

Men's Health Awareness

5 Powerful tips that men can apply now to improve physical and mental health without setting foot inside a gym.

By Mark Tregilgas (Founder of 30 Plus Mens Fitness)

There is so much confusion out there when it comes to weight loss and improving ones physical and mental health.

In this article I am going to give you 5 of the most powerful and applicable tips you can use right now to improve yours.

1) The Power of N.E.A.T

NEAT stands for Non – Exercise – Activity – Thermogenesis which accounts for the calories your burn on a day-to-day basis doing day-to-day stuff.

It's also probably one of the least considered yet powerful tools for health and fat loss.

Think taking the dog for a walk, hanging out the washing, taking the stairs instead of the lift, standing rather than sitting for periods and so on and so forth.

Put simply we all have a level of N.E.A.T and how much you do or don't do could be vital for your fat loss.

Despite being in the fitness industry since 2007 it was only around December 2016 that N.E.A.T became a buzzword in the industry.

Up until then it was only really considered that you would burn the majority of your calories via physical training.

I bought a Fit-Bit, then a Garmin and started to make a conscious effort to up my N.E.A.T and was amazed at just how many EXTRA calories you could burn just doing a 90-minute power walk.

Delving even further into N.E.A.T has been a real game changer for me.

I've actually done research and found there are some populations of women around the world who are the leanest, simply because their N.E.A.T is so high.

They cook, they clean, they take the kids everywhere, they run the house and they shop – this creates a MASSIVE calorie output so therefore you can see why they are lean!

I've taken a look at what all of my clients do for a living and those that are sat at a desk or driving all day – well there N.E.A.T is going to be very low so I am encouraging them to get out and walk at lunchtime or after work and try and hit the recommended 10,000 steps a day.

You can't lie when it comes to weight loss – the law of thermodynamics tells us you lose weight when you expend more energy than you take in, so if you are looking at your friend or family member and thinking they are lucky, they can eat what they want and still remain slim/ lean – ask yourself what they do for a living? Chances are they are on their feet all day or have a lot of active hobbies.

Therefore in my opinion, focusing on N.E.A.T is a win win situation for both physical and mental health.

Sedentary through the day? Can you walk to work? Can you get off the bus a stop earlier? Can you take a 30-minute power walk at lunchtime?

If you have an active job and are on your feet all day then you are going to be getting a massive head start on everyone else.

Therefore guys if you have a fitness tracker I want you to be hitting a goal of around 10,000 steps a day at least 5 days a week to get your N.E.A.T up.

Also from a mental health perspective there is nothing quite like going for a walk out in the elements in all weathers. We recently became dog owners and some of the happiest moments in recent times have been walking the dog with the family with my phone turned off.

I always return with a sense of calmness, clarity and accomplishment that I have added an extra 10,000 steps to my day.

2) Focus on sleep

Most men are not getting enough sleep.

Be it young children, working too much or staying up late to watch Netflix or be on their phones, the list of reasons could go on. Let me categorically state that for great physical and mental health, sleep is absolutely key.

Now I know if you have young kids, you will totally agree with me when I say that sleep deprivation is a form of torture right?

There are 2 hormones that we secrete when we suffer lack of sleep.

The first one is Ghrelin, this is a hunger hormone and actually makes us crave more food.

When my kids were young my appetite was out of control and I was always craving starchy carbohydrates, which of course are very easy to over eat!

The second is cortisol – this is a stress hormone and what do a lot of us do when stressed? Drink and eat, well at least I did. I gained 2 stone after my children were born and felt awful for a few years.

If you have a young family and are getting poor sleep right now then I totally empathise with you.

Trying to lose weight when you are sleep deprived can be an uphill battle for all the reasons stated above.

3) Get hydrated

Most men I meet are massively de-hydrated, living off endless coffees and countless diet drinks. The odd coffee and low calorie diet drink is fine BUT Water needs to be around 90% of your liquid intake a day. Aim for around 2-3 litres, which will help keep you hydrated, energised and also stave off any hunger which can often be confused with thirst. I remember first being told by a nutritionist many years ago that if I wanted more energy and to lose weight I should up my water intake.

I was simply astounded at how much more energy, clarity and focus I had, combined with a reduction in appetite.

Care first

Becoming hydrated is one of the simplest things you can do for health and vitality and I never ignore it.

How do you know if you are hydrated? Check the colour of your urine - if its yellow / brown you are dehydrated. If it's clear you are well hydrated.

Quick tip for those who will be upping their water intake; taper off around 6pm to avoid being up using the toilet all night.

4) Track calories and protein

Losing weight (fat) has always been about creating an energy deficit (this is the law of thermodynamics)

This means that in order to lose weight you must expend more energy in terms of daily activity, exercise and movement, than you take in via food and drink.

With the emergence of apps like MyFitnessPal or Fat Secret to track input and gadgets like Fit-Bits & Garmins to track output there has never been a better time to monitor your daily numbers.

I get emails daily from clients asking me to work out their macronutrient split but from talking to my peers on recent podcasts, to make things simple I believe there is only 2 things you should initially focus on to make life really simple.

1) CALORIES (sustainable deficit)

Workout a daily / weekly sustainable calorie deficit that you can adhere to over time.

You can work this out on MyFitness pal by punching in your stats. However the one I have been using in the last 5 weeks and found to be most reliable is www.calculator.net

If you want to lose 1lb a week, focus on a 500 calorie a day deficit to = 3500 cal weekly deficit.

If you want to lose 1.5lbs a week focus on a 750 deficit a day.

If you want to lose 2lbs a week focus on a 1000 cal deficit a day.

Now 1lb a week may not seem fast enough, however think about sustainability. You could play the long game and lose a stone in 14 weeks or 20lbs in 20 weeks without any real suffering as a 500 cal a day deficit is pretty easy to maintain.

Remember the more weight you want to lose, the more aggressive the deficit needed and you have to think about how long you can adhere to that.

2) PROTEIN

If you are looking at losing a lot of weight then you will have to accept some muscle loss. However if you are keeping your protein intake HIGH and lifting weights then you can actually retain and build small amounts of muscle whilst maintaining a daily deficit.

So how much do you need?

Well as a guide if you are pretty sedentary then take your weight in kilos and multiply it by 1.0.

Therefore if you were 90kgs you would need 90g of protein.

If you are pretty active and training up to 3 x per week I would multiply it by 1.5. Therefore a 90kg man would need 135g of protein.

If you are very active, on your feet all day, lifting weights, running, playing sports you could multiply bodyweight by between 1.8 and 2.0.

Therefore based on a 90kg man you would need anything up to 180g protein.

So there you have it guys, focus on calories and protein and the rest will take care of itself. If you've got a training day ahead, factor in some carbs pre and post.

5) Vegetables are KEY

Something I have learned that is vital if you want to lose weight and get leaner is to pile your plate with vegetables.

Veggies are awesome because they are packed full of vitamins and minerals and contain very little calories meaning that you can load your plate with them.

In years gone by before I became a trainer I gained weight eating a tonne of pasta, rice, potatoes and bread. Why?

It's not that these foods are inherently bad, it's just they are easy to overeat.

When I cut down (not eliminated) these types of food and ramped up my vegetable intake, I instantly lost weight and still felt as satisfied.

This is because vegetables are water based which means they expand in your stomach helping you feel fuller for longer.

That's not even going into the countless vitamins and minerals that foods like broccoli, spinach, kale, watercress, spinach, cauliflower, sprouts and green beans contain.

Seriously, experiment with reducing starchy carbs in every meal and get the vegetables on your plate and your waistline will thank you for it.

Also don't just limit veg to evening meals, get it at morning and lunch too!!

If you would like to view the **Webinar on 'Men's Health Awareness'** this is being delivered live on **Friday 19th June 2020 at 1pm-2pm**, please use the below link to register for this session –

<https://attendee.gotowebinar.com/register/8503637630390281488>

If you are unable to join the webinar live, a recording of the session can be accessed using the same link above after the webinar has taken place. If you wish to contact the Care first telephone counselling and information line then please don't hesitate to call the Freephone number provided by your organisation and you can speak to a professional in confidence.

Care first