

The Six Pillars of Health Cheat Sheet

Overall

- Listen to your body!
- Moderation – making changes slowly may help to make the changes permanent. Be gentle with yourself.
- Find ways to reward yourself.
- Find supportive friends.
- Listen to the advice of your health professionals, but remember, you are the person who will live with the results.
- Think outside the box when you're looking for answers.
- If you feel suicidal, in the United States you can call the National Suicide Prevention Hotline at **1-800-273-TALK (8255)** or text **CONNECT** to **741741**.
- Quit smoking.

Healthy Eating

- Your diet may be affecting your [mood](#). Diet changes could also help you [fight Alzheimer's disease](#).
- Decide on your goal: losing weight, feeling better, or both. Look for diets that will help you achieve your goal.
- When you change your diet, get buy-in from the people you live with. Clear everything you've decided not to eat out of your home and office space so you won't be tempted.
- Keep a list of acceptable foods on your phone and chose groceries from that list.
- Keep ample supplies of acceptable snack foods in your car, home, and office.
- Do not go shopping when you're hungry. That is when you will be most tempted by foods from your old diet.
- There's a difference between a food allergy and a food intolerance (which is much harder to find). If you're intolerant, try an elimination diet and stop eating the most likely culprits for three weeks: wheat and gluten, refined sugar, soy, eggs, corn, nuts, yeast, caffeine, alcohol, monosodium glutamate, and xanthan or other gums. [Anti-inflammatory diets](#) often eliminate gluten, nightshade vegetables (i.e., tomatoes, potatoes, peppers, eggplant, and goji berries), red meat, and citrus. Gradually re-add foods until you can determine the foods that you're reacting to.
- Keep a food diary to track what you eat and how you feel after you eat it. There are apps available to help you, or just carry a notebook.
- If you drink coffee, try switching to one cup of green or black tea. Or, gradually add more decaf to your coffee over a couple of weeks until your coffee is completely decaffeinated to avoid caffeine withdrawal.
- Look for foods with simple ingredients. If you can't pronounce it, don't eat it. Avoid foods that are simply substituting one bad ingredient for another. Sugar in any form—stevia, agave, honey, maple syrup, coconut sugar, raw sugar, molasses, xylitol, corn syrup—is still sugar. Fruit contains sugar also. Even though it has other benefits such as fiber, be careful about the amount of fruit you eat.
- The [American Heart Association](#), suggests that, per day, men should limit added sugar to 36 grams (9 teaspoons), while women should eat no more than 25 grams (6 teaspoons). There are 4 calories in a gram of sugar. One 12-ounce soda might contain 8 teaspoons of sugar—130 calories—and it has no nutritive value.
- Stay away from artificial colors, flavors, preservatives, and sweeteners.
- Try adding herbal teas, such as peppermint or ginger, to your diet.
- Drink enough water!
- Reach for vegetables or fruit when you get a sugar craving.
- Mindful eating: [Chew each bite of food](#) until it's in tiny pieces (approximately 15-30 times). Not only does it help you to taste what you're eating, but it is the first step in properly digesting your food. It will also help metabolize your food more effectively and you will feel full sooner.
- Eat before you get ravenous.
- Eat your largest meal in the morning, a smaller meal for lunch, and your smallest meal for dinner. Allow 3 hours for your food to digest before you go to bed, and try to allow 12 hours to elapse after you eat your last meal until you eat breakfast.
- Take your supplements.

Active Living

Active living includes your posture and the activities you do to strengthen your bones and muscles. ***Motion is lotion!***

- If you can't walk for [20-30 minutes](#) at a time, try walking a couple of times a day, even if it's just for 10 minutes per session. Try to walk 2-3 miles at least 4 times a week. Listening to audio books or podcasts while exercising may make it easier.
- Posture – sit and stand up straight. Try a standing desk.
- Move hourly – Dr. Axe has suggestions for [exercise](#) you can do at work.

- Find active activities that you enjoy – ballroom dancing, martial arts, tai chi, yoga.

Restorative Sleep

Most adults need between 7-8 hours of restful sleep every night. Tips for getting better sleep:

- Turn off your phone and stop using all your electronic devices at least an hour before you plan to go to bed. If you have to use an electronic device, you can buy blue–light-blocking sunglasses on Amazon for about \$10.
- Try to go to bed at the same time every night (the earlier the better) and wake up at the same time every day, even on weekends.
- Make sure your bed and pillows are comfortable.
- Use a sleep mask or black-out curtains and turn off ambient light in your bedroom so your sleeping environment is totally dark.
- Lower the heat to below 70 at night.
- Keep activities like watching TV, eating, and reading out of the bedroom.
- If you wake up and can't go back to sleep, give yourself 20-30 minutes to fall back to sleep, then get up and read or do some other quiet activity until you feel sleepy.
- Herbal teas, such as chamomile, may help prepare you for sleep. If you drink dairy, warm milk could also help you sleep. You can even add a pinch of cinnamon or nutmeg to your warm milk.
- Take a warm bath.
- Eat a light meal for dinner.
- Try to get at least 10 minutes of early morning sunshine every day, but remember to protect your skin.
- Go to the park or the beach. Walk in a forest.
- Consider reading a book on sleeping better. I used Sarah Ballantyne's [Go to Bed](#). She has a [14-day Sleep Challenge](#) available on her site for support.

If you can't sleep after trying these tips, see your doctor to eliminate sleep apnea or other medical conditions.

Stress Reduction and Awareness

There are many ways to reduce stress. Here are a few:

- Try meditation, medical qi gong, yoga, or tai chi. Meditation can include [chanting](#), [sitting](#), and [walking](#), among others. Check out different types of meditation until you find the one you like. There are also apps you can download to learn meditation techniques.
- Acupuncture can really help, but it is not an instantaneous fix.
- Breathing techniques, such as the Box Breath, can be a quick stress reducer. Breath in for a count of 4, hold your breath to the count of 4, breathe out to a count of 6, and hold to a count of 4. Then start over and continue for about 5 minutes.
- Standing in the [power pose](#) for 2 minutes is a good thing to do before going to a stressful meeting.
- Keep a [gratitude journal](#).
- *The Artist's Way*, a book by Julia Cameron, is a great way to discover your creative self.
- Laugh! Play YouTube videos of The Muppets while you're cleaning house or washing the dishes. Sing silly songs in the car. Dance the Twist!
- Take up a relaxing hobby, like knitting.

Social Connection

Social connection includes the connections you have with yourself, other people, and the world around you. How can you reconnect or better connect?

- Smile at people; it might help you **and** someone else feel better.
- Try activities that are outside your comfort zone, such as mentoring or volunteering.
- Improv. (The best thing I learned at improv was "[Yes, and ...](#)")

Purpose

Find a purpose outside of work, such as helping the homeless, teaching someone how to do something important, or mentoring young people to go into STEM.