



Dear Reader,

We receive hundreds of email inquiries about all aspects of health and wellness and, unfortunately, are not able to answer all of them. There are three different options available to you as a member of our community seeking information.

First, [you can search our database](#), where I have previously answered a wide variety of questions about health, wellness, nutrition, and longevity.

Second, please read the attached article about the most important nutrition and lifestyle changes that everyone can make to gain or maintain optimum health. I encourage everyone to follow this program for at least 90 days, and then reevaluate their health concerns.

Third, because we want to give you personal care, [we offer private consultations](#) for individual health situations. Please make an appointment if you are interested in a second opinion, as well as natural, simple solutions to your health concerns.

I have so much to share with you.

Warmest wishes,



Dr. Mitra Ray

My Mission: Educating and Inspiring people about how plant-based whole foods create simple, sustainable, vitality.



The 10 Habits for Optimal Health

Every day, I'm approached by readers and audience members who want to know exactly what lifestyle changes they can make for optimal health. This is a huge question deserving of its own book, but in the short term I am happy to share what I believe to be the most critical practices that everyone can engage in to maintain or regain health and vitality. In my book *Do You Have the Guts to Be Beautiful*, I discuss many of these habits in greater detail. However, this list is an excellent place to begin, and I recommend that everyone follow these habits for at least 90 days to see just how amazing they can feel. It takes more than a couple of weeks to undo years of dietary and lifestyle habits that may have been harmful. Some people even go through a period of detox at first, when they feel worse before they feel better. This is actually good news because it means your body is flushing toxins and working hard to regain health. So stick with it for 90 days!

1. Take 10 deep breaths whenever you feel stressed. Slowly fill your lungs with air from the diaphragm up, and slowly exhale completely. Deep breathing is an excellent, fast, efficient way to relax, and it doesn't cost anything. When you breathe deeply, your brain receives the message to calm down, and the symptoms of being stressed, anxious, or worried (higher blood pressure, increased heart rate, shallow breathing) are generally alleviated. You can release tension and relax no matter where you are, and this contributes a great deal toward longevity.

2. Drink water, and plenty of it. You've heard it before, and it's true: everyone needs to drink plenty of water each day. The more you weigh, the more you need to drink, but a good rule of thumb for most adults is three liters per day. Coffee, tea, soda or other sweetened drinks (such as sports drinks), and fruit juice, don't count... if it's not pure



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water, it's not part of the three liters you need. In fact, caffeinated and sugary beverages require that you consume even more water, so be aware of your consumption of other liquids. For more information on what type of water is best, please refer to my book [*Do You Have the Guts to Be Beautiful?*](#)

3. Eat plant-based, whole-foods at every meal, and make it the biggest part of the meal. While changing the way you eat can be daunting at first, there are truly delicious options available to a person following a plant-based diet. It is important to eat whole-foods, which are foods that haven't been processed and are not cooked (raw), or are lightly cooked. Fresh fruits and vegetables, legumes, and whole grains should make up the bulk of your diet. Nuts and seeds are also necessary, but the volume should be no more than a handful a day. Ideally, you should eat animal products sparingly: less than once a week.

4. Get at least 8 hours of sleep each day, and maintain a consistent bed time and wake time at least 6 days a week. I cannot overstate the importance of sleep for maintaining and regaining health. Your immune system will not function at optimum levels without adequate amounts of sleep, so you can't fight off common colds and other bugs, let alone more significant ailments. Additionally, sleep plays a role in such varied health issues as obesity, anxiety, depression, stroke, and cardiovascular health. Ideally, you should get at least 8 hours of uninterrupted sleep each night, and more is okay when you need to make up for lost sleep. If you're someone who wakes in the middle of the night and cannot easily return to sleep, it's useful to remain as still and peaceful as possible. Consider meditation or other relaxation techniques (such as forward bends) so that, even if you're not asleep, your mind and body are able to rest. Catnaps are useful too – just make sure that daytime naps aren't part of what's keeping you up at night.



5. Eat a clinically validated, whole-food based supplement. In addition to eating foods in their whole-food form, you should also eat a whole food based supplement. In the toxic environment that we live in today, we need more antioxidants than we are able to get from our food in order to offset the damage that is being done to our bodies. Juice Plus+® is whole food based nutrition, including juice powder concentrates from a rainbow variety of fruits, vegetables, and grains. [Clinical studies published in peer-reviewed scientific journals](#) have demonstrated that Juice Plus+® delivers key phytonutrients that are absorbed by the body, reduces oxidative stress, helps support a healthy immune system, helps protect DNA, and positively impacts key indicators of cardiovascular wellness.

Generally speaking, vitamins, fats (such as fish or flax oil), and many supplements are not healthy because they've been isolated and removed from their whole-food form. In some cases, under the supervision of a well-trained health care professional, isolated supplementation for a short period can be of benefit. For the long-term, there are tens of thousands of nutrients in whole foods, and our bodies know how to use all of them. So whole food supplementation is key; a multi-vitamin pill contains only a handful of these nutrients and in this form, they may harm us.

6. Eat processed foods sparingly, less than once a week if possible. As a rule of thumb, all packaged foods are suspect. People don't appreciate this because the convenience of packaged foods is so very tempting. But, generally speaking, in order to create foods that sit on a shelf, something has to happen to that food – it may be over-processed; it may have preservatives added, which are toxic to the body and make us retain extra fat and water along [with those toxins](#); it may have been irradiated, in which case it has very little



nutritional value left. And my rule is that if the food is such that no self-respecting bacteria would touch it, why should you? That is, if it doesn't rot, then it has no life-giving value.

7. Make breakfast and lunch your biggest meals, preferably between 10 am and 4 pm when your digestion is strongest. **Try to eat these two meals at the same times each day** so that your digestive organs expect to go to work each day at the same time. This helps tremendously with proper digestion and absorption of nutrients.

8. Get outside and move a little bit each day. Exercise is important, but not in the ways that we've traditionally thought. A bit of fresh air and time to let go of the day's stresses is very valuable, and I recommend taking a thirty-minute walk each day, for starters. I'm not talking about a power-walk, however. Until you are getting adequate nutrition, vigorous exercise can actually do more harm than good, so make sure you're following the food and nutrition recommendations if you're engaging in more strenuous activities. I also highly recommend restorative yoga poses as a way to reconnect with your body and focus your mind. A good weekly yoga class is an excellent way to learn proper form, and you can tailor a shorter practice that you perform daily, or whenever you feel the need, at home.

An added and important benefit of regular outdoor activity is that it provides exposure to sunlight. Vitamin D3 is really a hormone, and not a vitamin found in plants. It is also known as cholecalciferol and is produced by your body when you are exposed to sunlight. Many people have been taught to be sun-phobic in recent times. This attitude deprives them of precious sunshine and critical vitamin D3 production. Vitamin D3 plays a critical role in the maintenance of several organ systems, and D deficiency has been linked to cancer, cognitive impairment, high blood pressure, autoimmune diseases, and Type 1 diabetes,



amongst other health problems. 20 minutes of direct sunlight on the arms and legs a few times a week is what most people need. Proper nutrition will allow your body to make use of vitamin D stores, so if you live someplace where it's gray for part of the year, take advantage of any available sunlight, and try to be diligent about getting outside regularly during the sunny months. And be sure you're following a plant-based, whole-food diet. In some cases, supplementation may be necessary, such as for cancer-patients and people suffering from chronic pain. For more info, [click here](#).

9. Start each day with a Green Drink. Every morning, my husband, daughters, and I start each day with a big smoothie. It includes freshly ground flax seeds (not flax oil – you want the whole seed), ground milk thistle (for liver health), fresh or frozen fruit (whatever we have around, and anything that's beginning to get overripe), and plenty of dark leafy greens. Spinach, chard, and kale are excellent choices. Raw spinach has very little flavor, so for those people who aren't big fans of greens, that's the best place to start. My standard green drink recipe is below, but you can substitute your favorite fruits and vegetables, or experiment with savory green drinks as well.

10. Think good, healthy thoughts. Just as we are what we eat, our thoughts define our reality. If we're focusing on negative, angry, limiting thoughts, we become negative, angry, limited people. Focusing on what matters most and thinking positively is more than just New Age mumbo-jumbo: happy people live longer than unhappy people!



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Green Drink Recipe

When I make smoothies, I use a **Vita-mix**, which is a super-powered blender that can puree whole foods, including skins, stems, stalks, and other bits that are nutrient dense. However, this can also be made in a food processor or regular kitchen blender. The recipe is open to experimentation — try other greens and fruits as well.

I like using frozen banana, and frozen red, seedless grapes. Also, it helps to use chilled, filtered water. Making it cold makes it taste better and stay fresh longer. You can refrigerate up to 24 hours, but I like to drink it when it's at its most fresh.

Makes 1 Serving

- 3 large kale leaves, chopped
- 2 bananas-very ripe, frozen or fresh
- 1 fleshy fruit, chopped (apricot, peach, mango, etc), frozen or fresh
- 1/4c flax seeds
- 1 tsp milk thistle
- Enough filtered water to make it as liquid as you like

Put flax and milk thistle in blender. Blend until powder-like. Add one cup of water and continue blending. Add fruits and vegetables, and then slowly add additional water while blending. Blend until liquefied, or until smoothie has reached desired consistency.