojo Negro
- ☐ Edamame / Frijoles de Soya
- ☐ Chickpeas / Garbanzos
- ☐ Kidney Beans / Habichuelas Rojas, Frijoles Rojas
- ☐ Lentils / Lentejas
- ☐ Lima Beans / Habas
- ☐ Navy Beans / Frijoles Blancos, Habichuelas Blancos
- ☐ Peas / Chicharos
- ☐ Pigeon Peas / Gandules
- ☐ Pinto Beans / Frijoles Pintos, Habichuelas Pintas
- ☐ Pink Beans / Frijoles Rosados, Habichuelas Rosadas
- ☐ Split Peas / Guisantes Partidos



Notes

### Nuts & Seeds • Nueces & Semillas

- ☐ Almonds / Almendras
- ☐ Brazil Nuts / Nueces de Brasil
- ☐ Chia Seeds / Semillas de Chia
- ☐ Flax Seeds / Semillas de Lino
- ☐ Hazelnuts / Avellanas
- ☐ Peanuts / Cacahuates
- ☐ Pecans / Nueces Pecanas
- ☐ Pumpkin Seeds / Semillas de Calabaza
- ☐ Sunflower Seeds / Semillas de Girasol
- ☐ Walnuts / Nueces



### Grains • Granos

- ☐ Barley / Cebada
- ☐ Brown Rice / Arroz Integral
- ☐ Buckwheat / Alforfón
- ☐ Millet / Mijo
- ☐ Oats / Avena
- ☐ Quinoa / Quinoa
- ☐ Rye / Centeno
- ☐ Whole wheat / Trigo Integral
- ☐ Whole grain Cornmeal / Harina de Maiz de Grano
- ☐ Whole wheat pasta / Pasta de Trigo Integral
- ☐ Wild Rice / Arroz Silvestre





## Super Foods

### Fruits • Frutas

- ☐ Apples / Manzanas
- ☐ Apricots / Albaricoques
- ☐ Bananas / Plátanos
- ☐ Blackberries / Moras
- ☐ Blueberries / Arándanos
- ☐ Boysenberries / Bayas de Boysen
- ☐ Cantaloupe / Cantalupo
- ☐ Cherimoya / Chirimoyas
- ☐ Cherries / Cerezas
- ☐ Currants / Grosellas
- ☐ Figs / Higos
- ☐ Grapefruit / Toronja
- ☐ Grapes / Uvas
- ☐ Guava / Guayaba
- ☐ Honeydew Melon / Melón Verde
- ☐ Kiwi / Kiwi
- ☐ Lemon / Limón
- ☐ Lime / Lima
- ☐ Mango / Mango
- ☐ Nectarine / Nectarina
- ☐ Oranges / Naranjas
- ☐ Papaya / Papaya
- ☐ Passion Fruit / Maracuyá
- ☐ Peaches / Duraznos, Melocotones
- ☐ Pears / Peras
- ☐ Persimmons / Persimmons, Caquis
- ☐ Pineapple / Piña
- ☐ Plantain / Plantano macho
- ☐ Plums / Ciruelas
- ☐ Pomegranate / Granada
- ☐ Raspberries / Frambuesas
- ☐ Rhubarb / Ruibarbo
- ☐ Strawberries / Fresas
- ☐ Tangerines / Mandarinas
- ☐ Tamarind / Tamarindo
- ☐ Watermelon / Sandía



### Vegetables • Verduras

- ☐ Artichokes / Alcachofa
- ☐ Arugula / Rúcula
- ☐ Asparagus / Espárragos
- ☐ Bean Sprouts / Brotes de Soja
- ☐ Beet Greens / Hojas de Remolacha
- ☐ Beets / Betabel, Remolacha
- ☐ Bell Peppers / Pimientos
- ☐ Bok Choy / Col China
- ☐ Broccoli / Brócoli
- ☐ Broccoli Rabe / Brócoli Rabe
- ☐ Brussel Sprouts / Coles de Bruselas
- ☐ Carrots / Zanahorias
- ☐ Collard Greens / Col Rizada
- ☐ Cauliflower / Coliflor
- ☐ Celery / Apio
- ☐ Chayote / Chayote
- ☐ Chili Peppers / Chiles
- ☐ Cilantro / Cilantro
- ☐ Corn / Elote, Maíz
- ☐ Cucumbers / Pepino
- ☐ Dandelion Greens / Dientes de león
- ☐ Eggplant / Berenjena
- ☐ Endive / Endibia
- ☐ Green Beans / Judías Verdes
- ☐ Jicama / Jicama
- ☐ Kale / Col rizada
- ☐ Kohlrabi / Colibano
- ☐ Leeks / Puerros
- ☐ Mushrooms / Setas, Hongos
- ☐ Mustard Greens / Hojas de Mosta
- ☐ Nopales / Nopales
- ☐ Okra / Okra
- ☐ Onions / Cebollas
- ☐ Parsley / Perejil
- ☐ Parsnips / Chirivías
- ☐ Portobella Mushrooms / Hongos portobello
- ☐ Red Cabbage / Repollo Rojo
- ☐ Romaine Lettuce / Lechuga Romana
- ☐ Snow peas / Tirabeques
- ☐ Spinach / Espinaca
- ☐ Sugar Snap Peas / Tirabeques
- ☐ Swiss Chard / Acelga
- ☐ Tomato / Tomate
- ☐ Watercress / Berros
- ☐ Zucchini / Calabacín



### **3. Movement**

FITON app (Play Store, Apple, Roku TV). This is my absolute favorite exercise app, and it is free!

Fitness Blender - <https://www.fitnessblender.com/>. Free and paid plans

There are multiple videos on YouTube that you can easily access. Check these out  
Leslie Sansone walk at home. This is very beginner-friendly with a lively atmosphere  
Passion for Profession  
Feeling Fit Club San Diego

Honestly, you can just search out ANY form of exercise you desire, and YouTube probably has it.  
No membership required.

For US medicare patients: Check out Silver Sneakers <https://tools.silversneakers.com/>

### **4. Stress and Mental Health**

Breathing apps such as Calm, Headspace, or find breathing exercises on YouTube

Set time aside for self-care activities

Consider speaking with a therapist

### **5. Sleep**

Explore more about sleep here- National Sleep Foundation <http://www.sleepfoundation.org/>

Learn more about sleep disorders here- <http://sleepdisorders.sleepfoundation.org>

If you have sleep issues, consider these options

<http://freecbti.com/cbti>

<https://www.cbtforinsomnia.com/>

Meditation Apps for phone like CBT-I Coach App

YouTube meditations for sleep- I love DappyTkeys, he plays piano worship music, no lyrics.

Relaxing sleep music

Amazon Prime: Rain/thunderstorms

Podcasts: Nothing Much Happens, Get Sleepy, Sleepy

### **6. Risky Substances**

To quit tobacco- <https://www.cdc.gov/tobacco/about/how-to-quit.html>

To quit alcohol and recreational drugs- <https://americanaddictioncenters.org/rehab-guide/overcoming-addiction>

Here is more information on reading a food label-

<https://www.fda.gov/food/nutrition-facts-label/how-understand-and-use-nutrition-facts-label>

## About the author



**Oyinkansola Ogundimu**, fondly known as *Doctor O*, is a teacher at heart and a dedicated Christian physician with over a decade of experience practicing medicine in both Nigeria and the United States. She earned her medical degree from the **College of Medicine, University of Lagos**, and completed her residency training at the **University of Pittsburgh Medical Center (UPMC) McKeesport**. She is triple board-certified in **Family Medicine, Lifestyle Medicine**, and **Obesity Medicine**, and also holds a certification in **Health and Wellness Coaching** from Loma Linda University in California.

With a strong conviction that medicine should empower rather than create dependence, Oyinkansola is passionate about helping her patients and readers achieve lasting wellness by teaching them *how not to need medicine*. Her holistic approach to health integrates evidence-based medical practice with timeless biblical principles, offering a refreshing path to healing that honors both body and spirit.

Through her writing, speaking, and blogging, she expresses her faith in Christ while advocating for whole-person health. Whether in the clinic, on the page, or from the pulpit, Oyinkansola's mission remains the same: to inspire others to live fully—whole in spirit, soul, and body.

Read more on her website- [www.yourbodyisthetemple.com](http://www.yourbodyisthetemple.com)

Questions? Comments?- [info@yourbodyisthetemple.com](mailto:info@yourbodyisthetemple.com)

Instagram- [@yourbodyisthetemple](https://www.instagram.com/yourbodyisthetemple)

Coming soon! *Embracing a Healthy Lifestyle: Steps to a Healthier You*. A self-paced course to be released July 30, 2025. Join the waitlist [here](#). Rewards await you if you sign up by the release date.

*THE  
WHOLENESS  
MANDATE.*

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