



# The breath of life: How you breathe affects every aspect of your health

## 5 simple tips for getting the most out of every inhale and exhale

For the past few months, I've been putting together a brand new online learning protocol on lung health. And, it got me thinking about *breathing*. After all, what could be more natural—and more important for your lungs—than taking a breath?

Of course one of the primary purposes of breathing is to get oxygen into the body. But that's just the beginning. In fact, breathing plays various roles in the body, including helping to manage many chronic medical conditions. That's why breathing techniques are a fundamental part of my natural approach to health.

But because breathing is thought of as an *involuntary* reflex, it's often ignored by mainstream medicine. Many doctors don't understand that there are ways to actually *improve* your breathing—which, in turn, improves your health.

So let's take a closer look at how every breath you take affects every aspect of your health.

### The complicated process of respiration

The most common way breathing impacts your health is through the respiratory process.

When you take a breath, the inhaled oxygen binds to the iron inside the

red blood cells in your lungs before transporting the oxygen to every cell in your body and brain.

This is the sole purpose of red blood cells. They're the only cells in the body that don't carry DNA, but their role is vital because oxygen is highly reactive. If oxygen isn't "caged" inside these cells, it can interact with almost anything in your body, creating the oxidative stress that leads to many chronic health conditions.

Once oxygen enters the cells in your body and brain, it's used for a process called *cellular respiration*. This is when the mitochondria in cells "burn" the oxygen, together with carbohydrates, to create energy and water for the cells.

It's a classic chemical combustion reaction, like burning wood in your fireplace or gasoline in your car. In your fireplace, the heat energy warms you. In your car, the energy is utilized to power the pistons and move the wheels. In your cells, the energy is harnessed to fuel all metabolic processes throughout your body and brain.

### How breathing promotes vital energy

Mainstream doctors tend to only consider respiration when they think about breathing. But there's a lot more to this "simple" act of

inhaling and exhaling.

First of all, breathing can be described as a more general process of taking in "vital energy" from the environment.

In ancient Greece and Rome, inhalation relates to the concept of "*anima*" (spirit)—the energy that animates all life in the cosmos. In Latin, the word "inspiration" relates to spirit (*anima*). And in English, we use the related word "animal" to describe all living creatures.

To complete the circle, the word "inspiration" is used medically for taking a breath. When you combine this literal definition of inspiration with the figurative one of activation of the spirit or soul, you can understand the subtle energies interacting with the air and your outside environment.

In other words, the "vital energy"

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associated with breathing encompasses the body, mind, *and* spirit. That's why breathing is also a fundamental component of mind-body approaches like massage, meditation, and yoga.

### You are what you breathe

Medical conditions that involve breathing difficulties—such as asthma, bronchitis, emphysema, and chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD)—also illustrate this particular mind-body connection.

If you have one of these conditions, you may feel like you have a hard time breathing. This reduces your oxygen intake—triggering anxiety and panic attacks. Such emotions can make your breathing more shallow and arrhythmic, worsening your physical symptoms.

But controlling your breathing can help. For example, there have been studies on how breathing through the mouth or the nostrils during yoga can have different influences on your brain. (The new 6<sup>th</sup> addition of my textbook, *Fundamentals of Complementary, Alternative, and Integrative Medicine*, discusses this further. To find this book, go to [www.DrMicozzi.com](http://www.DrMicozzi.com) and click on the “Books” tab.)

Other research shows that the pace, depth, and route of each breath you take influences the mind-body connection and the “vagal tone” of the body, which regulates the nervous system.

This contributes to relaxation, which is a powerful form of stress reduction. (And we all know that too much stress can lead to everything from dementia to obesity.) That's why proper breathing techniques are a fundamental key for reducing your risk of chronic health conditions.

And that's not all. Evidence shows that proper breathing also helps improve your concentration, control your emotions, and facilitate restful sleep.

### My top 5 breathing therapies

So what is “proper” breathing? Well, it's basically slow, deep, rhythmic inhalation and exhalation.

When you're calm and relaxed, you automatically breathe this way. So these breathing techniques will come into play when you're *not* calm and relaxed.

If you practice the following breathing therapies regularly, you'll find yourself “automatically” reverting to them in times of physical, emotional, or mental stress. And that can help regulate your breathing—no matter how stressful the circumstances—and get your health back on track.

**1. Follow your breathing.** This is an easy way to become more aware of your breathing.

Start observing each inhalation and exhalation. Notice the sensations as air passes through your nose and throat, and down into your chest, causing movement in your abdomen. As you relax and your thoughts begin to wander, gently bring them back to your breath. Try to do this for 10 minutes each day.

**2. Alternate nostril breathing.** This type of yogic breathing is good for mental health and concentration.

Begin by closing one nostril with your finger, and breathing in and out through the other nostril. Then reverse nostrils. You can also inhale through one nostril and exhale through the other. Repeat five to 10 times, as needed.

**3. “365” breathing.** Therapists use

this common technique to combat accumulated stress.

At least three times a day, for five minutes at a time, inhale and exhale only six times per minute. You can do this by inhaling for five seconds and then exhaling for five seconds. Practice this technique all 365 days of the year.

**4. “4-7-8” breathing.** Try this technique, also known as *rhythmic breathing*, when you need to relax quickly.

Start by exhaling completely through your mouth, making a whooshing sound. Then, close your mouth and inhale quietly for a count of four seconds. Hold that breath for a count of seven seconds, and then exhale through your mouth (making the whooshing sound again) for a count of eight seconds. Repeat the entire cycle three more times, for a total of four rounds.

**5. Breath counting.** This technique is harder than it seems, but it's a good introduction to meditation and mental concentration.

Sit in a comfortable position and breathe normally for a few seconds. Then, every time you exhale, count “one,” “two,” etc., until you get to five. Then, start over, counting from

one to five on each exhale. Try to do this for 10 minutes. If your mind wanders and you realize you've counted too high, just start over on the one-to-five count.

### Other ways to improve your breathing

Just five to 10 minutes of **moderate exercise** leads to deeper and more frequent breathing.

**Posture** is also important for proper breathing, as sitting or standing up straight helps facilitate the function of respiratory muscles.

These muscles include:

- The **diaphragm**, which moves up and down in your abdomen, bringing air into and out of the lungs
- The **intercostal muscles** (between your ribs), that relax and contract to expand and narrow the chest around the lungs
- The muscles from the neck to the chest (which include the **upper trapezius, levator scapula, and pectoralis muscles**) that raise and lower the lung compartment

You can also practice the sensation of **breathing through your belly**. You don't really breathe air into

your abdomen, but this technique can make you feel like you're deeply *inhaling calmness* and *exhaling stress* in your core.


Begin expanding your abdomen by inhaling, as if to fill it with air. Then swell your chest. As you exhale, feel the sensation of “emptying” your belly.

### What you really need to know about breathing and lung health

Breathing is an important part of lung health, and lung health is an important part of your overall health.

But the only time the mainstream, or even “natural know-it-alls,” seem to pay attention to the lungs is when there's a cancer diagnosis. And by that time, it's almost always way too late.

That's why I've been working tirelessly on bringing together all of the non-drug, nutritional, and natural approaches to support lung health—and prevent and *reverse* lung diseases—in my new lung protocol.

You're not going to find this vital information anywhere else. So stay tuned... as soon as this online learning tool is ready, you'll be the first to know. 

## 6 surprising foods that stop chronic inflammation and slow aging

Chronic inflammation is now recognized as a major factor in virtually *every* age-related disease, including Alzheimer's, arthritis, cancer, diabetes, and heart disease.

And studies show that chronic inflammation can actually increase

aging at a cellular level. Meaning that many of the inward and outward signs of aging—from aching joints to wrinkled skin—are due, in large part, to inflammation.

The good news for you is that you don't have to buy into the

“anti-aging” pills and potions pushed by the advertising industry. Because it's easy to reduce chronic inflammation through simple lifestyle choices.

One of the most impactful changes you can make is to follow an anti-

inflammatory eating plan, like the Mediterranean diet.

While virtually every fruit, vegetable, protein, and fat in the Mediterranean diet can reduce inflammation, there are six specific foods I think of as *inflammation superstars*.

### The cornerstones of an anti-inflammatory diet

Eat these foods at least twice a week and you'll soon look and feel younger—both inside and out.

**1. Avocados**, like many fruits, are a great source of inflammation-fighting antioxidants. But unlike other fruits, avocados also contain healthy, monounsaturated fats that fight inflammation.

A recent analysis of 129 published studies found that eating avocados reduces abdominal fat and metabolic syndrome, which are linked to chronic inflammation.<sup>1</sup>

One of my favorite ways to eat avocados is in guacamole. By adding lime and chili peppers to your guacamole, you can also experience the anti-inflammatory power of vitamin C. Hot peppers also contain inflammation-fighting capsaicin, and tomatoes contain a potent anti-inflammatory carotenoid (which I'll tell you more about in a moment).

**2. Cruciferous vegetables**, like broccoli, Brussels sprouts, cabbage, cauliflower, collard greens, kale, and mustard greens, fight inflammation in several ways.

First, they're rich in vitamin C and other anti-inflammatory antioxidants. They're also high in fiber, which is associated with lower levels of C-reactive protein in the blood—a marker of chronic inflammation.

And remember, these vegetables have even more disease-fighting

potential when eaten raw instead of cooked.

**3. Wild-caught fatty fish**, like salmon, mackerel, trout, and sardines, are loaded with omega-3 fatty acids that help fight chronic inflammation.

Fish and other seafood are also good sources of vitamin D, which helps suppress chronic inflammation. In fact, some research shows that vitamin D slows aging at the molecular level. And it's been demonstrated in many

studies that D reduces the risk of age-related diseases like cancer, Alzheimer's, and Parkinson's.

You can prepare fish in many ways. I like to steam it with scallions, garlic, and anti-inflammatory ginger (for more about ginger's health properties, see page 7).

**4. Legumes**, like beans, chickpeas (garbanzos), lentils, lima beans, and peas, have been found to lower your risk of mortality.

One study of older Australian, Greek, Japanese, and Swedish

### Are these top 5 inflammation culprits hiding in your kitchen cabinets?

The flip side of loading up on anti-inflammatory foods is avoiding the foods that boost inflammation. Here's what research shows are the major dietary culprits behind chronic inflammation.

**Sugar** is the single worst ingredient you can eat, because it causes inflammation in multiple ways.

First of all, when sugar combines with protein or fat in your bloodstream, it produces compounds called advanced glycosylation end products (AGEs). Too many AGEs leads to oxidative stress and inflammation. (For example, Hemoglobin A1C is glycosylated hemoglobin, due to excess sugar.)

Sugar also messes with your gastrointestinal microbiome, which lowers your immunity and creates inflammation. More specifically, sugar increases gut permeability, which allows bacteria and toxins to leak out of your GI tract and into your bloodstream, ultimately producing inflammation, and other problems.

Finally, sugar can make you gain weight. And excess body fat leads to inflammation.

**White flour** in bread, pasta, desserts, and other foods is as bad for you as sugar.

This refined, processed grain is high in simple carbohydrates, which, like sugar, wreaks havoc on your GI microbiome. In particular, white flour can cause the growth of "bad" bacteria

in your gut, which increases your risk of glucose intolerance, leading to inflammation.

The simple carbs in white flour also spike your blood sugar compared to the more complex carbs in fruits and whole grains. And high blood sugar is a main culprit in inflammation.

**Fried foods** are often high in trans fats, which have been shown in multiple studies to increase inflammation—not to mention many other diseases.

Fried foods are also full of AGEs—the same inflammatory compounds associated with sugar.

**Vegetable oils** are manufacturers' solution for reducing trans fats in their packaged and processed "frankenfoods." But while vegetable oils are made to sound healthy, they're **not**.

Soy, corn, safflower, sunflower, canola, and palm oils are loaded with omega-6 fatty acids. While your body uses *some* omega-6s to produce hormones, regulate your metabolism, keep your bones healthy, and nourish your skin and hair, too many of these fatty acids can cause inflammation.

**Artificial sweeteners** have been found to alter the GI microbiome.

Like sugar and white flour, artificial sweeteners increase levels of the "bad" bacteria in your gut that lead to inflammation. And they decrease a type of "good," probiotic bacteria that releases anti-inflammatory compounds.

subjects found that just *half a cup* of cooked legumes per day reduced the risk of death by an incredible 34 percent.<sup>2</sup>

Many of the longevity benefits of legumes are due to their ability to reduce inflammation. Beans are even higher in fiber than cruciferous vegetables, which makes them potent anti-inflammatories.

I like to add beans to a traditional English or Irish breakfast including eggs, bacon, and grilled tomatoes.

**5. Olive oil** is another plant-derived staple of the Mediterranean diet.

Like avocados, olive oil is loaded with healthy fats like oleic acid, which has been found to lower inflammation. Olive oil is also rich in antioxidants—particularly oleocanthal, which has been shown to reduce inflammation as well as ibuprofen, if not better.


Always keep good-quality olive oil handy in your kitchen. It will stay fresh at room temperature, in a dark cabinet or cupboard, for about three months.

**6. Tomatoes** are one of the only foods that contain high amounts of the carotenoid lycopene, as I helped discover back in the mid-1980s. Research shows lycopene can be helpful in fighting chronic inflammation.

Cooked tomatoes, like tomato sauce and tomato paste, contain higher amounts of lycopene (which I also discovered). And you'll get *even more* anti-inflammatory benefits if you cook your tomatoes in olive oil.

Of course, these six foods are just a few of my natural approaches to

reduce chronic inflammation and promote healthy aging.

For more tips, check out my *Protocol For Eliminating Deadly Inflammation*. Readers can order by [clicking here](#) or calling 1-866-747-9421 and asking for order code **EOV3V500**. 

### My Cinco de Mayo "Superfoods" Guacamole and Salsa Picante

It couldn't be easier or more delicious to get *tremendous* health benefits from two popular appetizers: Guacamole (an avocado-based dip), and salsa (a tomato-based dip). And today I'm going to share with you my go-to recipes for both.

You can prepare both to taste, using quantities based on the amount you want to make. But I like to whip up a [fresh](#) batch for each serving.

#### Guacamole—Keep it simple

Start with washing your avocado. Then cut the avocado in half, remove the stone, and scoop out the flesh, separating it from the skin. Add freshly squeezed lime juice. Mix by hand with a spoon or spatula until you create a creamy, smooth consistency.

Pro tip: Lime juice is a potent antioxidant, and will freshen the green flesh of any previously saved avocado, which can turn brown over time. And to help keep cut avocados fresh, get a specially designed storage container in the shape of a half-avocado to keep conveniently in your fridge.

#### Salsa—Spice it up

Start with two mid-sized, organic

tomatoes and coarsely chop. Then take one-half (or one-quarter if you want less "tang") red onion and finely chop. Add one bunch of fresh organic cilantro, finely chopped.

Now to spice it up, you can use anywhere from one to six small jalapeño peppers, depending on how much heat you want to add. (As I explained in a recent *Daily Dispatch*, you can also choose other peppers based on their "heat index." Jalapeños are pretty mild, whereas red chili peppers turn up the heat.) Finally, mix all your ingredients together by hand using a spoon or spatula.

Both guacamole and salsa can be used as a garnish or a dip for organic corn tortilla chips. Remember, buying organic means the corn is free of genetically modified organisms (GMOs) and glyphosate contamination. You can also get blue corn tortillas, which don't come from super-bred and genetically modified yellow corn varieties.

What are *your* favorite guacamole and salsa recipes? I'd love to hear from you! Drop me a comment on my *Insiders' Cures* Facebook page or shoot me an email at [feedback@drmicozzi.com](mailto:feedback@drmicozzi.com).

## Tap into the ancient Indian "science of life" from your own kitchen

There's a rich tradition of healing practices throughout the world, with centuries worth of evidence showing that these "alternative" approaches are just as effective than western medicine—if not, *more*.

But big pharma is "dead-set" against any type of medicine that doesn't rely on expensive, dangerous drugs—even when it means your death. So they continue doling out pills, while

complementary recommendations based on natural principles—like eating right, exercising, and supplementing with herbs and other nutrients—get pushed into these "alternative" categories.

Unlike western medicine, these ancient “alternative” medicines view the patient as a whole, rather than just a bundle of symptoms to be treated with the drugs *du jour*. The goal is to ensure *overall* good health rather than just simply treating diseases.

One of the most comprehensive of these “alternative” medicines is *Ayurveda*, an ancient Indian healing tradition. The basic concepts behind Ayurveda are simple, and you can easily apply them to your daily life to stay healthy for years to come.

### The cosmic connection

Ayurveda is the science of life and longevity. But as with other eastern healing modalities, selected aspects of this Indian medical system and its cures have been adopted by pop “gurus,” authors, and media celebrities in the west—who don’t truly understand, or appear to care, how it all really works.

Unlike these “natural-know-it alls,” or “Johnny-come-latelies,” I’ve studied Ayurveda for *over 40 years*.

In fact, for 25 years I’ve included it in my textbook *Fundamentals of Complementary, Alternative, and Integrative Medicine*, which has just been published in its sixth edition. You can also read about Ayurveda in my books *Avicenna’s Medicine* and *Vital Healing*, all of which are available at [www.DrMicozzi.com](http://www.DrMicozzi.com).

The basic philosophy behind Ayurvedic medicine is that human beings are minute representations of the cosmos. In other words, our bodies and souls contain everything that makes up our surrounding world—including earth, air, fire, water, and space.

These five elements are combined differently into three doshas—

Kapha, Pitta, and Vata. Each dosha determines your physical and mental characteristics. You get your dosha makeup at conception, determined by your mother, father, and the time of year.

You’re born with perfectly balanced doshas, but poor diet and lifestyle choices (like lack of exercise or too much stress) can cause them to become imbalanced. And that can lead to disease.

Ayurvedic practitioners have a variety of ways to restore dosha balance. But you don’t have to visit a practitioner to apply basic Ayurvedic principles to your daily life. Because many traditional sources of Ayurvedic medicine can be found right in your kitchen.

### Five key Ayurvedic herbs

Indian medical and culinary traditions have worked hand-in-hand for millennia. While many plants are used in Ayurvedic medicine, you can get the most disease-fighting bang for your buck with the following herbs:

**Ashwaghanda**, also known as winter cherry, is one of the ingredients in my ABCs (ashwaghanda, boswellia, and curcumin) for joint health, due to its powerful ability to reduce pain and inflammation.

Studies show this herb has anti-inflammatory and antioxidant properties. It may also have a positive influence on the endocrine hormones and the central nervous system. And it’s known in Ayurvedic medicine for its “anti-aging” properties, with active ingredients shown by modern science to help stop cellular disease and decline.

Ashwaghanda is available as a

root you can boil into tea. In fact, “ashwaghanda” literally means “mare sweat,” from the aroma of the whole root. But it’s easier to take this herb as a dietary supplement. I recommend 400 to 500 mg a day.

**Boswellia**, also known as frankincense, comes from a gum tree that grows in South and Middle Asia, and was probably carried to ancient Greece and Rome on the Silk Route. In Christian belief, it was one of the traditional gifts brought from the east by the Three Magi at Epiphany.

During the Crusades, Boswellia was brought back to Europe by the famous Germanic, or Frankish, crusader Frederick Barbarossa (who you may know as “Red Beard”). Thus, the herb acquired the common name “frank incense,” or frankincense.

Studies show boswellia’s pain relief and anti-inflammatory effects are similar to steroid drugs, but without the dangerous side effects. Boswellia has also been shown to help with digestion and improve respiratory health. And lab studies have found it can fight cancer cells of the bladder, breast, brain, cervix, colon, liver, lung, pancreas, prostate, skin, and stomach.

Boswellia is also most commonly taken as a dietary supplement. I recommend 400 to 500 mg a day.

**Chili pepper**, also known as paprika or cayenne pepper, is another traditional Ayurvedic pain reliever. This pungent, fiery spice can be used topically in creams and ointments, or included directly into your diet.

You can include chili peppers in your meals a few times a week by sprinkling them into salads, soups,

and marinades. Or they make a great topping for chicken, burgers, or sausages hot off the grill.

Studies show this spicy herb depletes a chemical pain transmitter and desensitizes the nerve cells linked to pain. So chili peppers are commonly used to relieve pain associated with osteoarthritis, diabetic neuropathy, and shingles.

Research also shows that chili peppers can boost your longevity, perhaps because of their antioxidant activity. And they can help manage your blood sugar, improve your digestion, boost your heart health, and reduce inflammation.

If that weren't enough, research also links capsaicin—the principle component in chili peppers—with protection against atherosclerosis, high blood pressure, and obesity.

**Curcumin**, an active ingredient in turmeric, is a commonly used spice in Indian and South Asian curry dishes. In Ayurvedic medicine, curcumin is often incorporated into topical treatments for common eye infections and skin ailments, such as wounds, bites, burns, and acne.

Research shows curcumin has anti-inflammatory and antimicrobial effects. People with osteoarthritis and joint pain often take advantage

of these strong benefits and, of course, it's one of the ABCs I rely on for joint health.

But that's not all that curcumin can do. In the August 2018 *Insiders' Cures* issue (“Natural blood sugar remedies are outdoing mainstream diabetes drugs”) I reported on a study showing that curcumin is more effective for managing blood sugar than common diabetes drugs.

Research also shows it's a potent anti-cancer agent, especially for colon cancer. And curcumin has been found to reduce the plaque associated with Alzheimer's disease.

Along with including curcumin in your diet, you can also take it as a supplement. I recommend at least 200 mg per day.

**Ginger** comes from the root of the flowering ginger plant, which originated in China. It has a long history as a folk remedy, and plays a prominent role in Asian cooking. Ginger is used frequently in Ayurvedic medicine due to its numerous health benefits.


Ginger has been used for more than 3,000 years in various healing traditions, including Ayurveda, as a treatment for upset stomachs, diarrhea, and nausea. And some

studies have shown it's effective for osteoarthritis pain.

Research shows that ginger root also helps control the chronic inflammation related to Type II diabetes. It even improves fasting blood sugar and A1C numbers. Ginger seems to work directly in your GI microbiome to prevent sugar from entering the bloodstream.

Ginger has also been shown to reduce the inflammation that can lead to Alzheimer's. And like ashwaganda, ginger may help promote longevity by preventing cellular decline.

I suggest keeping some fresh ginger root in your pantry and adding a few slices to hot water to make a tea. You can also add freshly grated ginger to salads, meat, fish, and vegetable dishes. Or you can supplement with 2,000 mg of ginger root a day.

Together, these five herbs embody the Ayurvedic principles of longevity. Whether you add them to a balanced diet or take them as dietary supplements, you'll lower your risk of inflammatory diseases like arthritis, diabetes, Alzheimer's, and cancer...and help stop aging deep down at the cellular level. 

## The Paleo Diet Myth

### *Why living like a caveman won't boost your metabolism*

Back in the early 1980s, I began investigating what humans ate in prehistoric times.

I believed then (and now) in a traditional diet devoid of the processed and packaged foods that are so pervasive today.

I tried to explain to my colleagues at the National Institutes of Health that the type of diet our ancient ancestors ate—fruits, vegetables, nuts, seeds, meat, and fish—would be ideal for a study on how to prevent cancer and chronic diseases. (Conditions that are much more prevalent today than

they were back then.)

Unfortunately, with big pharma's so-called scientific advisors insisting on incorporating synthetic “supplement pills” into the study, we couldn't make it work.

But I did receive some phone

calls at home from a private clinical specialist (with absolutely *no* background or training in anthropology, nutrition, or metabolism) about my idea. And the next thing I knew, he coauthored the first “pop” book on the *paleolithic diet*, or paleo for short.

Now, paleo diets are an international craze. But like most fads, they’re being advertised as much more than they actually are. Instead of simply promoting healthy eating plans, “nutritionists” now tout paleo diets as a way to lose weight by revving up your metabolism.<sup>1</sup>

But that’s just another big, fat myth. And here’s why...

### **Our ancestors didn’t have faster metabolisms**

Over the years, I’ve unveiled numerous myths about mainstream medical recommendations regarding diet, metabolism, and nutrition. And the paleo diet is no different.

Metabolic studies in different populations demonstrate that the average number of calories you burn each day stays fairly consistent, *regardless* of your activity levels.

So the theory that the paleo diet helped our ancestors be more active, ramp up their metabolism, and expend more calories is a bold-faced lie.

Anthropologists have shown that in traditional paleo hunting-and-gathering societies, there’s actually a *lot* of leisure time. After food sources are found in the wild, people have plenty of opportunity to engage in arts, crafts, and social interactions.

In fact, anthropologists discovered that the amount of physical labor needed to survive actually *increases* when people settle down in one

place to grow crops.

The Hadza people of East Africa are a modern-day example of how our paleo ancestors lived. The Hadza build simple mud huts and hunt with tools made by hand. So you might assume that they’re laboring 24/7 in a daily struggle for survival, and are continually burning massive amounts of calories.

And yet, modern metabolic studies show that the typical Hadza burns *no more calories* than a modern, sedentary American.

How can this be? Well, much of it has to do with how diet and exercise affect basic human metabolism.

### **Why exercise won’t jump-start your metabolism**

Study after study shows the typical adult 50 and over burns about 2,500 calories per day, depending primarily on body size. Bigger bodies burn more calories because they have more cells and tissues consuming calories.

So, based on your size, you have a daily calorie baseline. And despite all of the hype you hear, you can’t boost that baseline by doing extra “workouts.” (Yet another reason excessive exercise is nonsensical, as I always warn.)

That’s because when you exercise more, your body simply reduces the amount of calories it burns performing *other* functions—like producing hormones or immune cells.

This response keeps your metabolism constant. In effect, your body “traditionally” needs to *conserve* energy when it can, and sees excess exercise (or as I call it, *excess-ercise*) as wasted calories.

So essentially, too much exercise

actually *starves* your metabolism.

I recommend moderate amounts of exercise—2.5 hours per week of walking, swimming, gardening, housework, etc. This amount of physical activity is in line with what our ancestors would have gotten when hunting and gathering—and it will help your body function optimally, without spending hours and hours in a dark, dank gym.

### **Eating like a caveman won’t rev up your metabolism either**

No matter what the so-called paleo “experts” say, there’s no such thing as a diet that can increase your metabolism.

In fact, research shows that extreme low-calorie diets actually *lower* your metabolism, as an evolutionary signal to keep you from starving to death. So when you eat less, your body burns fewer calories—creating a net-zero effect.

The bottom line is that you can eat—and exercise—like a caveman, but “paleolithic prescriptions” from pop doctors aren’t going to revamp your metabolism.

I’m all for “tradition” (and I’m not just fiddling on the roof), but we *really* need to understand what the traditional (“paleo”) human diet, metabolism, and nutrition is really about.

That said, the paleo diet isn’t a bad eating plan. It’s rich in fruits and vegetables, protein, and healthy fats. And it’s low in sugar and simple carbs. It’s the type of sensible diet that can help you maintain a healthy weight.

But it’s not the “miracle diet” the hypesters tout. **IC**

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