



Women's Wellness Center
www.womenswellnessnow.com

Healthy Lifestyle

Many patients ask for our thoughts on a healthy lifestyle. Here are a few recommendations that are scientifically supported and recommended for most women.

Good Nutrition - This may be the single most important variable to keeping you healthy, and **you** are in complete control of it. You can lower your risk of developing chronic diseases of aging such as heart disease, hypertension, diabetes, and cancer by consuming whole nutritious foods (vegetables, fruit, whole grains, lean meats) and staying away from refined carbohydrates (bread, baked goods, crackers, chips, pasta, sweets). Consume only healthy fats, such as olive oil and canola oil. Healthy fats are also found in nuts, seeds, and fish.

Maintain a Healthy Weight - Your weight is a very important predictor of your future health. If you are in the healthy range, stay there. If you are overweight, avoid gaining, and lose some if you can. This will strongly influence your risk of dying from heart attack or stroke, or developing high blood pressure, diabetes, or cancer.

Exercise - Everyone knows this is important, but we don't seem to make the time. Regular exercise lowers the risk of cancer, heart disease, hypertension, osteoporosis, and improves depression and PMS. Why wouldn't you make time for something that benefits you so much? Exercise for 30-60 minutes every day. It is best to spend some time doing aerobic exercise, such as running or biking **and** muscle-building exercises such as weight lifting. Building muscle increases your metabolic rate so that you burn more calories, even at rest! It also does wonders for improving your overall sense of well-being. Try getting a set of dumbbells. It's inexpensive and can be a very effective whole body work-out.

Stress Management - Stress can have serious health consequences over time. Whether it's routine daily stress, or big life-changing stress, sometimes we need guidance in developing coping strategies. Our mental health counselors have extensive experience in this area, and can help you develop the tools you need to manage emotional stress in your life.

Recommended Health Screenings

- Well Woman Exam – Yearly from **age 21** on
- Cholesterol, thyroid, and diabetes testing – Every 5 years
- Mammogram – Baseline at **age 35**, then yearly from **age 40** on
- Colonoscopy – First at **age 50**, then every 10 years
- Bone Density Testing – A baseline test at about the time of the menopausal transition. Further testing is individualized.

Dietary Supplements – Should you take a multi-vitamin? It may surprise you to learn that studies of multi-vitamin use show no benefit in health or longevity. In general, it is best to obtain vitamins and minerals through a healthy diet. Consuming many different kinds of vegetables, fruits, nuts, whole grains, and lean meats should provide you with all the essentials. However, studies have shown a benefit of supplementing a few vitamins and minerals in amounts that are difficult to obtain from diet alone (and these doses are higher than you will receive in a multi-vitamin). These are: Calcium, Magnesium, Vitamin D, Folic Acid (folate), Fish Oil (Omega 3 fats). All of these supplements may be consumed at the same time, best with food. Please read on to learn more about these nutrients and the best way to supplement and include them in your diet.

- **Calcium** - Most women need to supplement calcium, because it is difficult to get enough in the diet to provide optimal bone health for a lifetime. I recommend calcium citrate because this type of calcium is better absorbed than some other types of calcium supplements. My favorite is **Citracal Petites Plus D**. They are smaller than most, and contain vitamin D.
Try to consume **1000 mg** of calcium daily, dividing the dose into 2 or 3 separate times of the day.
Food Sources of calcium: milk, soy milk, cheeses, dairy products, and broccoli.
- **Vitamin D** - Vitamin D has been shown to lower the risk of colon cancer and possibly breast and ovarian cancer. Vitamin D is as important as calcium for bone health. It is difficult to get the recommended daily dose from your diet, so supplements are needed. Our skin manufactures vitamin D when exposed to sunlight, but using sunscreen blocks the benefit.
Supplement at least **1000 IU** of vitamin D daily.
Food sources of vitamin D: salmon, sardines, egg yolks, and fortified foods such as milk and cereals.
- **Magnesium** - This mineral helps your body metabolize calcium and is essential for many biochemical reactions in your body. Studies are inconclusive whether magnesium supplementation should be recommended for *all* women, but we do have evidence that it is beneficial in preventing headaches and symptoms of PMS. Keep in mind that magnesium can cause diarrhea in some women, so you may decrease the dose if necessary. For those who tend to have constipation, the increase in bowel motility would be a potential benefit.
Supplement **250–400 mg** of magnesium daily. Take up to 600 mg daily if you are fighting PMS or headaches.
Food sources of magnesium: artichokes, avocados, spinach, beans, almonds, cashews, pine nuts, whole grains.
- **Folic Acid (Folate)** - There are studies showing significant health benefits for women, such as lowering risk of breast and colon cancer, and lowering risk of cervical dysplasia (causing abnormal Pap). Also, because folate reduces the risk of birth defects, women in the reproductive age range should take a folic acid supplement.
Try to consume **1000-2000 micrograms** (equal to 1-2 milligrams) of folic acid daily.
Food sources of folic acid: broccoli, dark green leafy vegetables, oranges, grapefruit, poultry, nuts and seeds.
- **Fish Oil (EPA and DHA)** - Omega-3 fatty acids found in fish oil have been shown to lower blood pressure, decrease LDL cholesterol, increase HDL cholesterol, and decrease platelet aggregation—all factors that decrease the overall risk of inflammation and heart disease. Among other benefits, fish oil has been shown to **improve mood disorders** such as depression, and relieve pain from arthritis. Be sure you choose a purified product, free of toxic contaminants that may be found in fish. **Barlean's EPA-DHA formula** (Barleans.com) is my favorite. It is ultra-pure, has a citrus aroma, and does not cause excessive burping like some fish oil products. Barlean's and other brands are available online or in your local health food store. A quality brand will not have any fishy odor or taste.
Take at least **1000 mg** of fish oil daily. Take up to 4000 mg if you have arthritis, hypertension, heart disease, or high cholesterol.
Food sources of Omega-3 fats: walnuts, flaxseed, oily fish (salmon, tuna, sardines).