

Getting Started:

6 Steps to Kick-off Your Healthy Lifestyle

By: Louis S. Bezich

So you're a fifty-plus man who's motivated to start living healthy. You used our lifestyle questionnaire from the last edition of *50andBeyond.com* to measure your position on the spectrum of healthy behaviors. **Now what? What are the most important steps to safe and sound practices? Where do you start?**

Congratulations! You're the Exception

Before I tell you what the experts say let me offer my congratulations! You're the exception. Why? Too many of our fifty-plus brothers don't live healthy, especially compared to women. According to the U.S. Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality, American men are 24 percent less likely than women to have visited a doctor within the past year and 22 percent more likely to have neglected their cholesterol tests.

According to a Commonwealth Fund study, 33% of men did not have a regular doctor to go to when they were in need of medical advice and 60% of men over 50 years had not been screened for colon cancer within the previous year. 24% of men said they would wait as long as possible before seeing a doctor if they were feeling pain or ill. And a National Center for Health Statistics study says that 52 percent of women took at least one prescription drug in the past 30 days versus 43 percent of men.

See what I mean? These statistics should keep you motivated. Ok, let's make sure you kick-off your campaign for healthy living the right way.

6 Starting Steps

To get some insight on where to start a healthy lifestyle I posed the question to the guy that I entrust with my own well-being, Dr. Daniel Hyman. He is Board Certified in Internal Medicine, Head of the Division of Internal Medicine at Cooper University Health Care and serves as an Associate Professor at the Cooper Medical School of Rowan University. Dr. Hyman summarized his advice in six simple steps.

1. See your physician for an evaluation.
2. With physician approval, embark on an exercise program that includes:
 - Stretching before every work-out.
 - A slow starting routine that includes aerobic exercise like biking or a treadmill, and sensible weight training which builds up to a thirty to forty-minute workout, five times a week.
3. Eat sensibly, adopt a low fat diet that cuts the starches and focuses on lean meats.
4. Limit alcohol and caffeine intake
5. Avoid sugary drinks
6. Get adequate sleep.



Dr. Hyman's advice is supported by the Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality. According to their publication, *Men: Stay Healthy at 50+*, you should: (1) get the screenings you need, (2) get preventative medicines if you need them, and (3) take steps to good health which includes: physical activity, getting to a healthy weight and staying there, being tobacco free and having no more than two drinks per day if you are 65 or younger and no more than one drink per day if you are older than 65 (a standard drink is one 12-ounce bottle of beer or wine cooler, one 5-ounce glass of wine, or 1.5 ounces of 80-proof distilled spirits).

How do you sustain this regimen?

The healthy men I surveyed anchor their healthy practices with a good dose of routines, habits and rituals. 95% have day-to-day routines that incorporate these practices and 83% rated them as important to sustaining their behavior. Check out my previous articles in *50and Beyond.com* for tips on building your own healthy habits. **50**

You're now equipped to start your climb up the mountain of good health. Safe journey my friend.

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The contents of this article represent the research and opinions of the author and do not reflect the positions of Cooper University Health Care or Rutgers University.