

THE WOMEN'S
Vitality CENTER



VITAL FIRST STEPS

A quickstart guide to begin boosting your energy
and balancing your hormones.

Welcome to The Vitality Club

As you begin your journey to vitality, this document will give you a few first steps to get started. Here at The Women's Vitality Center, we believe in meeting you exactly where you are.

If it feels like too much of a challenge to take on all of the Vital First Steps, please know that it is perfectly OK to pick just ONE thing to focus on at a time. Or if you are a person who takes on all of the things and is driven to do them perfectly, we encourage you to slow down and just pick a few things to focus on first.



Welcome

**Your
Vital First Steps
include:**

Healthy Habits

Food Philosophy

Stress and Hormones

Tips for Staying on Track

Progress



not

Perfection

One of our favorite mantras is, "Progress, not perfection."

Health is a journey, and there will be ups and downs, twists and turns, along the way. Sometimes you can be super consistent and will be making great progress, and other times you may fall off track as other things get in the way.

All of that is OK.

We invite you to approach your self-care practices like meditation... meaning that when you get distracted, know that is perfectly normal. There is no need to beat yourself up about it. Just come back to your healthy habits again, and again, and again.

The Vital Method

This is The Women's Vitality Center's (TWVC) signature approach that helps you build an upward spiral and guides you on your journey to optimal vitality.



Validate

Your experience is real, and you deserve to be heard, seen and supported on your healing journey based on what matters to you.



Investigate

Get to know the whole story including your history, how your health is impacting you now, and information from pertinent labs.



Target/Track

Take targeted action to address obstacles, and track your progress.



Adjust

Make adjustments and get help to stay on track as you keep focused on your goals.

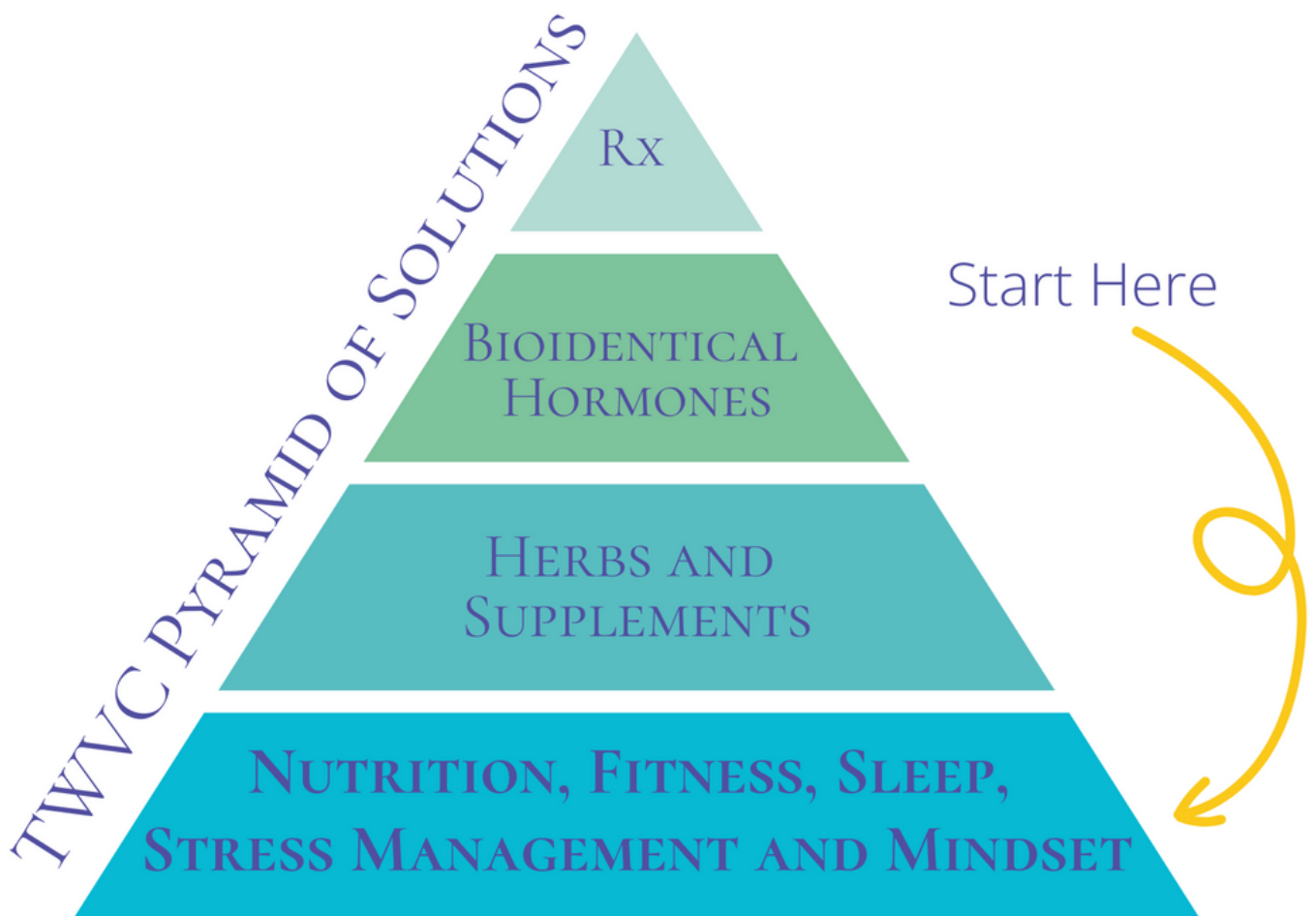


Live it up!

Enjoy your life and be a positive influence on the world around you.

Pyramid of Solutions

The Vital First Steps focuses on the foundations that will improve your overall health and hormone balance. We have found that 80% (yes, 80%!) of people's symptoms will improve significantly by addressing this foundational layer in our Pyramid of Solutions.



Use Your Habits to create self-care routines to support you.

As part of the natural world, our bodies work in daily, weekly, monthly and annual rhythms. In order to support the daily circadian rhythm of the adrenal glands, we recommend you build your habits into AM routines, PM routines, and weekly routines that support these three rhythms:



Sleep/Wake Rhythm



Exercise/Rest Rhythm



Eating/Fasting Rhythm

Our Replenish program goes into all of this in more detail and help you to solidify your self-care habits. In this Vital First Steps document we are giving you the foundations to get you started.

The VITAL Habits

Your life is really made up of the sum of your habits – it's the little things you do over and over, day in and day out, that collectively create your results. So, below are the habits that, over time, add up to good adrenal health and plenty of energy for all you need and want to do. When you have these habits working for you, you also have a great foundation in place that will help you to address any other health issues that you might be facing.



Sleep/Wake Rhythm

Wake up at the same time every day. (Yes, even on the weekend!)

Start your day in a positive frame of mind. When you wake up, ask yourself "How do I want to feel?" and set 3 intentions that will allow you to feel the way that you want to feel that day.

Starting at least 30 minutes before the time you want to go to sleep, wind yourself down in soothing ways.

Go to bed early enough to allow for 7-9 hours of sleep. This may require planning to eat dinner earlier.



Exercise/Rest Rhythm

Move your body first thing in the morning. Even just stepping outside for a stretch will help.

Keep moving and take advantage of all of the small opportunities to move your body during your day.

Practice a form of mindfulness. Whether meditation or deep breathing or something else, even just 5 minutes a day will help calm your nervous system.

Allow for a few minutes of intentional "letting go" and "calming your mind." Create a relaxation practice as part of a wind down routine the last 10-30 minutes before bed.



Eating/Fasting Rhythm

Hydrate yourself with a large glass of water upon waking and then eat a healthy breakfast that includes about 20-30g of protein.

Eat lots of veggies and plant foods throughout the day and plan ahead for your meals.

Chew slowly, chew a lot, and eat enough protein, fat, and fiber at each meal to feel satisfied. Then you won't want to snack between meals.

Eat a light, healthy dinner at least 2-3 hours before bed.

The Women's Vitality Center's Food Philosophy

How do you know what to eat?

The fact is that different diet strategies work for different people, so the answer really depends on YOUR own body! Some people feel better avoiding alcohol, caffeine, sugar, gluten, dairy or other foods, but not everyone needs to avoid these all of the time. As you are getting started, we recommend experimenting with these to discover what works best for you.

In addition to eating to support your health, we know that food has emotional as well as cultural significance. Other factors, such as the impact on the environment or religious/spiritual beliefs, may influence your food choices too. Therefore, our goal is to provide enough flexibility to adapt our guidance to the foods that are meaningful and enjoyable to you.

Our food philosophy is simple: Eat whole foods from clean sources (wild or organic when possible with animal sourced foods coming from animals raised on their naturally intended diets - e.g., 100% grass fed beef, wild caught fish, etc.). Include lots of plants, avoid processed foods, and pay close attention to how your body feels with each food choice you make.

We invite you to be open to exploring and finding new favorite dishes, but rest assured that you don't have to abandon the foods and flavors you love in order to be "healthy." Traditional meals from every culture can support your health when you understand how to choose and balance healthy proteins, fats and carbs.

Include “PFF” at every meal

Focus on including enough Protein, Fat and Fiber (PFF) at every meal to help your body have a gentle rise and fall of blood sugar that lasts several hours after you eat. This is a key eating strategy to help balance your blood sugar and support your adrenals, which translates to better, more balanced, energy and moods throughout your days.

To put this into practice, simply adjust the amount of each of these three until you find the balance that works best for your body and satisfies you for 4-5 hrs.

#1 - increase the amount of high quality Protein

#2 - include more healthy Fats

#3 - add some extra Fiber*

*Please note that by “fiber”, we primarily mean lots and lots of veggies. You might also add beans and whole grains, depending on your body’s needs, as well as nuts and seeds (flax and chia are especially great sources of extra fiber).

Additional grains, starchy veggies and fruit should be accents to PFF, rather than the “main event” for meals and snacks.

Pro Tip - Many patients find that a late afternoon PFF snack before they get into the rush of their late afternoon/evening activities can help them feel calmer and make better food choices in the evenings.

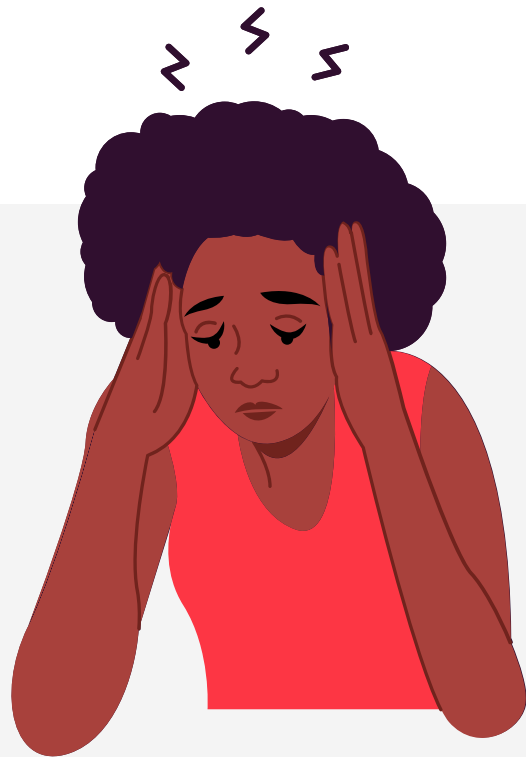
Note - For more information, check out our Food Guide in the Replenish program.

STRESS and HORMONES

Be aware of the role that STRESS plays in your health and in your life. When you experience ongoing stress (physical, mental or emotional), your body gets stuck in “fight-or-flight” mode (aka, sympathetic nervous system), and you are literally cut off from your ability to heal, which happens when your body is in “rest-and-digest” mode (aka, the parasympathetic nervous system).

The adrenal glands (which produce our main stress hormone cortisol) help your body to respond to stress, and also help your body to regulate your circadian rhythm throughout each 24-hour cycle. When working well, your adrenals help you “get up and go” in the morning, keep you energized and focused through the day, and then lower levels of cortisol to help you wind down and get a good night’s sleep.

However, when your adrenals are overwhelmed trying to respond to so much stress, they don’t work as well. This can lead to fatigue and burnout, as well as many other hormonal imbalances and health issues.



A place to begin is to identify the biggest drains on your energy. Check out the [Top 7 Energy Drains](#), along with simple solutions to begin to turn down the stress. Acknowledging and addressing these will help to optimize wellness and vitality over the long run.

Top 7 Energy Drains

1. Doing things that aren't aligned with your skills/abilities/interests and spending your time on things that drain you.

SOLUTION - Lighten up your to do list by releasing, reconsidering and re-prioritizing what isn't aligned. Check out the Replenish program for an exercise that will help you do just that.

2. Getting caught up in solving other people's problems.

SOLUTION - Let others walk their own path. It can be challenging, but you can be even more helpful by listening and being supportive while maintaining healthy boundaries.

3. Waiting until the last minute and then finding yourself addressing fires.

SOLUTION - Look at each week ahead of time to plan and visualize how you want it to go. Focus on the truly important things and schedule time for those projects. Be sure to include buffer time for the unexpected and get proactive and preventive.

4. Mainly doing things that you "have" to do, but not feeling aligned with them.

SOLUTION - Discover what you really love and get clear about why it is important to you. There can be freedom and power in making a choice from that place. Sometimes the empowered choice is to let something go or to set clear boundaries.

5. Nothing ever feels "good enough."

SOLUTION - Celebrate your accomplishments looking back from time to time and giving yourself 100% full credit for how far you have come. Forgive yourself for detours and stay committed to the journey. Consider how you define success - living by values-driven goals versus end game achievements.

6. Measuring your self-worth based on what you "do" instead of who you already are.

SOLUTION - Remember that you are valuable just because you are here, not because of what you do or accomplish. You deserve to feel amazing, and you are worth prioritizing and taking care of just because you are you.

7. "All-or-nothing" thinking/ Perfectionism

SOLUTION - Remind yourself of the mantra is "Progress not perfection" and allow yourself to sometimes do "minimal" versions of healthy habits. Commit to paying attention to your body and notice how you feel. If you are on track most of the time, you are building trust in your body which is resilient, and able to handle the occasional ups and downs.

Check out our Replenish program for more strategies on how to manage your stress, heal your adrenals, and balance your hormones.

Tips for Staying On Track

Now that you have begun your journey toward vitality, there may be bumps along the way that can derail you from healthy habits. Here are 12 tips to help you stay on track.

- 01. Brainstorm “obstacles” that come up for you** - the kinds of things that come up and usually throw you off track. When you can think about these things AHEAD of time you can also think through possible solutions that will support you the next time the obstacle comes up.
- 02.** Do you find that different parts of yourself want opposite things? Well, **get the different “parts” to work together.** Acknowledge the parts of you that are speaking and listen for the positive intention behind those impulses. When that voice chimes in with negative self-talk, or tempting you away from the healthy path you are trying to follow... sit and listen for a while. Really hear what it is that this voice ACTUALLY wants for you and then... ask it what it needs.
- 03. Know your “why” for getting healthy** - be clear about what it is that you really want and WHY want it. This “Big Why” helps you to commit at the start and recommit when you experience ups and downs. There are times when you may fall off track (and that it OK). Being connected to your “big why” will help you to get back on track more quickly.
- 04. Be flexible** because flexibility allows you to roll with the natural ebb and flow of life. It will not be a straight line from where you are to where you would like to be. Success is really about being flexible and having some fluidity, while keeping your eye on your goals and your “big why” as you continually moving toward them.
- 05. Approach your healthy self-care practices like meditation.** If you get distracted from your self-care that is perfectly normal. There is no need to beat yourself up about it. Just come back to your healthy habits again, and again, and again.
- 06. Treat your body like a dear friend.** Talk to yourself the way that you would someone that you have compassion for and love. This really helps a lot with moving towards staying on track because it is developing a caring relationship with your body.

Tips for Staying On Track

07. **Embrace Vitamin P (Pleasure).** Complete restriction is not sustainable, and your inner rebel will have its way one day. Allow yourself some Vitamin P. Even when it is something that is otherwise unhealthy or would be considered “bad” for you, if it is giving you pleasure then it is OK from time to time. Truly allowing and incorporating pleasure on purpose is a real key to long term success.
08. For travel the biggest tip is to **plan ahead.** **FOOD:** bring healthy snacks that include nuts, jerky sticks, hard boiled eggs, or clean, low sugar protein bars. **FITNESS:** Bring exercise clothes and use the hotel’s gym, or plan on going for a long walk when you arrive. When you get back, give yourself time for a big hike/walk so that you can get back into your body. **SLEEP:** Travel with an eye mask and ear plugs to help to create the environment for sleep. Follow a wind-down routine that is similar to the one that you do at home. **SELF-CARE:** Prioritize your own needs - be willing to do something, even if it seems a “hassle,” in order to help you take care of yourself in the way you know you need to. You are guaranteed to be glad that you did.
09. **Socializing** is another area where people feel like they can get off track easily. Again, planning and preparation are going to be helpful. Eat before you go out or suggest outings that don’t always center around food and alcohol, such as hiking, seeing music, game nights, or doing crafts. Be creative and have fun.
10. When eating out, be sure to **drink water** before going out to eat, **say no to the bread,** and order a healthy appetizer or salad right away so that you have something else to enjoy if there is bread on the table. Also be willing to **order the side of veggies** even though they cost extra. You are worth the avocado.
11. Be loud and proud. **State your health goals out loud.** Find a friend or someone in your life who is willing to be your accountability partner to help you stay on track.
12. As you build these healthy daily habits and rhythms, creating your new normal, try to think through ahead of time what would be a BTN (**Better Than Nothing**) version of the habit. A minimal version allows your habits and rhythms to keep a place in your normal routine when life gets busy - never skip doing your BTN to establish the pattern or habit.

We are so glad that you are here.

These are your Vital First Steps, and there is so much more that will be shared with you during your time as a member at The Women's Vitality Center.

Patients at the Center work closely with their care team through the Vital Method, and will be able to refer back to these foundations for good health. As a member of The Vitality Club you have access to our online community and offerings. There you will find more in-depth tips and suggestions on how to deepen your journey toward vitality and feeling great.

We are so happy to have you as part of The Women's Vitality Center wellness community and are available to help you to get the best care possible. As you continue working to get healthier, if you find that you are struggling, please keep in mind that we are here to help.

We see you and want to support you as you are diving into your wellness journey, and we would love to hear how you are doing.

