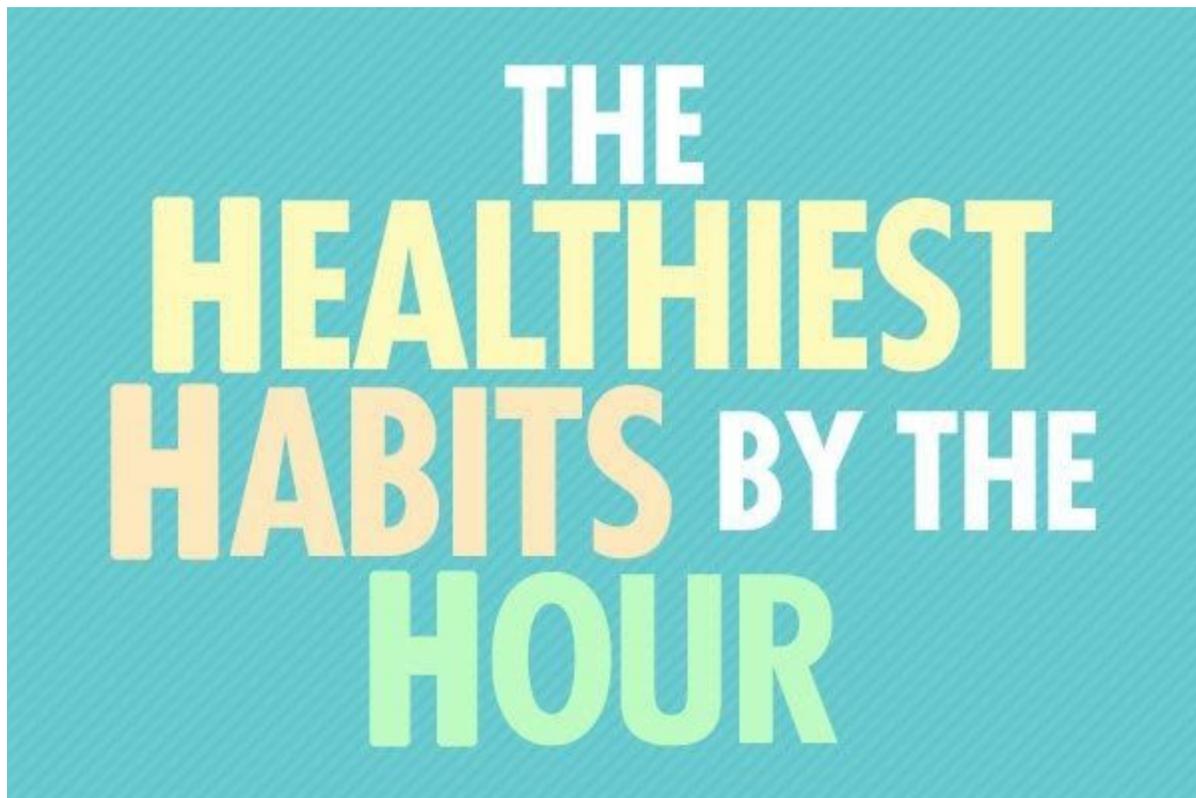# How to Have the Healthiest Day of Your Life

By Rosa Heyman | Nov 19, 2014

Follow this hour-by-hour playbook to stay energized, organized, and focused all day, everyday.

6 a.m. Sleep a little longer

"Getting enough quality shut-eye affects not only your metabolism but also the quality of your day," says registered dietitian Laura Cipullo, author of *Healthy Habits*. Rather than hitting the snooze button in the morning, set your alarm for an hour later. "You need adequate sleep to think clearly, problem solve, rest your brain, decrease hunger, and even lower your blood sugar," Cipullo adds.

7 a.m. Exercise

Jump-start your day by exercising in the morning—a habit that will rev both your metabolic and cognitive engines. Karen Ansel M.S., co-author of *The Calendar Diet*, explains, "not only are morning workouts more likely to happen than hitting the gym after a long day at work, they boost your mood and energy level for the entire day." She suggests laying out your exercise clothes and sneakers the night before so that you are less likely to bail come morning. As for choosing spinning, Pilates or a kickboxing class: "Morning movement should be a kind that you love so that you actually get out of bed and keep on doing it," suggests Cipullo.

8 a.m. Eat a high-protein breakfast

Sure, you've heard that breakfast is the most important meal of the day. But why? Studies show that people who skip breakfast have a four and a half times greater risk of obesity compared to those who regularly have a morning meal. Cipullo recommends eating a substantial assortment, such as toast with natural peanut butter and a serving of Greek yogurt, within an hour or so of waking up. "High-protein, higher-calorie breakfasts result in lower blood sugar, decreased insulin resistance, and decreased production of the hormone that stimulates appetite," she says.

9 a.m. Brush your teeth when you get to work

You've worked out, had a protein-packed meal, and made it to the office. Now, attend to your teeth. "If you brush too close to when you drink your morning coffee, the acidity may weaken your enamel," warns Cipullo. The American Dental Association recommends waiting 30 minutes after consuming something acidic before taking out your toothbrush.

10 a.m. Skip your snack

"Snacks are helpful for weight loss when they keep you full between meals, but breakfast and lunch are so close together that you really don't need the extra food to keep you from overeating at lunchtime," says Ansel. She cites a 2011 study that found that women who didn't snack midmorning lost more weight than those who did. So save your snack for sometime between lunch and dinner, which often fall at least six hours apart.

11 a.m. Plan your lunch

"The closer to lunchtime it gets, the hungrier you become, and therefore the more likely you are to make a rash decision," says registered dietitian Keri Gans. That's why she suggests that around this time, you stop what you're doing and take a moment to think about the healthy meal you'll have to fuel your body. "Then, 100-percent commit yourself to sticking with the plan," she adds.

12 p.m. Eat lunch

Mealtime! If you can, step away from your work and other distractions to take the time to enjoy your lunch. "It's easier in theory than in practice, but instead of eating so quickly that you don't even realize you just ate, chew slowly and savor every bite, so that you feel satiated and satisfied with your meal," says Gans. Ansel adds that it's not a bad idea to eat lunch a bit earlier than you might be accustomed to. "If you put lunch off until you're starving, you'll be more likely to grab whatever is easiest rather than what's healthiest."

1 p.m. Drink some water

If you feel tired or headachy at the beginning of the afternoon, you might be dehydrated, warns registered dietitian Kate Scarlata. "Always keep a glass or bottle of water handy to help keep your body well-hydrated and your mind in the game," she says. It's easy to confuse hunger with thirst, so if you feel hungry such a short time after a meal, there's a good chance that what you need isn't actually more food.

2 p.m. Have a cup of coffee

Good news for java junkies—that cup of Joe is actually good for you. "Coffee

is full of disease-preventing antioxidants, plus it's been shown to improve mood and concentration, and help protect against type 2 diabetes and Parkinson's disease," says Ansel. This is the ideal time for your second cup, since the caffeine will help you perform better throughout the afternoon, but will be out of your system early enough that it won't keep you from falling asleep at night.

3 p.m. Take a walk

Whether or not you work in an office, many of us are glued to our computers or devices all day long, which is why it's so important to get up and move. "Midday exercise will get your blood flowing, boost your energy, and may even ward off depression," says Scarlata (http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/10788675%20). Since time tends to get away from us, set an alarm on your phone to remind you to take a 10-minute walk around the block, the parking lot, up and down the building's stairs, whatever.

4 p.m. Have a simple snack

Experiencing a mid-afternoon slump is not unusual. "If you feel a bit irritable, you might be experiencing a dip in your levels of serotonin, the brain neurotransmitter associated with well-being and calmness," says Scarlata. The next time you feel your mood beginning to fall, grab a starchy snack such as a handful of pretzels or a few graham crackers—carbs have been shown to increase levels of serotonin in the brain.

5 p.m. Cook (actually!) dinner

Making a meal at home with as many fresh ingredients as possible can truly improve your family's health—less fried foods and trans fat, and a more balanced plate. But figuring out what to cook can be stressful and time consuming, which is why Ansel suggests designating one afternoon a week to plan and shop for several 20- to 30-minute dinners. Registered dietitian and SuperKids Nutrition founder Melissa Halas-Liang adds that, when possible, dance while you cook! Not only might a little salsa action make dinner prep more fun, "this non-exercise activity can add up to a big daily difference in expending calories."

6 p.m. Sit down together at the table

When you finally sit down to dinner, take the time to truly enjoy mealtime. "Use your evening meal as an opportunity to savor the food and appreciate being with your family," says Halas-Liang. Eating dinner together at home together can improve your children's nutrition, have positive effects on portion control, and has even been shown to relieve stress.

7 p.m. Don't sit down

As tempting as the couch may be at this time of day, try to force yourself to do something mildly active after dinner. Tidy up the kitchen, or take a stroll around the block while catching up with friends on the phone. "Walking will help boost your mood without neglecting your to-do list," says Halas-Liang.

8 p.m. Brush your teeth

"If you tend to nibble all night, you need to set up a new ritual to break the cycle," says Ansel. "Brushing your teeth sends a mental signal that mealtime is over, plus you're a lot less likely to nosh if you know you're going to have to brush your teeth all over again."

9 p.m. Unwind and organize

It's common to think of a million little things you need to do once you *finally* get into bed, which isn't very helpful when it prevents you from relaxing and falling asleep. "Try keeping a notepad by your bed," says Halas-Liang, "so that you can jot down reminders and prepare for the next day so that when you eventually turn off the light, your mind will be clear."

10 p.m. Turn down the thermostat

"A new study from the National Institute of Health found that sleeping in a cooler room increased men's metabolism by 10 percent," says Ansel. Sleeping in cooler temperatures helps to boost the production of brown fat, which burns energy, unlike white fat, which stores energy. And while this study only used male subjects, consider that cooler temperatures help everyone sleep better, and people who are more rested make healthier food choices. According to the National Sleep Foundation, the ideal temperature for sleeping is somewhere around 65 degrees.