

[IMAGE]

Healthy Living in a Hectic World

Self-Care Strategies to Fit Your Busy Lifestyle

By Dr. Jeffrey Tucker

If you're looking to get motivated to stay in shape for a lifetime, but are struggling to find the time or energy, look no further than Jack LaLanne for inspiration. Last summer, I had the pleasure of meeting Jack - I was teaching a class at the same seminar he was giving a talk at. Prior to hearing him speak, I had no idea of all his incredible accomplishments. For example, he swam from Alcatraz Island to Sausalito (approximately five miles) - handcuffed! He performed push-ups for 1 1/2 hours continuously. He swam an incredible distance (not five miles, mind you) *while towing 70 boats with a person in each boat!* When I met him, he was 93, clear-headed, articulate, had good posture and looked fit.

Jack's daily morning routine still includes two hours of exercise: He lifts weights for an hour and then goes in the pool for an hour. He also takes lots and lots of vitamins and minerals. Jack begins each and every day with 50 grams of soy protein. He is not completely vegetarian, but he doesn't eat chicken, red meat or white sugar. He gets most of his protein from egg whites, soy protein and occasionally fish. Jack's diet is not a low-carb diet, but he does stick strictly to natural grains such as brown rice and whole wheat. He also eats at least 10 fresh, raw vegetables a day. He hasn't had dessert since 1929 and never eats between meals or after 9 p.m.

Lady on Bike - Copyright â Stock Photo / Register Mark At the class he was teaching, Jack said something I thought was very powerful, yet so simple: "Exercise is king, nutrition is queen, and if you put them together you build a kingdom!" Let's talk about how you can build your own "kingdom" even in the midst of your hectic, stressful life. Like Jack, I believe anyone can improve their physical condition if they really want to and are willing to do something about it.

CHALLENGE Your Body

Do some form of intense exercise every day: Exercise intensity is more important than exercise duration. Higher levels of physical fitness reduce the risk of heart disease and early death. Try to achieve a burn rate of greater than 10 calories per minute. If you go to the gym two to three times a week and spend 30-60

minutes per session, you can focus on 10-minute high-intensity sessions on your off days (see routines below). Our bodies are designed to move in different ranges and multiple planes of motion on a regular basis. Today, because of computers and prolonged sitting, we don't get a variety of movements like our ancestors once did.

Tip: If you take 20-30 minute walks for your exercise, be intense about it - walk faster than you're used to. Raise the cardiovascular value of walking by lifting and pumping your arms up overhead and back down to shoulder height. Carry a 1-, 2- or 3-pound free weight or kettlebell in your hands while walking. Be sure to raise the hands fully overhead. Use the interval training concepts while doing this exercise: pump the arms overhead for a minute, then keep them at your sides for a minute, then repeat. Keep alternating between the two maneuvers as you continue walking.

The 10-minute total-body workout: This entire workout will take you about 10 minutes. Do each exercise for 20-30 seconds, rest for 20 seconds, and then start the next exercise. Continue the circuit of 20-30 seconds of exercise, followed by 20 seconds of rest, until you've done all eight exercises. This is one "circuit." After you complete the circuit, rest 90 seconds (longer if you feel you need it). Then do a second round.

Sample Workout #1

1. *Body-weight chair squat:* Stand with your hands behind your head. Sit back at the hips and bend your knees to squat down. Squeeze your glutes and push back up.
2. *Plank pose:* Place your forearms on the floor (shoulder-width apart) and straighten your legs behind you so your feet line up with each other. Lift your hips and torso off the floor. Focus your eyes on the floor beneath you so your head is in neutral alignment with your spine.
3. *Back extension:* While lying on your stomach with your arms at your sides (palms up), inhale and lift your head and torso up off the floor into a back bend. Your feet stay down. Go as high upward as you can. Hold the up pose for a moment; as you exhale, lower back down.
4. *Jumping jacks*
5. *Forward lunge with band pushes:* Take a large step forward with one leg and push both arms straight out in front of you. When your front thigh is parallel to the floor, hold for 2 seconds and return. Repeat with your other leg and arms.
6. *Dumbbell or band biceps curl to an overhead press:* Stand holding a pair of dumbbells with an

underhand grip (palms facing forward) at arm's length next to your thighs. Without moving your shoulders forward, move your arms slightly back behind you. Curl the weights up to your shoulders, then rotate your arms as you press the weights overhead so that your palms face forward at the top of the move. Pause for 2 seconds, then return to the starting position.

7. *Sprint in place*

8. *Lying Swiss-Ball Triceps Extension:* Grab a pair of dumbbells and lie face-down with your chest on a Swiss ball with your arms bent 90 degrees. Keeping your elbows and upper arms stationary, straighten your arms. Pause for a count of two, then slowly return to the starting position.

Lady running upstairs - Copyright © Stock Photo / Register Mark **Sample Workout #2**

1. *Squat with alternating arm pull:* Stand with exercise bands with handles in your hands attached to a low point. Sit back at the hips and bend your knees to squat down. Squeeze your glutes and push back up. Once up, pull the bands into a row.
2. *Back extension*
3. *Step ups:* Stand facing a step or bench or sturdy chair. Place one foot on the bench and push down through your heel to lift your other leg up to the step and drive the knee up. Return to the starting position and finish the reps with one leg before switching legs and repeating the exercise.
4. *T push-up:* With hands placed shoulder-width apart on the floor, do a pushup. When your arms are straight, lift your right hand and rotate to the right so you raise your right arm straight up over your shoulder and your body forms a "T." Bring the arm back to the floor. Do another push-up, and then alternate sides.
5. *Mountain climbers:* Get in a push-up position, but with your feet staggered on two good-sized hand towels. Make sure you are on a surface that will allow the towels to move back and forth under your feet. Move your feet back and forth (bring one knee in toward your body, then the other) as fast as you can under control. Do this for as long as possible, increasing the amount of time you can perform the exercise to failure.
6. *Swimmer's lat pull:* Use an anchored exercise band. With feet shoulder-width apart and knees slightly bent, lean over at the hip - don't roll your back - until your upper body is almost parallel with the floor. Extend your arms in front of you and grip the band handles. Draw your arms down and extend them in back of you, until they are at hip level. Reverse the motion and repeat.
7. *Backward lunge:* Stand with your feet together, facing and holding exercise bands with handles in each

hand. Move your left foot backward and pull the handles into a row with elbows at your side. Keeping your head and chest up, bend both knees to lower your body. Return to the starting position. Alternate legs.

8. *Single-leg Romanian deadlift*: Stand on one foot. Keeping the arch in your spine, push your hips back and lower your hands. Press your heel into the floor to return to standing. Do equal amounts on both legs.

FEED Your Body

Eat the right amount of calories: We all want to avoid getting sick. In order to maintain our immune system, we need proper amounts of calories, especially from protein. When your protein and calorie intake are deficient, your body's priorities become keeping your heart beating and your lungs pumping (functions needed for our body to survive) while your immune system is depressed, leaving you susceptible to infection.

Too few calories will also lead to weight loss, which generally isn't a good thing if you're already at a healthy weight. When you monitor your body weight on the scale, it shouldn't move more than a pound or two in either direction in a given week. If you're losing weight, slowly add some healthy foods such as lean proteins, vegetables and mixed nuts. If you're gaining, cut back a bit on your portions.

Eat a variety of colorful vegetables: Nine servings of vegetables are recommended per day. (If you can do 10, like Jack does, go for it!) I usually recommend no more than two to three fruits per day. Boost the health benefits by eating different colors of produce. This is called the "technicolor" plan. Unless you're following the most stringent first stage of the Atkins diet, you should be able to consume 60-120 grams of carbs a day (depending on your weight and exercise level). Long-lived, healthy people eat a lot of plant foods.

Vegetables supply fiber, antioxidants, flavonoids, and indoles. You are going to start hearing more and more about phytochemicals and phytonutrients being used as disease-fighting foods.

Lady eating salad - Copyright â Stock Photo / Register Mark *Eat after you exercise*: The right amount of exercise enhances immune function, boosts energy and can elevate your mood. Too many people are doing the same workout over and over without any progress being made. You are either losing fat or you are not. You are either adding muscle or you are not. You are either improving your looks or looking worn out. You need to make sure your muscle system has all it needs to repair itself from vigorous workouts. What you eat after your workout will help build muscle. Here are some good examples of foods to eat immediately (no more than 60 minutes) after a workout:

- 2 slices whole grain toast and 2 tablespoons peanut butter
- Apple and 1 cup low-fat cottage cheese*
- 1 cup fruit yogurt and 1/4 cup granola*
- 2-egg omelet with 1 cup fresh vegetables, 1 whole-wheat English muffin*
- String cheese and 1 ounce almonds*
- 1/4 cup nuts and an orange
- Hard-boiled egg and a slice of 12-grain bread*
- Whole-wheat pita and 1/2 cup canned tuna*

*These food combinations provide higher quality protein (containing all nine essential amino acids).

Additional healthy suggestions include: 1) *Eat more cold-water fish* like salmon for the benefits of the omega-3s. These lower the risk of heart disease, lower blood pressure, improve mood and concentration, and are good for the brain. 2) *Enjoy the sun* for at least 10-15 minutes, three times a week. Some of the longest-lived people on the planet live in sunny climates. Sun boosts vitamin D levels, which improves mood and enhances levels of cancer protection, and improves bone-strength. 3) *Drink red wine or eat grapes*. The resveratrol in dark grapes is being studied for its effect on extending life, which it seems to do for almost every species studied. 4) *Eliminate sugar*. Sugar's effect on hormones, mood, immunity, weight, and possibly even cancer cells is enormous - and it's all negative. To the extent that you can remove sugar from your diet, you will be adding years to your life and life to your years. 5) *Keep a food diary and exercise log*. The more food records people keep, the more weight they seem to lose.

REST Your Body

Insufficient sleep depresses the immune system, making you susceptible to colds, upper-respiratory infections, low energy, weight gain, a tired appearance, and other complaints like feeling irritable. Even minor sleep disturbances (getting one hour less than usual) can cause a significant drop in the immune system. If you are nodding off during the day, you need more sleep.

Make sure you are not drinking too much caffeine to compensate for a lack of sleep. If your coffee consumption is excessive, it could be messing with your sleep patterns and also sabotaging your immune system. Consuming more than four cups of regular coffee a day is a definite red flag.

Proper sleep hygiene involves getting uninterrupted sleep, in the dark, without the television on, in a relaxing environment. To recharge and replenish your body, strive for 8-9 hours sleep every night. Start by going to bed an hour early, and ask friends and family not to call you after that time. Also don't bring work into the bedroom. If some or all of the following apply, you're not sleeping enough, eating enough, or both, for the amount of training you're doing:

- You're exhausted most of the time, but you have trouble sleeping at night.
- You're achy all over.
- You feel touchy and irritable.
- You're getting weaker in the gym. You feel weaker than your previous workout.
- You're injuring yourself (sprains, pulled muscles, and so on) frequently in small ways at the gym.

Avoid Medication

Salad - Copyright â Stock Photo / Register Mark Heartburn and laxative remedies are some of the most common medications people purchase over the counter. This suggests that diet and lifestyle are causing symptoms that lead to self-medication. Over-the-counter treatments rarely address the source of the discomfort; they only mask the symptoms for a short time. A chronically inflamed gut ultimately may play a role in everything from gastritis, allergies, skin rashes, hemorrhoids and cancer to autoimmune disorders. Good gastrointestinal health is a critical component in reducing the state of stress in your body. If you often feel a burning sensation in your stomach and/or are regularly taking OTC medications, get it checked out.

Tip: *Consume* a daily dose of probiotics. You can supplement with probiotics or eat yogurt, particularly probiotic-infused varieties that have high concentrations of *L. acidophilus*.

The goal of this comprehensive exercise, diet and lifestyle program is to get you in the best shape of your life without spending considerable *time* doing it - because after all, how much of *that* do you have these days? It still takes a concerted effort on your part to take responsibility for your lifelong health. It goes way beyond how you look; it's about how you feel and about making sure you stay healthy and happy for years - maybe even as long as good old Jack. So, are you up for the challenge?

Jeffrey Tucker, DC, is a doctor of chiropractic and rehabilitation specialist who integrates chiropractic, exercise and nutrition into his practice in West Los Angeles. You can sign up for his newsletter at

DrJeffreyTucker.com.

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