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Week 30 of 52: Nutrition and Exercise

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Each emergency provides us with its own set of unique challenges. One aspect of emergencies that is always present and yet one we tend to overlook is the fact that we must adapt to the physical challenges an emergency presents. Some may find themselves chopping more firewood, or scaling rooftops or bending over more while gardening, thus putting more stress on the back. In any case, if your body is not prepared to handle this influx of physical activity, you will be more susceptible to injuries and strain.

The term "survival of the fittest" is not just a phrase someone coined to describe the evolution of organisms who best adapt to the environment. In a survival sense, those who are the fittest will have the greatest chance of surviving. Our bodies were not designed to sit stagnant at a desk for 8 hours a day. We have large muscular systems that were created to help us maintain a physical activity level. Yet, we have been conditioned to be sedentary due to our jobs, and ease of transportation. How do you think you can survive if your body is not conditioned to make it?

Here's another scenario, say you and your family have made the decision to [bug out of the city](#) ^[1]. If you have not conditioned your body to hike with multiple pounds of gear strapped to your back, then you will have a very difficult time bugging out. Lugging around extra pounds on your body on top of all the gear you have in a bug out scenario will quickly wear you out, could potentially cause an injury and even put you in harms way. Therefore, we must begin preparing the body now for those physical activities we may find ourselves in. Here are a few changes to consider:

- **You are what you eat** – Make healthy snacks ahead of time to avoid binge eating. When you are ready for a more dramatic change, get rid of your weaknesses (junk food, sodas, ice cream, chips, etc) and begin incorporating more healthy meals into your diet. To learn more about healthy eating habits, [click here](#) ^[2].
- **Drink lots of water.** We all know that water helps your body and organs function properly, so start drinking more water. It really does a body good.
- **Bring on the protein.** Adding more protein into your diet helps rebuild muscles that are torn from exercising. It also provides with more energy.
- **Strengthen your muscles**, especially those in your back by stretching exercises such as yoga. Cardiovascular activities are also a great way to strengthen muscle groups and lose the extra pounds.
- **Stretch regularly** - Stretching promotes blood circulation, strengthens and elongates muscles. Stretching before any type of activity can assist in preventing injuries from occurring.
- **Create muscle memory.** Any activity you believe you will be doing in an emergency situation, begin practicing in order to develop muscle memory. You want your body to be able to fall back on what it knows and what it is used to doing when an emergency occurs. This "second nature" response is very beneficial in an emergency situation.
- **Take your vitamins.** Vitamins have a beneficial effect on the body and also help build stronger muscles as well as assist in building the immune system.
- **Stop the bad habits.** Make a commitment today to stop consuming anything that is harmful including alcohol, tobacco products, and harmful drugs and substances. You do not want to be dealing with withdrawal symptoms during an emergency.

Personally speaking, I dusted off my elliptical machine last year and began incorporating an exercise program into my daily life. My goal was to prepare my body physically for working outdoors. When I began, I could barely do 20 minutes at the lowest setting. The more I

continued, the easier it got and I have worked myself up to 45 minutes/ 2-3 times a week. I have also included doing yoga to further strengthen my muscles. What I did not realize is the largest change I noticed wasn't the sweat equity, but I became more aware of what my body needed. Another great reward was the increased energy that I had. With three kids, a busy lifestyle and my homesteading hobbies, I needed all the energy I could get; and spending time on the elliptical gave me that much needed energy boost.

What you may find after incorporating physical exercise and stretching is that not only will you begin a physical transformation, but your mind and spirit will transform as a result of making healthier choices. Being physically well is realistic and a very important aspect of preparedness. Peter Holy, CEO of [123 Feel Better](#) ^[3] Company suggests that, "A physically healthy person is someone who strives to do all that they can to maintain their body at the optimum level of functioning both in times of sickness and good health...Total health reaches far beyond Physical Wellness, but adequate Physical Wellness provides a good foundation for a whole and complete life."

Action Items:

1. Start an exercise routine and make a commitment to do at least 10 minutes a day of physical activities and gradually build up when your body gets used to the workout.
2. Begin a daily vitamin regimen.
3. Plan healthy meals before you go grocery shopping and stock up on healthy snacks such as fruits, vegetables, seeds and nuts, trail mixes, eggs, yogurt, etc.
4. Always stretch your muscles before doing any type of physical activity.

Preps to Buy:

- Speak with a wellness advisor or physician about what your physical exercise plans are and short/long-term goals. See if they can give you any pointers.
- Buy any exercise equipment needed for your exercise regimen.
- Begin purchasing foods that will enhance your health. Some super foods to consider can be [viewed here](#) ^[4].
- If you plan on hiking outdoors, consider a good pair of hiking boots. More information can be [viewed here](#) ^[5].

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URLs in this post:

[1] bug out of the city: http://readynutrition.com/resources/are-you-ready-series-72-hour-kits_04122009/

[2] click here: <http://www.choosemyplate.gov/index.html>

[3] 123 Feel Better: <http://www.123feelbetter.net/>

[4] viewed here: http://readynutrition.com/resources/be-nutrition-ready-and-store-super-foods_23022011/

[5] viewed here: http://readynutrition.com/resources/are-you-ready-series-essential-footwear_28112009/

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