Stay on Track This Summer

Like the winter holidays, summer is a time of year when many people lose sight of their health and wellness goals and fall out of their normal routines. Hot weather, vacations, and frequent barbeques can be the perfect storm to steer you off course. Taking time to relax and enjoy life with family and friends this season is important. However, the key to success is finding a balance so that you are not overindulging, but also do not feel deprived. Here are a few things you can do to keep yourself on track this summer to avoid having to start from square one when the fall rolls around.

Make Healthy Swaps:
Food was made to fuel our bodies but you should not be punished for treating yourself every once in a while. This means you don’t have to skip the barbeques or ice cream, altogether. For example, when grilling, instead of having a cheeseburger or hotdog, opt for a chicken-and-vegetable kabob. Or in place of potato chips, choose fruit salad. By making healthy swaps you won’t have to feel so guilty about the ice cream for dessert.

Stay Hydrated:
We often hear about the importance of drinking water, but frequently do not consume enough daily. Dehydration can cause the body to retain water, resulting in bloating and weight gain. It can also cause fatigue, headaches, dizziness and fainting. It is especially important to consume adequate amounts of water in the warmer months, in addition to eating foods with high water content. If plain water does not appeal to you, try infusing it with your favorite fruits!

Stay Active:
While the summer months cause some people to be more active, for others, it has the opposite effect. Those who are uncomfortable in the heat tend to stay inside their air-conditioned homes, or lounge by the pool all day. If this sounds like you, be sure to set aside time, even if it is just a few times a week, to get your heart rate up. You can swim laps or tread water, or do a body-weight strength circuit in your house or apartment. These workouts will help maintain or even improve your fitness level throughout the summer and keep your heart healthy.

Keep these tips in mind this summer to help you stay on track towards your health and wellness goals. Remember to find a balance, so you can feel satisfied and sustain these behaviors all summer long.
Eating for Energy

Tired? It might be what’s on (or isn’t on) your plate. Just as gasoline is fuel for a car, food is fuel for our bodies— and while you wouldn’t put Red Bull in your gas tank, this is the reality for many Americans suffering from busy schedules and lack of sleep. We may not be able to control our schedules, but did you know the types of foods you choose to eat also directly affect energy levels? Fight fatigue beginning with your plate by following five simple ways to eat for energy:

1. **Eat often, but not too much.** Eating regularly throughout the day (every three to four hours) provides the body with a steady source of energy as opposed to fewer, larger meals. Larger meals often lead to that “afternoon slump” feeling, so try smaller, frequent meals or snacks and eat until you’re full, but not overstuffed.

2. **Treat meals like a balancing act.** The key to a balanced meal for optimal energy is adequate proportions of fruits, vegetables, whole grains, lean protein, and healthy fats. Aim to fill half your plate with a variety of colorful fruits and vegetables, one-quarter with a whole grain, and the rest with a lean protein.

3. **Snack smart.** In addition to balancing meals, it is important to balance snacks. For snacks, pair a carbohydrate source with a protein. Treat snacks like mini meals and get creative! They can be conventional, like a piece of fruit with a small handful of nuts, or innovative, such as a small baked potato with grilled chicken.

4. **Skip the soda.** While soda, energy drinks, and other sugar-sweetened beverages provide a convenient energy boost, the large amounts of added sugar can quickly lead to crashing. Often times, dehydration presents as fatigue, so opt for a glass (or two!) of water when you start to feel tired.

5. **Ditch the diet.** Diets typically cut both calories and food groups, both of which can result in poor nutrition and low energy. Rather than going to extremes cutting 1,000+ calories and all carbohydrates, aim for gradual weight loss (approximately one pound per week) and focus on nourishing your body with nutrient-dense foods at every meal. Seek further guidance and individualized recommendations from a registered dietitian (RD).