

MEE SCALE

Manage Stress, Exercise Everyday and Eat Well is an ongoing theme in my training practice. Doing those three things will do a great deal for our health; better management of blood lipids, blood pressure and body weight, increases in bone density, self-confidence, better sleep and the list goes on.

I developed the **MEE Scale** as a simple tool to rouse your thoughts and help you to quantify your efforts in stress management, daily exercise and healthy eating. Once you've done that, I can help you make some positive inroads to a healthier lifestyle.

The scale and subsequent scores are very easy to understand. I have assigned numbers 1 – 5 to each of the following; **Manage Stress, Exercise Everyday and Eat Well**. Those numbers have been assigned a value; poor, fair, average, good and excellent.

1 = Poor 2 = Fair 3 = Average 4 = Good 5 = Excellent

First, read the piece regarding managing stress. Then think about how well (or not so well) you “manage” your daily stress. Take your time to really think about how much stress you have and how you manage it. Include all types of stress; job, personal, emotional, health, financial etc. Make an honest appraisal. Now place a number 1 – 5 in the appropriate space. Repeat for Exercise and Eating.

Manage Stress - Stress can be a physical response or emotional interpretation or both to an outside stimulus. Certainly a degree of stress is a normal part of our functioning for human growth, keeping us motivated and stimulated throughout our day. However when we are overloaded with too much daily, weekly, job, personal, family, financial stuff, our coping strategies may become inadequate. The solution is to better manage our time and stress response. Remember, it may not only be the number of stressors, but how we “manage” stress. Ask yourself if you feel like you are tense, short tempered, frantic, anxious, uptight or agitated, especially over the little things. Now score your ability to manage stress.

Manage Stress

1	2	3	4	5
P	F	A	G	E

Score _____

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Exercise Everyday - The American Heart Association, American College of Sports Medicine, Center for Disease Control and Prevention, and the National Institutes for Health say that apparently healthy adults should be doing some kind of aerobic activity “most days” of the week. They agree that aerobic activities may include physical activity that elevates your resting heart rate (relative perceived exertion 6 – 8.5) to 60 – 85% of your age predicted max. heart rate for a minimum period of 30 minutes/day. Examples include brisk walking, jogging, tennis singles, bicycling, stair climbing, swimming, rowing etc. These organizations also say that in addition to the aerobic activity, there needs to be a weight bearing component 2 times/week to sustain and/or build muscle and bone and improve balance. Weight bearing activities are a component of what you do with me. Some of the benefits of exercise include increases in strength, stamina, balance and bone density, and improvements in blood lipids, blood pressure and blood glucose.

Exercise Everyday

1	2	3	4	5
P	F	A	G	E

Score_____

Eat Well - I felt this was the most time consuming, challenging and complex category to define. With that in mind, I have deferred to the U.S. Department of Health and Services, the U.S. Department of Agriculture and the Harvard School of Public Health for insight.

U.S. Department of Health and Services and U.S. Department of Agriculture:

Focus on fruits. Eat a variety of fruits—whether fresh, frozen, canned, or dried—rather than fruit juice for most of your fruit choices. For a 2,000-calorie diet, you will need 2 cups of fruit each day (for example, 1 small banana, 1 large orange, and 1/4 cup of dried apricots or peaches).

Vary your veggies. Eat more dark green veggies, such as broccoli, kale, and other dark leafy greens; orange veggies, such as carrots, sweet potatoes, pumpkin, and winter squash; and beans and peas, such as pinto beans, kidney beans, black beans, garbanzo beans, split peas, and lentils.

Make half your grains whole. Eat at least 3 ounces of whole-grain cereals, breads, crackers, rice, or pasta every day. One ounce is about 1 slice of bread, 1 cup of breakfast cereal, or 1/2 cup of cooked rice or pasta. Look to see that grains such as wheat, rice, oats, or corn are referred to as “whole” in the list of ingredients.

Get your calcium-rich foods. Get 3 cups of low-fat or fat-free milk—or an equivalent amount of low-fat yogurt and/or low-fat cheese (1 1/2 ounces of cheese equals 1 cup of milk)—every day. For kids aged 2 to 8, it’s 2 cups of milk. If you don’t or can’t consume milk, choose lactose-free milk products and/or calcium-fortified foods and beverages.

Go lean with protein. Choose lean meats and poultry. Bake it, broil it, or grill it. And vary your protein choices—with more fish, beans, peas, nuts, and seeds. Know the limits on fats, salt, and sugars. Read the Nutrition Facts label on foods. Look for foods low in saturated fats and trans fats.



Nutrition experts from the Harvard School of Public Health created the Healthy Eating Pyramid. It is based on the best available scientific evidence about the links between diet and health. This new pyramid fixes fundamental flaws in the USDA pyramid and offers sound information to help people make better choices about what to eat.



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The Healthy Eating Pyramid sits on a foundation of daily exercise and weight control. Why? These two related elements strongly influence your chances of staying healthy. They also affect what and how you eat and how your food affects you. The other bricks of the Healthy Eating Pyramid include:

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- 1. Whole Grain Foods** (at most meals). The body needs carbohydrates mainly for energy. The best sources of carbohydrates are whole grains such as oatmeal, whole-wheat bread, and brown rice. They deliver the outer (bran) and inner (germ) layers along with energy-rich starch. The body can't digest whole grains as quickly as it can highly processed carbohydrates such as white flour. This keeps blood sugar and insulin levels from rising, then falling, too quickly. Better control of blood sugar and insulin can keep hunger at bay and may prevent the development of type 2 diabetes.
- 2. Plant Oils.** Surprised that the Healthy Eating Pyramid puts some fats near the base, indicating they are okay to eat? Although this recommendation seems to go against conventional wisdom, it's exactly in line with the evidence and with common eating habits. The average American gets one third or more of his or her daily calories from fats, so placing them near the foundation of the pyramid makes sense. Note, though, that it specifically mentions plant oils, not all types of fat. Good sources of healthy unsaturated fats include olive, canola, soy, corn, sunflower, peanut, and other vegetable oils, as well as fatty fish such as salmon. These healthy fats not only improve cholesterol levels (when eaten in place of highly processed carbohydrates) but can also protect the heart from sudden and potentially deadly rhythm problems. (3)
- 3. Vegetables (in abundance) and Fruits (2 to 3 times).** A diet rich in fruits and vegetables can decrease the chances of having a heart attack or stroke; protect against a variety of cancers; lower blood pressure; help you avoid the painful intestinal ailment called diverticulitis; guard against cataract and macular degeneration, the major cause of vision loss among people over age 65; and add variety to your diet and wake up your palate.
- 4. Fish, Poultry, and Eggs (0 to 2 times).** These are important sources of protein. A wealth of research suggests that eating fish can reduce the risk of heart disease. Chicken and turkey are also good sources of protein and can be low in saturated fat. Eggs, which have long been demonized because they contain fairly high levels of cholesterol, aren't as bad as they're cracked up to be. In fact, an egg is a much better breakfast than a doughnut cooked in oil rich in trans fats or a bagel made from refined flour.
- 5. Nuts and Legumes (1 to 3 times).** Nuts and legumes are excellent sources of protein, fiber, vitamins, and minerals. Legumes include black beans, navy beans, garbanzos, and other beans that are usually sold dried. Many kinds of nuts contain healthy fats, and packages of some varieties (almonds, walnuts, pecans, peanuts, hazelnuts, and pistachios) can now even carry a label saying they're good for your heart.
- 6. Dairy or Calcium Supplement (1 to 2 times).** Building bone and keeping it strong takes calcium, vitamin D, exercise, and a whole lot more. Dairy products have traditionally been Americans' main source of calcium. But there are other healthy ways to get calcium than from milk and cheese, which can contain a lot of saturated fat. Three glasses of whole milk, for example, contains as much saturated fat as 13 strips of cooked bacon. If you enjoy dairy foods, try to stick with no-fat or low-fat products. If you don't like dairy products, calcium supplements offer an easy and inexpensive way to get your daily calcium.

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7. **Red Meat and Butter (Use Sparingly):** These sit at the top of the Healthy Eating Pyramid because they contain lots of saturated fat. If you eat red meat every day, switching to fish or chicken several times a week can improve cholesterol levels. So can switching from butter to olive oil.
8. **White Rice, White Bread, Potatoes, White Pasta, Soda, and Sweets (Use Sparingly):** Why are these all-American staples at the top, rather than the bottom, of the Healthy Eating Pyramid? They can cause fast and furious increases in blood sugar that can lead to weight gain, diabetes, heart disease, and other chronic disorders. Whole-grain carbohydrates cause slower, steadier increases in blood sugar that don't overwhelm the body's ability to handle this much needed but potentially dangerous nutrient.
9. **Multiple Vitamin:** A daily multivitamin, multimineral supplement offers a kind of nutritional backup. While it can't in any way replace healthy eating, or make up for unhealthy eating, it can fill in the nutrient holes that may sometimes affect even the most careful eaters. You don't need an expensive name-brand or designer vitamin. A standard, store-brand, RDA-level one is fine. Look for one that meets the requirements of the

USP (U.S. Pharmacopoeia), an organization that sets standards for drugs and supplements.

10. **Alcohol (in moderation):** Scores of studies suggest that having an alcoholic drink a day lowers the risk of heart disease. Moderation is clearly important, since alcohol has risks as well as benefits. For men, a good balance point is 1 to 2 drinks a day; in general, however, the risks of drinking, even in moderation, exceed benefits until middle age. For women, it's at most one drink a day. Now rate your overall eating habits.

Eat Well

1	2	3	4	5
P	F	A	G	E

Score_____

Total Score

Add your scores. Your minimum total score cannot be less than 3 points. Your maximum total score cannot exceed 15 points. Whatever the score, you should make every effort to advance to the next level. Scoring is as follows;

3 - 4 points	Poor	Need some serious help. One step at a time.
5 - 7 points	Fair	Strive to the next level.
8 - 10 points	Average	Nobody wants to be average. Keep trying.
11 -13 points	Good	You're almost there.
14 -15 points	Excellent	Job well done. Go eat some ice cream!

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