

# Ten Secrets of 100% Healthy People - your 2017 Commandments

Patrick Holford 20 Dec 2016

Some people rarely get sick and are always fizzing with energy; they don't gain weight or lose their memory. So what's their secret? When I carried out Britain's biggest ever health and diet survey, completed by more than 55,000 respondents, the results showed that to be super-healthy, all you need to do is follow ten simple rules.

*Make them your resolutions – and look forward to a happier, healthier new year.*

## 1. PERFECT YOUR DIGESTION

How efficiently you digest food affects your state of mind, and determines your longevity, and whether you feel energised or tired. The secret to healthy digestion lies in eating the right foods and breaking them down properly. In my survey, those who ate fresh fruit, seeds, nuts, fish and vegetables reported the healthiest digestion. Many foods, such as fruit and vegetables, contain enzymes that help them to be digested, but this only happens if the food is eaten raw or lightly cooked.

Chewing food well makes a big difference. Enzymes in saliva break down carbohydrates, so keep chewing until the particles are well broken down. One myth is that you can't digest meals of both protein and carbohydrate. This isn't true. What is true is that protein is digested in the stomach, a process that takes an hour or two, whereas carbs are digested lower down in the small intestine. If you eat a high-protein meal and follow it with a fruit salad, the fruit may get trapped in the stomach and start to ferment. Thus, it's generally better to eat soft fruit as snacks, and not with meals.

## 2. BALANCE YOUR BLOOD SUGAR

When your blood sugar is low, you feel tired and hungry. If you refuel with fast-energy-releasing high-GL (glycaemic load) carbohydrates (sweet or refined foods), you cause your blood sugar to rise rapidly. Your body doesn't need so much sugar, so it dumps the excess into storage as fat. Your blood sugar level lowers again, and you crave something sweet, or a pick-me-up such as a caffeinated drink. This is how you enter the vicious cycle of yo-yoing blood sugar that leads to weight gain.

To balance your blood sugar, eat fewer fast-release foods (sweets, cakes and biscuits) and more slow-release foods (fresh fruit and vegetables, wholegrain carbohydrates).

You also need to graze rather than gorge. Eat breakfast, lunch and supper – and introduce mid-morning and mid-

afternoon snacks. This provides your body with an even supply of fuel.

Another tip is a daily spoonful of cinnamon. A Scandinavian study found that 6g of cinnamon – about 2 teaspoons – may slow down digestion in the stomach. This would effectively ‘slow-release’ the carbohydrates in a meal.

### 3. SHARPEN YOUR MIND

Do you wonder how your brain and body’s chemistry manages to stay in balance? How it makes insulin when your blood sugar is high, or adrenalin when you’re stressed – two of thousands of vital ‘communication’ chemicals? Behind the scenes, there’s a process called methylation that is the key to feeling connected, happy, alert and motivated.

How good you are at methylation is indicated by the level of a substance in your blood called homocysteine.

Keeping your homocysteine low, indicating that you are able to rapidly adapt and respond to life’s stresses, is the third secret of 100% health. A low homocysteine score means a low risk of strokes, heart attacks, pregnancy problems, memory decline, depression, mental illness, osteoporosis and many other health issues.

There are four factors that raise homocysteine: stress, smoking, drinking coffee and not exercising, as well as having a diet low in B vitamins, especially folic acid. And

it's relatively easy for everyone to improve what I call our 'methyl IQ' through simple changes to diet and lifestyle. [Read this report](#) on how to lower homocysteine to find out what to do.

#### 4. EAT ESSENTIAL FATS

Thirty years ago 'fat' was a demon: high in calories, bad for your heart and the cause of weight gain. Today we know that omega-3 fats are essential for good health, acting as natural painkillers and more potent antidepressants than conventional drugs. On top of this they are your skin's best friend, keeping it soft and moisturised. Omega-3 fats are found in colder climate nut or seed oils, such as flaxseeds and walnuts. They are also found in oily fish. The decline in our oily fish consumption, largely because of fat phobia, has fuelled an epidemic of omega-3 deficiency.

In my survey, I found that a person's chances of being in optimal health go up by nearly two thirds for those consuming three or more servings of oily fish (herrings, sardines, mackerel, salmon, tuna and trout) a week, compared to two a week.

#### 5. INCREASE THE ANTI-AGEING ANTIOXIDANTS

The entire process of ageing, from your first wrinkle to worsening eyesight, depends on oxidation. Put simply, we make energy by combusting carbohydrate with oxygen.

The net result is our own exhaust fumes called oxidants. This is the stuff that rusts metal and, ultimately, rusts us. Bruce Ames, professor of biochemistry and molecular biology at the University of California, and one of the world's leading experts on anti-ageing, was among the first scientists to propose that an optimal intake of antioxidant nutrients is the key to living a long and healthy life.

So where can you get your antioxidants from? One piece of very good news is that dark chocolate is very rich in two antioxidant flavonoids. But most chocolate, even the organic stuff, is full of sugar. The best is my [GLTY® Organic Chocolate with Cherry, Almond and Chia](#). It's only 4% sugar and totally delicious.

And there's a reason why we encourage you to eat a rainbow of fruit and vegetables as generally, where you find the most colour and flavour, you will also find the highest antioxidant levels. Aim for five to ten servings daily of a range of fruit and vegetables to keep your intake high.

## 6. WATER IS YOUR MOST VITAL NUTRIENT

Water is freely available, but most of us just don't drink enough. You need eight glasses a day – more if you live in a hot climate. If you only drink when you're thirsty, your body is already in a state of dehydration. Not drinking enough makes you tired and dries out your skin and your

joints. It gives you headaches and reduces mental ability. It's also a major cause of constipation.

Hunger is often confused with thirst, so when you're hungry, drink a glass of water. Your body retains more water if you drink little and often. It retains less if drunk with sugary drinks, or tea or coffee.

Here are some simple steps you can take to increase your water intake:

- Start by drinking a glass of fresh water when you get up in the morning.
- Ask for a glass of water to go with your coffee and tea in cafés – if you're still having them!
- Drink a glass of water with each meal.
- Carry a bottle filled with filtered water whenever you leave the house.
- During exercise, drink at 10 to 15 minute intervals.
- Always drink water when you have an alcoholic drink.

## 7. THE CHI FACTOR

Energy isn't just about eating the right food and exercising. There's another factor called chi in China, ki in Japan and prana in Indian traditions. Chi – which broadly corresponds to 'energy flow' – has been recognised for years in the East, but it is rarely included in the health agenda in the West. This is largely because it can't be measured by conventional medical science.

However, the fact that you can't measure something doesn't mean that it doesn't exist.

These ancient systems of exercise such as t'ai chi, qigong or yoga have been designed to balance the emotions, still the mind and rejuvenate the body, by removing the blockages caused by accumulated tension. Although you can, technically, learn chi exercises from books and DVDs, it is far better to have direct instruction. This is because success depends on being in the right position, with the correct breathing pattern – which a teacher can specifically show you.

A survey of our 101 top health scorers shows that 50% practised some form of chi-generating exercise.

Psychocalisthenics is a sequence of 23 movement and breathing exercises that activate the flow of vital energy through all muscle groups, organs, glands and tissues. It is performed in the Arica Daily Routine and during many Arica trainings. We are holding a Psychocalisthenics Workshop on [Saturday 11th March in Dublin](#) and [Saturday 18th March in London](#).

## 8. KEEP FIT, STRONG AND SUPPLE

One of the myths about exercise is that you have to put in a lot of effort to reap any benefit. In fact, simply increasing your energy expenditure from physical activity by 1,000 kilocalories a week – which is the equivalent of just 15 minutes of jogging, cycling or swimming or 30

minutes of walking a day – is associated with cutting your risk of premature death by about 20 per cent.

Incorporate exercise into your daily schedule by walking the children to and from school, or turning household chores into an aerobic work-out. Get a pedometer and monitor your daily steps for a week. Aim for 4,000 steps in the first week and 6,000 in the second week. For most people the latter is around three miles walking a day. When you have achieved this, aim for 10,000 steps a day. Unless you have an active job, such as waitressing or nursing, it will be difficult to log this just by daily activity, so you may have to include a longer walk or run in your routine.

My survey results showed that 54 per cent of those with an optimum cardiovascular health rating, exercise for three or more hours a week, compared to one per cent of those with a poor rating.

## 9. GET YOUR PAST OUT OF YOUR PRESENT

We only develop as human beings through relationships, and developing emotional intelligence is what allows us to interact healthily with others.

My survey of 101 top health scorers shows that 85 per cent consider state of mind to be extremely important for health, and 83 per cent have a close circle of family and friends.



Extreme emotions affect heart function, depress the immune system and inhibit digestion. I remember one client who suffered from terrible irritable bowel syndrome (IBS). Every nutritional treatment I gave her failed to make any difference. Then one day she confessed, for the first time, an act of infidelity. From that day on her IBS disappeared.

Everyone accumulates emotional tension. However, how you consciously experience your emotions makes all the difference. When you need to express an emotion, take a breath and say clearly: ‘I am feeling xyz [for example, angry, frustrated, sad] and that’s OK.’

Take another breath and say this two more times until you sense a different feeling. Allow the feeling, and yourself, to ‘be’, without judgment.

## 10. FIND YOUR PURPOSE

Having a sense of purpose is one of the defining qualities in those who scored highly in my questionnaire. Your sense of purpose changes throughout life. For example, taking care of your family may give you your feeling of purpose. Many people find purpose through work that feels important and meaningful. For most of us, being of service to others works, either by supporting causes that we feel passionate about or simply helping people we meet. And don’t forget your own self-development – the purpose of becoming the best you can be.