

## Modify habits for big health wins

Wouldn't it be great if our bodies delivered instant results? Eat well for a day and see perfect cholesterol? Work out once and gain stamina, strength and the ideal blood pressure? Skip dessert and instantly improve your A1c level?

Unfortunately, that's not how it works. Our bodies are finely tuned machines that need consistent care—fueling, movement, rest and engagement—day after day. Better health requires action, and results take time.

While progress isn't always immediate, effort does pay off. Sometimes, there's even an instant benefit.

For example, increasing your water intake today can help you feel better right away. It may reduce the risk of constipation, kidney stones, headaches and sluggishness.<sup>1</sup>

Other habits, both big and small, can move you toward better health. Even if changes in blood sugar, cholesterol or blood pressure aren't immediately visible, consistency matters. When you put in the work, results will come.

Read on for suggestions that can positively impact your health.

### Reduce your alcohol intake

Whether you enjoy a glass of wine at night or a beer on the weekend, drinking alcohol has an impact on your body. But after just one week without alcohol, your body starts to recover in ways you might not notice right away.

#### After one week

You sleep better, you may eat better, you're more hydrated and have improved energy.

#### After two weeks

Stomach irritation is reduced. Acid reflux and indigestion may subside.

#### After three weeks

Your blood pressure is normalizing, reducing your risk of heart disease. Fewer calories can lead to lower weight.

#### After four weeks

Your skin looks better and more hydrated. Your liver function is improving.


When you stop drinking alcohol, you can expect better moods, concentration, memory and more.

### The 4-week reset

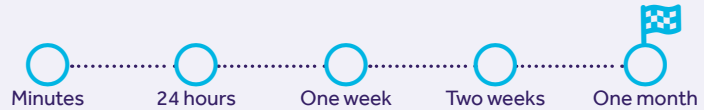


## Stop smoking

Quitting smoking affects your body almost immediately.<sup>4</sup> You may feel it right away, or not. The important thing is to stick with it.






-  **In minutes**  
Your heart rate drops to normal.
-  **In 24 hours**  
Nicotine levels drop to zero. Your carbon monoxide level drops to normal.
-  **In 1-12 months**  
Coughing and shortness of breath decrease.
-  **In 5-10 years**  
Your risk of some cancers is cut in half. Your risk of stroke decreases.

### First 30 days smoke-free



## Start exercising

It's recommended that adults get 150 minutes of physical activity each week. This could be as simple as walking 30 minutes five times a week.<sup>5</sup> It is one of the most important things you can do for your health.<sup>6</sup>

-  **After exercising for 10 minutes**  
Your brain gets more blood, and more oxygen, making you more alert.
-  **After exercising for one hour**  
Your blood pressure goes down, and your digestive system speeds up.
-  **After one day**  
You may feel muscle soreness, especially if you did exercises that are new to your body.
-  **After one week**  
You may start to feel more energy. Your mood improves and you may have more confidence.
-  **After one month**  
Regular exercise improves physical, mental and social health. It can also improve your productivity and increase feelings of happiness.

### Weekly movement tracker Progress to 150 minutes



Keep it up for all the payoffs.

Before starting any new exercise routine, talk to your healthcare provider to make sure it's safe.

<sup>1</sup><https://www.canada.ca/en/department-national-defence/corporate/news/regional-news/western-sentinel/2021/08/facts-on-fluids-how-to-stay-hydrated.html>

<sup>2</sup>If you are a heavy drinker, seek medical advice before attempting to quit on your own.

<sup>3</sup><https://helpwithdrinking.ca/understanding-problem-drinking/alcohol-affects-health/>

<sup>4</sup><https://www.lung.ca/benefits-quit>

<sup>5</sup><https://www.canada.ca/en/public-health/services/publications/healthy-living/physical-activity-tips-adults-18-64-years.html>

<sup>6</sup><https://health-infobase.canada.ca/datalab/pass-blog.html>

# The importance of strength-based exercise

Physical activity is one of the five pillars of being healthy. Along with eating well, getting enough sleep, managing stress, not smoking and checking in with your mental health, regular exercise will keep your body functioning properly.

It takes a time commitment—at least 150 minutes a week of aerobic activity. That's just 30 minutes, five times each week.<sup>1</sup>

Aerobic activity is excellent for your body. Go the extra mile by adding exercises that are strength-based and specifically targeted to building muscle.



## Why build muscle?



As we age, women and men naturally lose strength, stability and bone density. Bone thinning can lead to osteopenia and osteoporosis. At the same time, we also lose muscle mass. This condition, called sarcopenia, coupled with osteoporosis, can leave you frail, more likely to fall and to break a bone.<sup>2</sup>

Regular weight-bearing and resistance exercise can help slow nature. It can also help you protect your body and balance to avoid falls and fractures in the future.

## Support your body's needs

Eating a high-protein diet is all the rage these days. But drinking protein shakes and eating giant beef burgers does not guarantee you will gain muscle.<sup>3</sup> Building muscle and bone density happens when there is adequate nutrition to support it. Eating a balanced diet full of calcium, vitamin D and protein<sup>2</sup> is the goal.



Average adults should eat 0.36 grams of protein for every pound they weigh.<sup>3</sup> A person who weighs 180 pounds needs around 65 grams of protein daily to meet basic nutritional requirements (it could be more or less depending on age, weight, medical conditions and how active you are).

There are online calculators<sup>4</sup> that can help you figure out how much protein you should eat to maintain and gain muscle.

## How to get started

To preserve and build muscle, you need to stimulate it through weight-bearing and resistance exercises.

Use **resistance bands**, **dumbbells**, **exercise machines** or your **own body weight** to start a practice that incorporates all your major muscle groups. That means the quads (front of thighs), glutes (buttocks and hips), hamstrings (back of thighs), chest, back and core (abdomen).

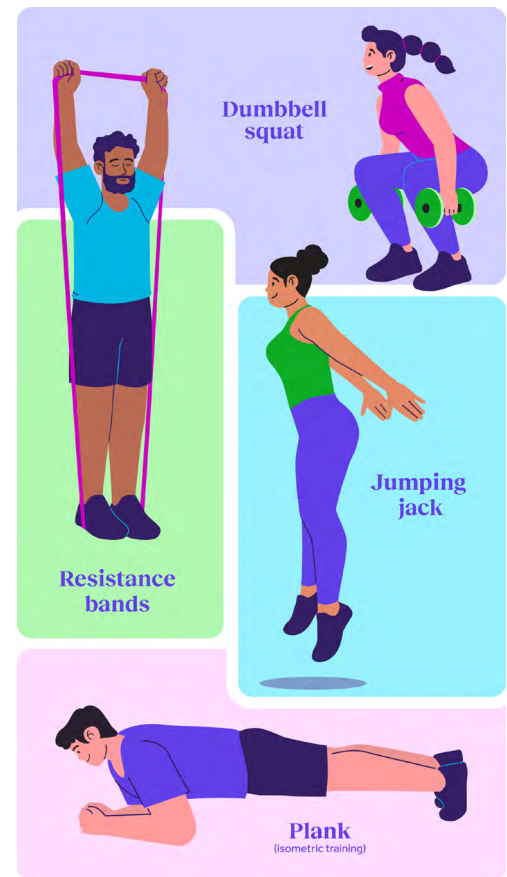
If that sounds overwhelming, focus on two simple options: plyometric and isometric training—jumping and planks.

**Jumping**<sup>5</sup> places healthy stress on your bones, stimulating growth and improving density. It also strengthens the muscles used to generate power. Start with one or two sets of 5–10 hops once a week. Gradually increase repetitions, sets and frequency. Over time, you'll notice gains in strength, height and agility—making movements like skipping or jumping jacks feel easier.

**Planks**<sup>6</sup> offer similar benefits. This push-up position strengthens your core, stabilizes your back and engages your glutes, hips and arms. It works nearly every muscle from head to toe. Try short sets of 10–30 seconds daily. Within a month, you'll feel stronger and see noticeable changes.

## Better, without bulk

The goal is not to be a body builder. When building muscle for health, you'll feel it in how your clothes fit (better), how you sleep (better) and how you may now indulge in a treat without paying the price (muscle, even at rest, burns more calories than other tissue). As you get older, strength training will provide the most important benefits: maintaining balance, posture and the ability to be independent.



Before starting any new exercise routine, talk to your healthcare provider to make sure it's safe.

<sup>1</sup><https://health-infobase.canada.ca/pass/meeting-recommendations/>

<sup>2</sup><https://osteoporosis.ca/exercise/>

<sup>3</sup><https://heartandstroke.ca/articles/your-top-protein-questions-answered>

<sup>4</sup><https://health-infobase.canada.ca/nutrition/dietary-reference-intakes-calculator/>

<sup>5</sup><https://sirc.ca/articles/the-power-of-plyometric-training/>

<sup>6</sup><https://www.canada.ca/en/public-health/services/reports-publications/health-promotion-chronic-disease-prevention-canada-research-policy-practice/vol-43-no-5-2023/strength-training-balance-activities-canada-historical-trends-prevalence.html>



## Build a “picky plate” full of nutrition

It's not often you get to enjoy all your favourite foods in one meal and still eat healthily. That's what makes the “picky plate” so great.

This meal idea actually comes from kids. Parents often put together a mix of different foods for their children to sample. It's a bit of everything, but together it makes a balanced meal.



Grown-ups can make their own version, like a small mezze plate or a single-serve charcuterie board. Try adding fresh fruits and vegetables, lean proteins, and some healthy carbs.

To keep things healthy and save money, look for local, in-season foods. Shopping at a farmer's market is a great way to find fresh choices. Your taste buds will be happy.

## Tips for easy assembly

With unlimited combinations, assembling these meals could feel like a challenge. The key is to prepare elements ahead of time. Here are some ideas to get you started:



1

### ① Prepare raw veggies

Do it all at once. Wash, slice and peel (if needed) vegetables like carrots, cucumbers, celery, edamame, broccoli, snap peas, radishes, mini peppers and mini tomatoes. Store them in containers in the fridge for easy assembly. Steamable frozen veggies are also a quick alternative to fresh.



3

### ② Divide into portions

Cut cheese into cubes. Divide things like dips, hummus and cottage cheese into serving-sized portions.

### ③ Prep your protein

Weigh out portions of sliced turkey, ham, prosciutto, rotisserie chicken, etc. When you're cleaning up dinner, portion leftover proteins into 3-to-4 ounce servings. Hard boil eggs and store them unpeeled until you're ready to serve.

### ④ Batch roast

Fill a sheet pan with potatoes, sweet potato wedges, squash, peppers and onion to roast in the oven. These will be delicious additions to your plates. Store them in microwave-safe containers to reheat when ready to eat.



5

### ⑤ Plan, plan, plan

Choose themed picky plates each week. Taking inspiration from Mexican, Italian, Middle Eastern or Asian cuisine allows you to purchase, season and prep accordingly. When planning dinners, think about what you can repurpose on plates. Leftover chili can become a dip or spread. Cube, skewer and sauce leftover meats. Incorporate extra quinoa or rice into salads.

## Get creative

The only rule about picky plates is that there are no rules. Create combinations that will satisfy and nourish you.<sup>1</sup> Eat the rainbow by adding as many colourful foods as you can. Aim to make fruits and vegetables the stars of your plate. And watch your portion size when it comes to higher fat and calorie items, like cheese, bread or sweets.

**Take inspiration from the following plates and then add your own flair.**

### Mezze plate

The mezze combines foods that are traditionally Middle Eastern. Serve with pita chips.

#### 🍷 Dips/spreads (pick 2)

Hummus  
Baba ganoush (roasted eggplant)  
Tzatziki (creamy cucumber spread)  
Labneh

#### ♂ Protein (pick 1)

Falafel balls  
Chicken kebabs  
Lamb meatballs

#### 🥗 Salads (pick 1-2)

Tabbouleh  
Greek salad  
Tomato salad

#### 🥕 Veggies (all)

Cucumbers or zucchini wedges  
Sliced red, yellow or green peppers  
Cherry tomatoes  
Chickpeas (also a good protein and fibre source)

#### 🥙 Salty, briny (pick 2)

Black and green olives  
Stuffed grape leaves  
Pepperoncini  
Feta cheese cubes

#### 🍪 Sweets (pick 1)

Dates, figs or dried apricots



## Farmer's market plate

Let the vegetables and fruits take center stage. Make it fresh and straight from the farmer's market, a country farm stand or even your garden. Serve with fresh baguette, hearty bread or with whole-grain or seeded crackers.

### 🥬 Veggies (whatever is in season)

Cucumbers  
Sliced red, yellow or green peppers  
Cherry tomatoes  
Carrots  
Radishes  
Snow peas

### 🍏 Fruits (whatever is in season)

Strawberries  
Green or red grapes  
Melon cubes  
Apple or peach slices  
Blueberries

### 🥄 Dips/spreads (pick 1)

Yogurt dip  
Hummus  
Ranch dressing

### 🍗 Protein (pick 1)

Rotisserie, grilled or roasted chicken  
Hard boiled eggs

### 🥫 Salty/briny (pick 1-2)

Pickles  
Roasted nuts  
Cubed cheese (cheddar, jack)

### 🍪 Sweets (pick 1)

Mini cookies  
Apple cider donut bites

### 🥗 Salads (pick 1-2)

Broccoli salad  
Cabbage slaw



## Raid-the-fridge plate

This is self-explanatory. Start with veggies and then, who knows what you'll find. Take a little of this and a little of that, just to get a taste. Be creative!

### 🥬 Veggies (whatever is in season)

Cucumbers  
Sliced red, green and yellow pepper  
Cherry tomatoes  
Carrots and celery  
Radishes  
Edamame (a good source of fiber and protein)

### 🍏 Fruits (whatever is in season)

Apple or pear slices  
Blackberries or raspberries  
Blueberries  
Orange or clementine sections  
Grapes or kiwi fruit

### 🍗 Protein (pick 1)

Rotisserie chicken  
Hard-boiled eggs  
Sliced turkey  
Cottage cheese (small cup)

### 🍲 Leftovers (pick 1)

Meatloaf cubes  
Chicken chili (small cup)  
Thai curry with rice (small cup)  
Roasted sweet potato wedges  
Tuna salad (small cup)  
Pasta (small cup)

### 🍪 Sweets (pick 1)

Dark chocolate square  
Plain Greek yogurt with honey (small cup)

### 🥫 Salty/briny (pick 1-2)

Olives  
Kimchi  
Pickles  
Cubed cheese

### 🥄 Dips/spreads (pick 1)

Hummus  
Ranch dressing



# Webinar

**Interested in learning more wellness tips from the Teladoc Health Canada team? Join us for our upcoming Wellness Webinar**

## **Men's Health Roadmap: Thriving Through Every Stage**

**Taryn Tobia**

Senior Manager, Clinical Operations  
Teladoc Health Canada, Inc

**Tuesday, June 9 @ 12:00 - 1:00 PM EST**



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