



FEEL BETTER USING SEEDS®

WHAT WOMEN IN MIDLIFE NEED TO KNOW ABOUT THE SEVEN ESSENTIAL ELEMENTS FOR DAILY SUCCESS

By Diana Bitner, MD, FACOG, NCMP | Chief Medical Officer & Founder | **true.** Women's Health

true.TM
WOMEN'S HEALTH

THIS EBOOK WILL HELP YOU PINPOINT DAILY HABITS AND BEHAVIORS
THAT CAN IMPROVE YOUR QUALITY OF LIFE AND HEALTHY AGING.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

1

INTRODUCTION

2

WATER

3

SLEEP

4

VITAMINS

5

FIBER

6

NUTRIENTS

7

ACTIVITY

8

**MIND-BODY
CONNECTION**

9

NEXT STEPS

SEVEN ESSENTIAL ELEMENTS FOR DAILY SUCCESS

SEEDS®

“

I just don't feel like myself. What happened?

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As an OB/GYN specializing in midlife care for nearly three decades, I would say this is the most common phrase and question I hear from my patients. I am passionate about educating, empowering and connecting with women to help them improve their lives during midlife and menopause. My mission is to reach women everywhere with a different way of thinking about their health, and SEEDS® is one of the first steps to changing your thinking. SEEDS® is a tool that empowers women on a lifelong journey of wellness. These basic habits impact how well women will age and feel during menopause and beyond. Bottom line: If you get all your SEEDS® accomplished every day, the result will be to feel better and be healthier. There is no magic pill for anti-aging and the SEEDS® do work when you follow them.

Are you ready to stop waiting for the “change” and start making the lifestyle changes that will move you with grace, joy and energy into your 50s and beyond? The first step to alleviating the uncomfortable physical changes of midlife and menopause is to identify which symptoms you are experiencing—irritability, hot flashes, sleep disturbance, night sweats—and track when they happen. Once you recognize what is going on in your body and pay attention to what's happening when these symptoms surface, you will be able to pinpoint what behaviors or daily habits may be making them worse. And then you can choose what to do.

That is what the Seven Essential Elements of Daily Success (SEEDS®) are all about. These essential elements are not optional. When we ignore or deny these necessities, we impact our wellbeing and quality of life. These important daily habits are listed below, and each one is explained in more scientific detail on the following pages.

SEEDS

SEVEN ESSENTIAL ELEMENTS FOR DAILY SUCCESS

WATER

EIGHT 10 OZ GLASSES EVERY DAY



SLEEP

50 HOURS EVERY WEEK



VITAMINS

MULTIVITAMIN, VITAMIN D, CALCIUM



FIBER

35 GRAMS PER DAY



NUTRIENTS

HEALTHY CARBOHYDRATES, HEALTHY PROTEINS, SMART FATS, ONE TREAT



ACTIVITY

AEROBIC, STRENGTH TRAINING, STRETCHING



MIND-BODY CONNECTION

ONE 5-MINUTE INSTANCE EACH DAY OF METERED BREATHING AND GRATITUDE





WATER

“

Pure water is the world's first and foremost medicine.

SLOVAKIAN PROVERB



WATER

EIGHT 10 OZ. GLASSES EVERY DAY

You need at least six to eight ten-ounce glasses of non-caffeinated beverages per day. Water is the body's principal chemical compound, making up, on average, 60% of a woman's body weight. Nearly every system in your body depends on water. It flushes toxins out of your vital organs, carries nutrients and oxygen to your cells, and helps dissolve nutrients to be accessible to your body.

So, what happens when we get busy and don't take the time to hydrate? When we leave water out of our daily habits, the results can be subtle, but hypo-hydration can take its toll in ways that can affect our normal daily function. Inadequate water intake causes dehydration, dry skin, and dry hair. Even mild dehydration can cause headaches and lethargy, hot flashes, and night sweats. Besides, if you are not well hydrated, your core temperature rises faster, and your muscles underperform. You may tend to feel more fatigued, are less likely to get through a workout, less likely even to want to start the exercise and workout with less intensity.

We all have slightly different water requirements based on our body size, physical activity, and metabolism. This recommendation is meant as a guide—it may vary somewhat for each person.

Add a serving of water for each serving of caffeine or alcohol consumed each day to finish with a net of eight servings at the end of each day. To calculate your water intake per day, the critical number is total water MINUS each serving of alcohol and caffeine. Both alcohol and caffeine make you excrete out water, even if you are mildly dehydrated, so it's essential to take those servings into account. Here's an example to help you calculate your net water each day:

While this is not a scientific demonstration, in real life, this net amount of water affects menopause symptoms, energy, and quality of life. Many of us have challenges with schedules that can affect when we can drink water and empty our bladders. If you work in a factory, are a teacher, or perform surgery, timing is everything. It simply takes more planning.

CALCULATE YOUR NET SERVINGS OF WATER

EXAMPLE

8 glasses of water
minus (-) four cups of coffee
minus (-) two glasses of wine
= two (2) net servings of water

HERE'S A PLAN TO HELP YOU FIT YOUR DAILY WATER REQUIREMENTS INTO YOUR DAILY SCHEDULE

- Drink two or three glasses of water before leaving the house in the morning.
- Drink one more glass of water in the car on the way to work or school.
- Drink a glass of water as your day begins and schedule a bathroom break when it works best for you.
- Several hours later, make time for another glass of water and a bathroom break.
- Drink one more glass of water at lunch and again during your afternoon break.
- Drink one more glass of water in the car on the way home and one more with dinner.
- Done.





SLEEP

“

Your future depends on your dreams, so go to sleep.

MESUT BARAZAN



SLEEP

50 HOURS EVERY WEEK

Sleep is everything—that can't be underestimated! Humans can't function without it and don't function well when sleep is disrupted. And, it can be almost impossible to lose weight if you are sleep deprived!

Adequate sleep improves performance, memory, and energy levels; and reduces the risk of illness, disease, dementia, depression, or anxiety. It must be a priority. We all get busy and think that cutting corners on sleep is the best way to catch up on our to-do list. If you have serious concerns about your ability to get adequate sleep, it is best to talk to your doctor or a sleep specialist. A condition known as sleep apnea can be made worse by sleep difficulties caused by fluctuating hormones, and sleep apnea can increase your risk of heart disease. For the more routine concerns, there are practical tricks that work when put into practice.

Many experts agree we all need approximately 50 hours of sleep per week, meaning a minimum of seven good quality hours per night. There is controversy on the concept of making up sleep, or "sleep banking." Sleep experts warn that counting on weekend catch up is not a good idea, but catching up can help, if needed. However, it is always better to stick to a schedule.

If the issue is falling asleep, the problem is likely poor "sleep hygiene." This is the official term for set steps to take before falling asleep. It is vital to avoid screen time 15 to 30 minutes before wanting to fall asleep and be consistent. It can also be good practice to have a bed be only for sleep or sex—not TV, reading, working, etc. Many women say they have difficulty falling asleep due to mind-racing once their head hits the pillow. The answer? Figure out your sleep patterns and follow a nightly routine.

To determine your sleep patterns, ask yourself some questions: Do you always have sleep trouble or only at certain times of the month? Or, if you are in menopause, did your sleeping difficulties start when your periods stopped? Or is your lack of sleep because you stay up too late trying to get things done around the house? Or, is your slumber affected during stressful times? Do you have trouble falling asleep? Do you fall asleep easily but wake up in the night unable to get back to sleep? Do you stay up too late, set the alarm for 5:00 a.m., and then hit snooze five times? If you answered yes to any or all of these questions, read the tips below!

TIPS TO GETTING A BETTER NIGHTS SLEEP

- Keep a daily gratitude journal and worry list to externalize your thoughts. Put them down on paper so you can empty them from your brain.
- Go to bed at the same time. Wake up at the same time.
- Get regular exposure to outdoor light or sunlight, preferably in the late afternoon.
- If you wake up in the middle of the night, get up and try metered breathing out of the bedroom.
- If hot flashes or night sweats are becoming a more regular thing, do five minutes of metered breathing before bed to settle down the thermostat and reduce hot flashes at night, and talk to a certified menopause practitioner for treatment options.
Visit [Menopause.org](https://www.menopause.org) to find one in your area.





VITAMINS



VITAMINS

MULTIVITAMIN, VITAMIN D, CALCIUM

Vitamins and minerals are worth their weight in gold. A daily multivitamin can be beneficial in supplying trace minerals for body function. Calcium is a multipurpose mineral. It plays a role in nerve transmission and muscle function. It is critical to maintaining our teeth and bones and reducing the risk of developing osteoporosis, a thinning of the bone that accelerates in postmenopausal women. According to The National Institutes of Health, in the first years after menopause, women lose an estimated 3% to 5% of their bone mass, leveling off at 1% per year after age 65. Vitamin supplements are helpful to ensure you are getting daily basic requirements in the case your diet is not adequate on a daily basis.

The easiest way to satisfy your body requirements is to take a daily multivitamin—anyone that agrees with your stomach and fits your budget. Of course, the best source for calcium is your diet, not a pill. Calcium-rich foods include yogurt, milk, kale, sardines with bones, cheese, Chinese cabbage, and broccoli. Too much calcium can increase the risk of kidney stones and heart disease by calcifying existing vessel plaque. The recommended daily dose of calcium for women 19 to 51 years of age is 1,000 mg. For women 51 and over, the Food and Nutrition Board at the Institute of Medicine of the National Academies recommends a daily dose of 1,200 to 2,000 mg. Supplements may be needed for those who are lactose intolerant or can't get the recommended dosage from food sources.

Vitamin D is essential for bone health and thought to impact inflammation, cancer risk, and health of blood vessels (studies in progress) and can be challenging to get from food sources. However, the best source of Vitamin D is direct exposure to sunlight. About 10 to 15 minutes of sunlight each day during the afternoon hours, three times a week may be adequate. Of the supplements available, Vitamin D3 is most readily absorbed by the body. The average woman (based on weight) requires approximately 2,000 IU per day. Ongoing research will better quantify the dose, but this dose is a good starting point. Your doctor can order a blood test if there are questions about absorption (i.e., if you had bariatric surgery).

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Vitamin D and Calcium are like a happily married couple; one doesn't do well without the other.

DIANA BITNER, MD

Therefore, it is important to make sure you are getting adequate amounts of each of these vitamins every single day!



FIBER



FIBER

35 GRAMS PER DAY

What is fiber? It's a substance in plant foods that the body cannot digest or absorb. Therefore, it passes virtually unchanged through the stomach and small intestine and into the colon. People with diets high in fiber have a lower risk of diabetes, heart disease, diverticulosis, constipation, and colon cancer. Eating fiber-rich foods also helps you feel fuller longer after every meal, helping curb overeating and weight gain.

Fiber is classified as either soluble or insoluble, and both are healthy additions to a daily diet. A healthy diet should be approximately three-fourths soluble fiber and one-fourth insoluble fiber, totaling 35 grams per day. There are many online guides to break down the details and advise how to get fiber, but here is a quick overview of the two different fiber types:

INSOLUBLE FIBER promotes the movement of food through your digestive system and increases stool bulk, so it can benefit those who struggle with constipation. Whole wheat flour, wheat bran, nuts, and vegetables are good sources. It can be hard to get enough, and therefore, it is okay to take a supplement. Insoluble fiber is important in maintaining healthy bowel movements (BM). I frequently talk to my patients about bowel movements, encourage healthy amounts of insoluble fiber, and probiotics to support formed bowel movements.

An aspect of this that is not talked about enough is the link to vaginal health. Many women suffer from pain with intercourse and chronic vaginal discharge with bad odor and staining of the underwear. It is often from a bacteria imbalance and accidental BM soiling. It is not as if there are obvious pieces of BM in the vagina. Still, even an invisible, small amount of bacteria in the vagina can cause symptoms, especially if your estrogen is low and your vagina pH is higher than normal. Semen has a high pH, and if you have a little extra bad bacteria in your vagina, and you have intercourse without a condom, the higher pH makes the bad bacteria grow.

So, it is important to keep your stools formed, rinse well with water after a loose stool, and see a healthcare provider if you have persistent stinky discharge. You may need a vaginal antibiotic to decrease the harmful bacteria and allow for the restoration of a healthy balance.

SOLUBLE FIBER, which dissolves in water, can help lower blood cholesterol and glucose levels, thus lowering cardiovascular disease and diabetes risk. You can get generous amounts of this in oats, peas, beans, apples, citrus fruits, carrots, rice, beans, barley, and psyllium. Refined or processed foods are lower in fiber, so try to eat those only on occasion.



NUTRIENTS

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Let food be thy medicine and medicine be thy food.

HIPPOCRATES



NUTRIENTS

HEALTHY CARBOHYDRATES

APPROXIMATELY 5 SERVINGS EVERY DAY

SMART FATS

APPROXIMATELY 3 SERVINGS EVERY DAY

HEALTHY PROTEINS

APPROXIMATELY 5 SERVINGS EVERY DAY

ONE TREAT

Smart eating for energy includes five servings of carbohydrates daily, five servings of proteins, and three fats. A basic guideline is to consider how many portions of each energy source you include in your daily diet. Here's the skinny on what you need and why you need it.

CARBOHYDRATES

Why do distance runners "carb-up" and eat lots of pasta before a marathon? The body needs carbohydrates to make energy. There are two different types of carbohydrates: sugars (or simple carbs) and complex carbs. Smart (good) sources of simple carbs are fruits and dairy. Unhealthy simple carbs include processed sugar such as table sugar, candy, sugary sodas, baked goods, and syrups. These are the ones that make us gain weight easily and turn into fat, which is stored in our belly. Smart (good) sources of complex carbs include vegetables, whole-grain bread and pasta, brown rice, and oatmeal. A good reference is **Sugarbusters**, by H. Leighton Steward, Morrison Bethea, Sam Andrews and Luis A. Balart.

The concept is based on the glycemic index. It is a rating scale based on how fast the carbohydrate is broken down into sugar, how high the sugar spikes in your blood, and how fast your blood sugar then drops. A high glycemic index food is a peppermint candy or orange juice. A low glycemic food is a sweet potato or grapefruit juice. Think about how differently you feel after choosing the high glycemic food choice instead of the low glycemic food. If you are paying attention, the low glycemic food has minimal sugar buzz (to get max benefits from a sweet potato, don't add brown sugar) and leaves you feeling full longer. Simple sugars are high glycemic index choices and can trigger a hot flash or trigger a night sweat if eaten before bed. It is recommended you get 45% to 65% of your calories from carbs. If you are on an 1,800 calorie per day diet, you should eat between 200 and 290 grams of carbs per day.



NUTRIENTS

CONTINUED

PROTEIN

Did you know that every cell in the body contains protein and that muscle is mostly protein? The body does not store protein, so we must get it through outside sources. Protein helps us to build muscle and feel fuller longer. The recommendation is that 10% to 35% percent of total daily calories comes from protein. For an 1,800 calorie diet, this equals between 45 and 160 grams of protein per day. Sources of complete protein are lean meat, fish, poultry, eggs, and dairy products. Incomplete proteins include plant sources such as beans, peas, nuts, seeds, and grains. If you're always on the go, opt for an easy protein fix such as ten almonds, a boiled egg, a small Greek yogurt, or a spoonful of peanut butter. An unhealthy protein would be fatty meals (NY strip steak).

HEALTHY FATS

We need a certain amount of fat in our diet, for example as in the Mediterranean Diet. Healthy fats are found in vegetable oils, fatty fish, avocado, and nuts. It is recommended that you eat three servings a day of these fats, spread throughout the day. Fat is needed for our cells' health and can help us feel satisfied and full, with less of a tendency to reach for the simple carbohydrates.





ACTIVITY

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**Exercise is a celebration of what your body can do.
Not a punishment for what you ate.**

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ACTIVITY

5,000 STEPS FOR WEIGHT MAINTENANCE 10,000 STEPS FOR WEIGHT LOSS.

AEROBIC • STRENGTH TRAINING • STRETCHING

A healthy exercise plan includes heart-raising aerobic exercise, strength training, and stretching. Activity is a big part of weight control, and it is time to examine your personal amount and type of activity. We need 5,000 steps a day to even think about maintaining our weight, and 10,000 steps per day to see weight loss. To support our metabolism, we must maintain or gain muscle. My book, **I Want To Age Like That**, is a great resource to help you create a plan. To maintain an activity, I point out that it is important to like the activity. This seems really simple, but so many women try to force themselves, for example, to jog, even if they hate to jog. It does not work!

In addition, practicing basic yoga several times a week can be very beneficial. It is relaxing, not strenuous, perfect for basic stretching, and can be used as a meditative practice. If you are looking for a deeper stretching routine and some strength training, you can try more strenuous yoga. An excellent yoga program is by **Baron Baptiste**, and his classes can be found on sites such as Youtube.

Even the smallest changes in your activity level can make a big difference. How do little bouts of exercise add up, and what kind of results can you expect to see in the grand scheme of things? By walking 10 minutes a day at a brisk pace, the average person (150 pounds) can expect to burn 60 calories. Repeating this activity every day for a month would burn a total of 1,800 calories or the number of calories required to burn off 0.5 lbs. of fat. Over a year, this would result in a six-pound weight loss. Add to that healthful dietary changes, and the possibilities increase exponentially.

Perimenopause can be the best wake-up call and the last opportunity to get it together. Once menopause sets in, there is a significant shift in metabolism, and for many, it becomes challenging to make changes. While it's never too late and never impossible to make changes, why wait until the effort required increases significantly? And don't forget the draining effects of stress and sleep deprivation. If your body is in survival mode, how can you expect it to release weight? How can you expect the appetite signals to work right and have the energy for good food choices and workouts? All these aspects fit together like a puzzle, and knowledge gives you the power to see the big picture.



MIND-BODY CONNECTION

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Mindfulness isn't difficult, we just need to remember to do it.

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MIND-BODY CONNECTION

ONE 5 - MINUTE INSTANCE EACH DAY OF METERED BREATHING AND GRATITUDE.

CLOSE MOUTH • OPEN EYES • FOCUS VISION ON A SINGLE SPOT • BREATHE NORMALLY THROUGH THE NOSE

Meditation, metered breathing, yoga, and other exercises that relax, reenergize, and revive your spirit and renew your optimism are almost as important as sleep in rejuvenating your body and mind. Sometimes a 10-minute back rub at a salon is a quick anti-stress fix. Taking a walk in the woods or visiting a museum can be just what you need to reset. Do something that takes you away, even for 15 minutes, from your worries and stresses.

Gratitude and metered breathing are very effective in getting us out of flight or fight mode and improving focus and memory. Try it before speaking publicly or talking with your boss. If you're feeling anxious, unmotivated, irritable, unhappy, or uncharacteristically pessimistic, it's time to focus even more on your emotional and spiritual wellness. Keeping a gratitude journal is an excellent way to keep you focused on your life's positive things. Every day, you should write down what you are grateful for that day. Have three go-to-gratitudes, meaning you have three tear-jerking things for which you are thankful (specific events that have happened), and you can remember those when you need them. You can change them if they start to lose their effectiveness.

Metered breathing can also be very effective in helping you return to sleep in the middle of the night, but it is best done in a quiet place out of bed before returning to go to sleep.

Here's how it works:

METERED BREATHING

- Sit comfortably in a quiet room in the house (not your bedroom) with your arms relaxed and take a deep cleansing breath.
- Close your mouth, open your eyes, and stare at a small object and breathe.
- If your mind wanders, then, without judgment, go back to breathing.
- The goal is five minutes, twice a day.

Once you get practiced, it is a great tool to do even one minute before a meeting, a confrontation, or an important phone call. And, it's especially helpful when trying to get back to sleep in the middle of the night. This practice gets you back in your body, turns off the fight-or-flight response, and allows your brain's smart parts to engage. As a bonus, metered breathing also allows your body to maintain a more expansive thermoneutral zone and decrease hot flashes.

NEXT STEPS

These SEEDS® seem like common sense, but how many do we do every day? I do not even like to prescribe hormones or medication to treat PMS or depression without first prescribing a course of SEEDS® alone. Medications can help modify or improve your system, but only with the other basics being supplied as well. Think of all the SEEDS® as gas in the engine—without gas, the car cannot go, even if the engine is extra fancy, the tires brand new, or the paint is really shiny.

I see many women in the **true.** Women's Health clinic who are on hormone prescriptions and still have hot flashes. Or, they are unable to take hormones because they have had breast cancer or have risk factors, like heart disease or untreated high blood pressure. I do not increase their hormone dose or give hormones to those in whom it would not be safe, but instead, help them think about how and where in their day to incorporate SEEDS®. Often, it just takes planning—when to drink the water (for teachers, nurses, or doctors), when to empty their bladders, when to exercise, what menu to plan, when to take vitamins and fiber, and how to incorporate metered breathing and mindfulness. The plan will be different depending on the circumstances. What amazes me is time after time, the SEEDS® work!

If you need help with health planning and want to learn more about how to incorporate SEEDS® into your life, come visit us at **true. Women's Health**. As a patient, you have access to our **true.** app where you can track your SEEDS® every day and have access to the many benefits of being a **true.** patient! Visit **truwomenshealth.com** to learn more!





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