Women Achieving Balance

BY ERIC BUTTERMANN

Staying in shape doesn't mean inventing more hours in your already hectic day; it requires a better strategy for the time you do have. Exercise and healthful eating provide a gateway to all-around health.

Find Your Stride

"Anything is better than nothing when it comes to exercise" is Kate Borman's rule. The best "anything" for women says Ms. Borman, a personal trainer at Fitness Together, is weight training, which strengthens bones, helping to avoid or lessen the effects of osteoporosis. Compound exercises allow you to get the most "bang for your buck," Ms. Borman says, and doing them three times a week is optimal. She recommends upper and lower body combinations such as bicep curls and squats, push-ups and leg presses. "You can also get a better workout by not allowing much rest in between sets," Ms. Borman says. She recommends three sets, at six to 12 reps. "Any higher and you won't get stronger," she says.

Yoga is an excellent stress-reducer, but before you head into "downward dog," make sure you choose the class that's right for you. For example, hot yoga is just as advertised — and could raise your stress along with your temperature. Ms. Borman likes yoga as a complement to strength training. "It can be very beneficial to flexibility," she says. "Tight calves and a bad back definitely won't have you lifting weights comfortably."

Don't Forget the Cardio

Cardiovascular exercise is crucial, and Ms. Borman recommends shooting for five days a week for at least 30 minutes. "Running is optimal, but even walking can be a strong benefit, if done at a fast pace and at an incline for higher intensity," Ms. Borman says. "If you have bad knees or regular foot problems, an elliptical machine allows you to get the benefit of moving fast without the impact of hitting the ground."

Eating, Minus the Torture

Nutrition is just as vital to overall health as exercise, and there are options to the standard diet recommendations. A calcium-rich diet can extend far beyond the dairy case, says nutritionist Melissa Bowman Li. "Kale, spinach, even molasses get the job done," she says.

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- Kate Borman,
Personal Trainer at Fitness Together

For protein and iron, she recommends cold water fish, red meat — provided it's grass-fed — and hormone-free organic chicken. "You can also do a replacement protein shake when you're not in the
mood,” she says. “Look for high-grade whey protein powder.” Iron supplements are another option.

**Forget “All or Nothing” Thinking**

Having trouble with binging? Nutritionist Dawn Jackson Blatner says it’s better to quench cravings with small portions rather than lose control later. “I don’t recommend women try to be perfect when it comes to eating,” she says. “A lot of times, I actually divide my plate between being good and going a bit wild. Have your salad with light dressing on one side and have your flat-bread pizza on the other.”

Don’t skip eating out, she says, just avoid the bigger portions. “Many times the entrees are just too big for women,” says Ms. Blatner, a co-author of “Counseling Overweight Adults: The Lifestyle Patterns Approach and Toolkit.” “Try an appetizer and a salad instead. The worst thing is to avoid being social because you’re afraid of eating badly!”

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