



UNIVERSITY OF
CALGARY

Foundations of Self Care:

Strategies for better sleep, nutrition, & exercise

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Please note:

- The tips I will be sharing are not for people with severe insomnia, disordered eating, or significant health conditions which impair their ability to be physically active. If this is the case, you should seek individual medical advice from your primary care provider.

Why is sleep important?

- It affects our mood, making us less able to cope with small triggers when we are tired
- Things feel harder to do when we are tired (motivation decreases)
- Our concentration & response time decreases when tired
- Insomnia is proven to lower our immune response & make us susceptible to heart disease, diabetes, hypertension, & poor mental health
- Sleep is when we consolidate memory & learning

Why is nutrition important?

- What we eat impacts our physical health in the moment & long term
- Food fuels our physical and mental activities
- Food choices can be an important way to express our culture
- Food has very strong connections to memories
- Being more intentional about what we eat increases our enjoyment & our sense of control over our lives

Why is exercise important?

- It reduces the likelihood of heart disease, hypertension, some types of cancer, arthritis, & other diseases
- It helps us manage our mental health, with significant decrease in symptoms of depression & anxiety
- It improves mood and boosts energy
- It helps with better sleep

What gets in the way?

- Time
- Money
- Energy
- Lack of planning
- Feeling overwhelmed

Sleep strategies

- Get outside - think about your light exposure
- Consider your sleep environment
- Minimize interference
- Think about your substance use (including caffeine)
- Be careful what you eat close to bedtime
- Exercise in the daytime or evening but finish at least 2 hours before bedtime
- Relax and create a soothing bedtime routine
- Limit electronic use

Sleep strategies

- Keep a pen and paper by the bed
- Meditation or relaxation strategies
- Get up at the same time every day
- Only use your bed for sleep and intimacy
- Leave the bed if you can't fall asleep
- Get up when you wake
- Keep a sleep diary if you have concerns
- Don't worry about what is "normal sleep"
- Check out any medical concerns

*Write down one sleep strategy you
can try this week*

Nutrition strategies

- Meal plan once a week with your schedule in mind, shop your plan, & do some prep on less busy days
- Batch cook meat/lentils/starches and freeze
- Make eating/cooking a social experience
- Take a broad approach to healthy eating (try 80/20 or color)
- Get creative: try dinner for breakfast, use ChatGPT, try a new type of cuisine
- Enjoy treats in moderation
- Make hydration part of the plan
- Build your food skills

Nutrition strategies

- Have a list of easy to grab snacks that you like
- Learn a few easy recipes/formulas
- Consider what small appliances you might use/can afford (blender, instant pot, slow cooker)
- Let go of your idea of what a meal has to look like
- Eat mindfully at a table, even if you are by yourself
- Experiment with spices
- Try a farmer's market
- Consider online ordering or delivery
- Grow some food yourself

*Write down one nutrition strategy you
can try this week*

Exercise strategies

- What can you do in 5 min? 10 min? 20 min? 30 min?
- What can you do without equipment?
- Park a little further away or get off the bus one stop earlier
- Use the stairs whenever possible
- Make exercise a social experience
- Explore Calgary's parks and pathways
- Aim for minutes of activity instead of specifics, have alternatives
- Put it in your calendar

Exercise strategies

- Make it easy – habit stack
- Use your Active Living Membership
- Stand or use a exercise ball instead of sitting
- Suggest a walking meeting
- Use your Netflix time to stretch or do cardio
- Be intentional about adding activity – gardening, cleaning
- Make it fun!
- Aim for frequency not duration

*Write down one exercise strategy you
can try this week*

- Mood Matters: How Food, Movement & Sleep Can Have an Impact on You - YouTube

Recommended resources

- Podcast: Huberman lab
- Apps: Insight Timer, Calm, Headspace, Balance
- Good food box [Good Food Box — Community Kitchen Program of Calgary \(ckpcalgary.ca\)](https://ckpcalgary.ca)
- Ucalgary Active Living [Active Living | University of Calgary \(ucalgary.ca\)](https://ucalgary.ca)
- Books:
 - Sink into sleep by Judith Davidson
 - How to cook without a book by Pam Anderson

Questions?

References

- Canada's food guide. [Food-guide.canada.ca](https://food-guide.canada.ca)
- Canadian Sleep Society. [Css-scs.ca](https://css-scs.ca)
- Davidson, J. (2021). *Sink into sleep*. Demos Health.
- [Mayoclinic.org](https://www.mayoclinic.org)
- [Ucalgary.ca](https://www.ucalgary.ca)

Thank you!