

FREE STARTER CHECKLIST

The Health Improvement Starter Checklist

Eight areas, one printable checklist, and a method for picking the three things worth doing first instead of the thirty things you will abandon.

Nobody fails at health improvement because they lacked a list. They fail because they had too much list and no order. This checklist is deliberately complete, and then it takes the complete version away from you and makes you choose three things.

Print it. Walk through each area and check only what is genuinely true this month. What is left unchecked is your menu, not your homework. The selection worksheet near the end is the part that decides whether any of this survives past week two.

START WITH A CLINICIAN, NOT A CHECKLIST

If you have a health condition, take prescription medication, are pregnant or postpartum, are recovering from illness or injury, or have symptoms that concern you, talk to a qualified clinician before changing your routine. Some of the items below are handled differently depending on your history, and a ten-minute conversation saves months of guessing.

Area 1: The foundations most plans skip

Before habits, structure

- ☐ I have a primary care clinician, and I know their name and number
- ☐ I have had a routine visit within the timeframe my clinician recommends for me
- ☐ I know which screenings and vaccinations are recommended for my age and history, because I asked
- ☐ My dental and vision care are current
- ☐ I keep a running note of symptoms and questions to raise at appointments
- ☐ I know what medications and supplements I take, and a pharmacist has reviewed the whole list
- ☐ I know my family history for the conditions that run in my family
- ☐ I have written down what I actually want from this, in one sentence
Not a target number. Something like: keep up with my kids, get through the workday without crashing, be able to travel comfortably.

Area 2: Movement

Both kinds, and the sitting in between

- ☐ I do something that raises my breathing rate on most days of the week

- ☐ I do something that loads my muscles against resistance at least twice a week
- ☐ I stand up and move for a few minutes at least once an hour when I am seated for long stretches
- ☐ Some walking is built into my day in a way that does not depend on motivation
- ☐ I do something for balance, if I am over 50 or have ever felt unsteady
Standing on one leg while brushing teeth is a legitimate start.
- ☐ I stretch or do mobility work at least a few times a week
- ☐ My activity is something I would still be doing in six months
The best exercise is the one you repeat, not the one with the best reputation.
- ☐ I have asked a clinician about anything that hurts, rather than training around it for a year

Area 3: Sleep

The multiplier on everything else

- ☐ My wake time is consistent within about an hour, including weekends
- ☐ I have a wind-down routine that starts before I get into bed
- ☐ My bedroom is cool, dark, and quiet enough
- ☐ My phone charges outside arm's reach of the bed
- ☐ I have a caffeine cutoff time and I keep it
- ☐ I usually wake feeling at least reasonably rested
- ☐ If I lie awake frustrated for a long stretch, I get up rather than fighting it
- ☐ I have raised loud snoring, gasping, or unrefreshing sleep with a clinician if it applies to me
This one is worth a real appointment rather than a habit fix.

Area 4: Eating patterns

These items are about rhythm, variety, and enough, not about restriction or body size. Nothing on this list asks you to cut, count, or earn anything.

Rhythm and variety

- ☐ I eat at broadly consistent times rather than nothing until late and everything at night
 - ☐ I eat something reasonably soon after waking
 - ☐ Most of my meals include a protein-containing food
 - ☐ Vegetables or fruit appear at most meals
 - ☐ Some fiber-rich food is in my day: whole grains, legumes, vegetables, or fruit
 - ☐ My kitchen is stocked so that the easy choice is a reasonable one
 - ☐ At least some meals are decided in advance rather than at the moment I am already starving
 - ☐ I eat at least one meal a day sitting down, away from a screen
 - ☐ Food is not a source of stress, guilt, or rules for me
- If it is, that is worth talking to a clinician or a registered dietitian about. It is common and it deserves proper support.
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Area 5: Hydration and what you drink

The most boring area, and the one people notice fastest

- ☐ Water is within reach where I spend my day, and I refill it
 - ☐ I drink something with breakfast rather than running on coffee alone
 - ☐ I know my caffeine total across coffee, tea, soda, and any energy or pre-workout products
 - ☐ I have thought about my alcohol intake honestly, and discussed it with a clinician if it concerns me
 - ☐ I drink more when it is hot, when I am active, or when I am unwell
 - ☐ I have asked a clinician about fluid intake if I have a heart, kidney, or other condition where it matters
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Area 6: Stress, mind, and rest

The part that undoes the rest when it is missing

- ☐ I have something I do regularly that reliably brings my stress down
 - ☐ There is at least one gap in my day with no input at all
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- ☐ I have a place where worries go: a notebook, a person, or a plan
 - ☐ I can decline things without an argument with myself
 - ☐ My notifications are configured by me rather than by the defaults
 - ☐ I have one thing in my week that exists purely because I enjoy it
 - ☐ I take actual time off, and it is in the calendar
 - ☐ I have talked to someone about my mental health if I have needed to
- Low mood or loss of interest lasting more than two weeks is a reason to see a clinician. If you are having thoughts of harming yourself, get help the same day.

Area 7: People

Consistently underrated on health checklists

- ☐ I have regular contact with people I care about, and some of it is scheduled
- ☐ I have at least one person I would tell if something were genuinely wrong
- ☐ I am part of something recurring with other people: a class, a team, a group, a shift, a congregation
- ☐ I have someone who would notice if I disappeared for two weeks
- ☐ If I am caring for someone else, I have help and I have my own appointments booked

Area 8: Environment and safety

The setup that makes good choices cheap

- ☐ My home has working smoke and carbon monoxide alarms, tested recently
- ☐ My home has a first aid kit that is stocked and in date
- ☐ My walkways, stairs, and bathroom are set up to reduce fall risk
- ☐ My workspace does not force me into a position that hurts by the afternoon
- ☐ I use sun protection appropriate for my skin and my climate
- ☐ I wear the right protection for what I do: seat belt, helmet, hearing protection, eye protection

☐ The things I want to do more of are visible and easy to reach
Shoes by the door, water on the desk, mat left out.

☐ The things I want to do less of require an extra step
Friction is a more reliable tool than willpower.

Now choose three

Look back at the unchecked boxes. There will be more of them than you can act on, which is why the next step is subtraction rather than planning. Choose three, and only three, using the filter below.

1 One that is medical, if any apply

A missed appointment, an unasked question, a symptom you have been sitting on. These outrank every habit on the list.

2 One that is upstream

Sleep and daily rhythm make everything else easier. Movement makes mood and sleep easier. Pick something that improves the conditions for other changes rather than something isolated.

3 One that is embarrassingly easy

Something you are 95 percent confident you will still be doing in a month. You need one guaranteed win to keep the other two alive.

4 Give each a time and a place

A habit with no when and no where is a wish with better vocabulary.

5 Define the floor version of each

The two-minute version for bad weeks. On bad weeks the floor is the whole habit, and it still counts.

6 Decide the rule for missing

Miss once, fine. Never miss twice in a row. Decide it now, while you are calm.

7 Put a review date on the calendar

Thirty days out. Re-read this checklist then, and choose the next three.

Change 1

~~The medical one, if any apply~~

When and where it happens

Its two-minute floor version

Change 2

~~The upstream one~~

When and where it happens

Its two-minute floor version

Change 3

The embarrassingly easy one

When and where it happens

Its two-minute floor version

What I am deliberately NOT working on this month

Write at least five things here. This is the useful half of the exercise.

My 30-day review date

Questions for my next appointment

The thirty-day tracker

MARK THE WEEKS. THREE HABITS, FOUR WEEKS, ONE PAGE.

Habit	Week 1	Week 2	Week 3	Week 4	Kept?
Change 1					
Change 2					
Change 3					

What to raise at your next appointment

Bring a written list. Fifteen minutes goes fast, and the thing you forget is usually the thing you went in for.

- Any symptom that has been present for weeks, or that is getting worse
Fatigue, pain, breathlessness, changes in digestion, sleep, mood, memory, or continence.
- Which screenings and vaccinations are recommended for you
This depends on your age, history, and risk factors, which is why it is a question rather than a rule.

- **Whether it is safe to start or increase exercise, and what to avoid**

Especially with heart, lung, joint, or blood pressure considerations, pregnancy, or a recent injury.

- **A review of every medication and supplement you take**

Bring the actual containers or photos of the labels.

- **Anything you are taking without the prescriber knowing**

- **Sleep problems, snoring, or waking unrefreshed**

- **Mood, anxiety, alcohol, or anything you have been avoiding raising**

Clinicians have heard it. The visit is the correct place for it.

- **What numbers, if any, they want you to track at home, and what would mean calling them**

DO NOT WAIT FOR THE REVIEW DATE

Seek prompt medical care for chest pain or pressure, difficulty breathing, sudden confusion, sudden weakness or numbness on one side, difficulty speaking, a sudden severe headache, fainting, uncontrolled bleeding, or any symptom that is severe or frightening. Get help the same day if you are having thoughts of harming yourself.

YOUR NEXT STEP

Three changes a month, with something arriving every week

The Health Improvement Guru Insider Newsletter is built for exactly this rhythm: one area at a time, practical breakdowns of movement, sleep, daily energy, and routine care, and clear guidance on what belongs in a habit plan versus what belongs in a doctor's office.

Join the Insider Newsletter at healthimprovementguru.com, \$15/mo

Important. This checklist is general wellness information and is not medical advice. It is not intended to diagnose, treat, cure, or prevent any condition, and it is not a substitute for evaluation by a qualified clinician. Screening, vaccination, activity, and medication decisions depend on your individual history and should be made with your doctor. Consult a clinician before changing your activity, sleep, or eating routine, particularly if you are pregnant, managing a health condition, or taking prescription medication.