

OPTIMAL HEALTH UNIVERSITY™

Presented by Dr. Troy H. Peters

10-Week Jump-Start Wellness Plan: Part One

For the next 10 weeks, Dr. Peters will guide patients through a unique and highly effective approach to getting — and staying — healthy. Achieving optimal health is an ongoing process, and there are no “quick-fixes.” The key to this innovative approach is focusing on one aspect of wellness each week. By completing “bite-sized” challenges, patients will gradually learn to take control of their well-being. Read on for a brief outline of the plan. And, ask Dr. Peters for additional details and resources.



Week One: Start With the Spine

Challenge: Schedule an appointment for a chiropractic checkup.

Doctors of chiropractic believe that the spine is the foundation of health. Unfortunately, even many so-called “holistic” health strategists often overlook this vital key to wellness. That’s why Dr. Peters encourages those on the Jump-Start Wellness Plan to begin with a chiropractic checkup.

Dr. Peters focuses on detecting and correcting dysfunctional regions in the spine called vertebral subluxations — a condition that occurs when motion is restricted or spinal bones (vertebrae) are out of alignment. Vertebral subluxations are associated with a myriad of health issues, such as headache, back pain, neck pain, ear

infection and carpal tunnel syndrome. Chiropractors eliminate vertebral subluxations with gentle maneuvers called chiropractic adjustments. Scientific studies show that chiropractic adjustments effectively correct and prevent vertebral subluxations — and the conditions associated with them.

Resources: Ask at the front desk for back issues of *Optimal Health University™* on specific spinal health topics that spark your interest.

Week Two: Stamp Out Stress

Challenge: Reconsider your schedule, and adopt a stress-reduction regime.

Emotional stress — the hallmark of today’s society — is linked with a myriad of ailments, including vertebral subluxation, heart disease, stroke, cancer, infertility, headache, depression and insomnia.

This week, start stamping out stress by re-evaluating your daily schedule. Get creative. Free up some time by organizing a school carpool with similarly harried parents. Consider swapping babysitting time with a neighbor or hiring a local teenager to take over some household chores.

Next, make a list of three obligations you can cancel or delegate to others this week. For many, learning to turn down requests is difficult. Here are a few tips to help you say “no:”

- Wait 24 hours before responding to a substantial request for your time.
- Repeat to yourself over and over again, “It’s OK to say ‘no’ to stress-inducing commitments that will interfere with my well-being.”
- Refuse to give in when pushy persuaders become crusaders for your time.
- Create a “saying no script” you are comfortable with. Explain that you are focusing on boosting your level of health, and that means carving out additional time for yourself to prevent stress.
- Use the “broken record” technique with those who pester you repeatedly. This means responding to each attempt to change your mind with an identical script.

After you’ve carved out more time in your routine, investigate stress-reduction techniques, and choose one to practice for at least 15 minutes, three times per week. Techniques to consider include yoga, meditation, breathing exercises, t’ai chi, biofeedback, writing in a journal or engaging in a hobby or craft you enjoy.



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Resources: If you need help choosing a stress-reduction technique, ask your chiropractor for advice. Doctors of chiropractic can help you choose the right technique for your lifestyle and provide referrals for related courses in the community. For more information on saying “no” effectively, check out *Conversationally Speaking* by Alan Garner (Lowell House) or *How to Say No Without Feeling Guilty* by Patti Breitman (Doubleday).

Week Three: Dump the Drugs

Challenge: Reconsider your use of unnecessary medication and reliance on drugs.

Do you pop over-the-counter painkillers on a regular basis to alleviate afternoon tension headaches? Do you run to the medicine cabinet after working out in search of relief from muscle soreness? Does your morning routine include guzzling several cups of coffee?

Symptoms such as headache, back pain, muscle soreness, fatigue and boredom are messages from your body screaming that something is amiss. If you’re relying on drugs to cover up symptoms, you’re ignoring your own inner wisdom, disrespecting your body and sabotaging your health goals.

Never discontinue the use of prescription medication without consulting the doctor who prescribed it. However, you may choose to clean your cabinets of over-the-counter painkillers and commit to addressing the cause of your health ailments — rather than merely masking symptoms. You may also want to consider all-natural alternatives, such as nutritional supplements. Ask your chiropractor to assist you in this endeavor.

In addition to taking a hard look at your use of medication, consider any reliance on nicotine, caffeine, alcohol or “recreational” drugs.

Resources: If you need help breaking a substance addiction, ask your chiropractor for a referral to treatment programs in the community. For information on the misuse of antibiotic drugs, check out *Beyond Antibiotics* by Michael A. Schmidt (North Atlantic Books).

With the Sandman Week Four: Make Friends With the Sandman

Challenge: Adjust your schedule to accommodate adequate sleep time.

Sleep debt has reached epidemic proportions in today’s society, with its destructive effects frequently downplayed or ignored. The frightening truth is that a lack of sleep is nothing to snore at. Even modest sleep deprivation is linked with an increased risk of headache (*Cephalgia* 1990;10:157-60). In addition, missing sleep can produce fluctuations in blood sugar levels that mimic that of diabetics (*Lancet* 1999;354:1435-9). Sleep debt is also associated with decreased mental function and an increased likelihood of psychological disorders, such as depression and anxiety. And, if that isn’t enough to convince you to head for your pillow, consider this: Forgoing sufficient snooze time may hasten the aging process.

“We found that the metabolic and endocrine changes resulting from significant sleep debt mimic many of the hallmarks of aging,” explains researcher Eve Van Cauter, Ph.D. “We suspect that chronic sleep loss may not only hasten the onset but could also increase the severity of age-related ailments such as diabetes, hypertension, obesity and memory loss” (*Lancet* 1999;354:1435-9).

How much sleep is enough? Although each individual has a unique “body clock,” most people function best with at least eight to nine hours during a 24-hour period. For some, it’s best to sleep only at night. Others’ circadian rhythms dictate dividing sleep between nighttime and a daily nap. The key is to listen to your body. Notice what sleep patterns leave you most rested and alert; then, work to schedule your day accordingly. At the very least, commit to hitting the hay a half hour earlier each night this week.

Resources: For a comprehensive overview of the significance of sleep, read *Power Sleep* by Dr. James B. Maas (Harper Perennial). Online, check out www.sleepnet.com or www.sleepfoundation.org.

Week Five: Develop a Winning Nutritional Strategy

Challenge: Rid your cabinets of junk foods, and identify five destructive nutritional habits to tackle.

Start this week by ridding your cabinets and refrigerator of junk foods, high-fat products and sugar-laden items: And don’t replace them during your next grocery trip! Instead, stock up on whole foods — avoiding quick foods, frozen foods and processed foods. If you only have access to nutritious items, you’re more likely to adopt healthy eating patterns.

Next, take a minute to identify five destructive nutritional behaviors you struggle with. After documenting each one, brainstorm a healthy alternative to each habit. For example, if your lunch break often involves swinging by McDonald’s® drive-through, consider packing a fresh green salad topped with grilled chicken or tofu chunks. Or, if you skip meals often, block out mealtimes at regular intervals. After you have identified the habits you wish to change and what alternatives to replace them with, commit to trying out these new approaches for one week. The boost in energy you experience may persuade you to keep up some — or all — of them for good!

Resources: Dr. Andrew Weil’s *Eating Well for Optimum Health* (Knopf) is a fantastic resource for anyone seeking to learn the truth about nutrition. Also, watch for nutrition-focused *Optimal Health University*™ handouts each month.

Watch for an Optimal Health University™ detailing Part Two of the Jump-Start Wellness Plan next week.

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