

NATALIA BOFFI

# First steps towards a healthy lifestyle and diet

FREE



A FREE GUIDE FROM  
HEALTHY STARTS HERE FOR YOU





# HELLO!

*I just wanted to say congrats on deciding to download the guide. It means you're ready to make a change and gain some knowledge about the basics that will lead you to a healthier, happier, and more youthful life.*

*By committing to implementing these pillars in your daily routine, you'll start seeing the benefits firsthand. Trust me, I apply all the steps from this guide in my own life and with everyone I help who's looking for new ways to tackle unhealthy lifestyles and eating habits.*

*I truly believe there's always something to learn and room for improvement. So let's dive in and start this journey together!*

*Welcome,*

*Natalia Boffi*

*Integrative Nutrition Health Coach®*

# CONTENT

## PART 1

- 1 Basic concepts of Nutrition
- 2 Food groups
- 3 What we should NOT consume
- 4 Key Terms You Should Know

## PART II

- 5 Importance of Physical Activity,  
Motivation to Exercise
- 6 Proper Stress Management
- 7 Overcoming Excuses
- 8 Maintaining Focus and Motivation

## PART 1

### 1

## BASIC CONCEPTS OF NUTRITION

Nutrition is a fundamental factor. We can see how the industrial era has led society towards the mass consumption of processed and packaged products, filled with chemicals and additives. The narrative behind it was to make our lives a little easier because it's always simpler to eat something that's already practically ready, rather than dedicating time to cooking. From my own experience, I can say that it's incorrect and false to believe that they make our lives easier. In the short term, it may seem that way, but in the long run, it leaves us with so much to fix that the immediate convenience is not worth it.

However, this supposed convenience (instant gratification) has distanced people from their original diet, the one our ancestors followed, which primarily consisted of what they could hunt and harvest. That natural diet, free from toxins and rich in minerals and vitamins, has been compromised. Personally, I have found great help in adopting a proper diet, such as following a Mediterranean diet with carbohydrate control. You've probably heard of it before, but before delving into any specific diet, I want us to first understand each food group.

## FOOD GROUPS



## CARBOHYDRATES

Carbohydrates are one of the macronutrients found in food and provide one of the possible sources of energy for the body.

Most foods contain carbohydrates in varying proportions (hence the importance of choosing wisely).

Depending on their composition, carbohydrates can be classified as:

**Simple Carbohydrates:** Their main characteristic is their immediate assimilation. Sugars (glucose, fructose, lactose) enter the bloodstream and convert into instant energy. Be cautious with them as they are quickly absorbed, which spikes your insulin levels. Remember that insulin is the "hunger hormone" and prevents you from utilizing your fat stores as energy (i.e., it keeps you chubby). Every time we experience an insulin spike, we gain body fat and lose muscle mass.

**Complex Carbohydrates:** Their main characteristic is providing energy over longer periods of time. These carbohydrates are absorbed slowly, therefore, they do not trigger insulin secretion.

How does the body use carbohydrates? When you consume carbohydrates and they are absorbed by the body, your cells can use a portion of the glucose immediately, while the unused portion is stored in the muscles and liver as glycogen. However, only a limited amount can be stored, and the excess carbohydrates are directly converted into FAT, specifically triglycerides, and stored by the body (visceral fat, the most difficult to eliminate).

To avoid this situation, it is recommended to follow a low-carbohydrate diet (such as keto, paleo, or a Mediterranean diet with carbohydrate control). By reducing carbohydrate intake, you can control blood sugar levels, insulin levels, promote the burning of body fat, have better appetite control, eliminate cravings, and experience greater satiety.

An important aspect is to stop thinking that carbohydrates refer only to pasta, bread, and rice, as many foods contain carbohydrates, including vegetables, fruits, and nuts.



## PARTE 1

2

### FOOD GROUPS



### PROTEINS

A protein is composed of smaller units known as amino acids. The human body needs a total of 20 amino acids, and although most of them are produced by the body itself, there are 9 that we need to obtain through food, known as essential amino acids.

We can distinguish two types of proteins:

- **Animal-based proteins**, also known as complete proteins, as they contain all 9 essential amino acids in their composition and are easily absorbed.
- **Plant-based proteins**, also known as incomplete proteins, as they do contain amino acids but not all essential amino acids are present in their composition, making them more difficult to absorb.

Consuming proteins correctly helps reduce appetite, allowing for better control and preventing overeating. This leads to a good level of satiety and weight control.

I invite you to experience it yourself by trying a protein-based breakfast on one day and a carbohydrate-based breakfast on another day. Take note of when you feel the need to eat your next meal. You will see how the protein-based breakfast keeps you satisfied for a longer time.

It is important to note that digesting proteins requires the body to burn more calories. Therefore, it helps in maintaining a healthy weight.

FOOD GROUPS



FATS

Fats are nutrients that provide energy. Fats contain 9 calories per gram. Fats also aid in the absorption of fat-soluble vitamins A, D, E, and K.

I know we're entering a territory where you'll need to unlearn certain things. When it comes to talking about fats, there needs to be a shift in perspective, as for a long time they were seen as the enemies of our bodies. Even today, despite numerous studies proving otherwise, many people still fear consuming fats, and this fear is directly associated with cholesterol. So, let's take a brief moment to address and clarify this point.

Cholesterol is vital for our health:

- It is essential for life.
- It is a part of cell membranes and is necessary for their repair.
- It plays a role in the production of certain hormones such as estrogen, progesterone, and testosterone.
- It constitutes 35-40% of the central nervous system (the brain).

Cholesterol is not an enemy; on the contrary, it is a necessary ally for maintaining good health.

FOOD GROUPES  
TYPES OF FATS

**SATURATED FATS:**

Saturated fats are solid at room temperature. They are mostly found in animal-based foods such as milk, cheese, and meat. Poultry and fish have less saturated fats compared to red meats. Saturated fats are also present in tropical oils such as coconut oil, palm oil, and cocoa butter. Healthy options: Organic butter, organic cream, ghee (clarified butter), coconut oil.

**TRANS FATS:**

Trans fats are fats that have been modified through a process known as hydrogenation. This modification makes them more durable and solid at room temperature. These are the harmful fats that you should eliminate from your diet. They are found in processed foods, fried foods, margarine, and vegetable oils, primarily.

**UNSATURATED FATS:**

Monounsaturated fats: These fats are found in avocados, nuts, and vegetable oils such as canola oil and olive oil. Healthy options: Olive oil, nuts, avocado, olives.

Polyunsaturated fats: These fats are mainly found in vegetable oils such as safflower oil, sunflower oil, sesame oil, soybean oil, and corn oil. Polyunsaturated fats are also the primary fat found in fatty fish and seafood. Omega-3 fatty acids. Omega-6 fatty acids. Healthy options: Fatty fish, grass-fed meat, organic eggs, chia seeds.



## WHAT WE SHOULD NOT CONSUME



## SUGAR

It is a silent enemy that is everywhere, in obvious places and others not so much. It has so many names that many people, when they check a label, only look for the word "sugar" and may end up buying something that does contain it, just under a different name.

The serious problem is that excessive and frequent consumption of sugar is the cause of a large number of chronic diseases such as diabetes, heart problems, obesity, to name a few.

Many people seek that sweet taste as a kind of refuge or emotional comfort, for moments of stress or anxiety, becoming addicted to it. That's why those who decide to eliminate sugar from their lives often suffer from withdrawal symptoms, similar to those experienced when quitting a drug.

When you eat sugar, the enzymes in saliva break it down, and then the molecules are converted into glucose by the intestines and gastric juice. The blood absorbs the glucose, and the pancreas is stimulated to produce insulin. Insulin transports the glucose to the cells, while the excess is stored by the body for later use, thereby converting and accumulating as excess triglycerides and body fat (especially visceral fat, which is the most difficult to eliminate).

WHAT WE SHOULD NOT CONSUME



GLUTEN

The industrialization and genetic modification of cereals have made them increasingly less nutritious and unrecognizable to our bodies, leading us to states of chronic inflammation. One of the most advanced viewpoints in modern medicine places utmost importance on the issue of chronic inflammation and its fundamental link to chronic and degenerative diseases.

The relationship between gluten-containing foods and inflammatory processes that begin in the colon and then manifest as overweight, diabetes, arthritis, lupus, fibromyalgia, and cancer is now a matter that medicine cannot overlook if we want individuals to lead a healthy and long life.

The process can be described as follows:

**GLUTEN -> Inflammation of the colon -> Leaky gut -> Systemic inflammation -> Chronic disease -> Premature aging**

The opposite would be:

**NO GLUTEN -> Healthy gut -> Systemic inflammation reduction -> Health -> Longevity**

If we want to heal, we must understand what is making us sick and consciously choose our diet to avoid fueling the fire.



## PART 1

4

### KEY TERMS YOU SHOULD KNOW

I want to provide you with additional information in this section to help you make the most informed food decisions.

These are some terms that can be useful when shopping:

**ORGANIC:** These are foods that have been grown without synthetic pesticides, chemical fertilizers, and other additives. The term is commonly used when referring to vegetables, but it can also apply to meats and eggs. These foods contain higher levels of antioxidants. It's worth checking annually the 12 most contaminated foods and which ones are not, so you can decide which ones to buy organic and which ones don't necessarily need to be, making it more economically viable. You can verify this information through the following links: <https://www.ewg.org/foodnews/dirty-dozen.php> and <https://www.ewg.org/foodnews/clean-fifteen.php>.

**NON-GMO:** First, it's important to understand that a GMO (Genetically Modified Organism) food is one that has been genetically modified, either to make it resistant to a product like herbicides or to improve its appearance. These foods are abundant and have many negative effects, so it's important to verify that what you are consuming is non-GMO.

**NATURAL:** These are foods that have not undergone industrial processing and do not contain additives, hormones, sweeteners, colorings, or flavorings. They are the best foods and should be the ones you include most in your diet. Be cautious as the term "natural" is often used on labels, such as "natural flavors," which is not truly natural but rather processed.

**GLUTEN-FREE:** Perhaps the most well-known term, and one you may pay close attention to when shopping.

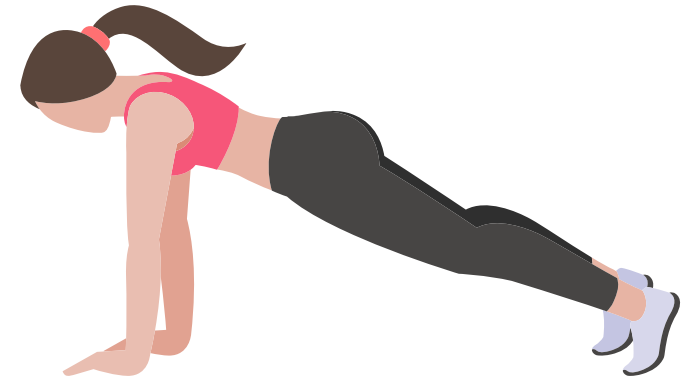
**NO HORMONES ADDED:** This applies to animal-derived foods, especially meats, which have not had additional hormones added during rearing. Adding hormones to animals is common to make them grow faster and larger, but these hormones can be detrimental to our health.

**FREE RANGE:** This term is commonly used on labels of meats, poultry, and eggs, indicating that the animals were allowed to roam freely during their upbringing. Such meats are more nutritionally balanced, containing higher amounts of vitamins and fatty acids.

**GRASS-FED:** This term indicates that the animal has been naturally fed on grass that was free from pesticides, fertilizers, and chemicals, and that its meat does not contain any added hormones. These animals were raised in a calm and free manner.

And don't forget to try to consume local, seasonal, and preferably organic products as much as possible.

IMPORTANCE OF PHYSICAL ACTIVITY,  
MOTIVATION TO EXERCISE



Including a consistent exercise routine in a health program ensures your success, providing greater effectiveness and sustainability to desired results.

Engaging in regular exercise produces a relaxing and satisfying effect that not only helps achieve a healthy weight but also reduces anxiety.

This occurs because during exercise, we release a series of hormones and neurotransmitters that contribute to our overall health and well-being each day.

Exercise not only stimulates our external movements but also generates internal work involving various organs to ensure the acquisition of energy and proper body function.

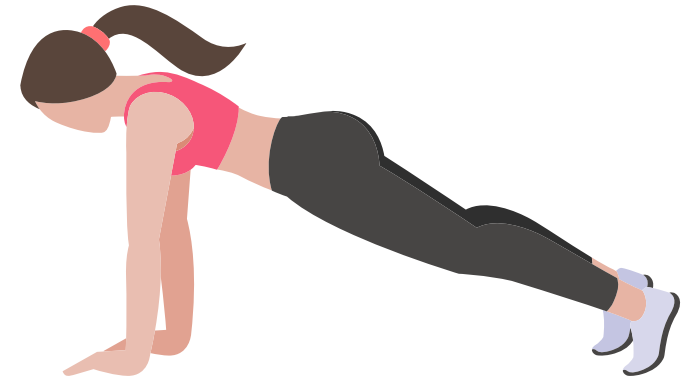
Studies show that the release of endorphins is directly proportional to the level of effort and duration of exercise. Therefore, more intense exercise leads to a greater release of endorphins, resulting in a feeling of happiness and well-being compared to less strenuous activities.

For individuals who are not accustomed to exercising, I would like to share some recommendations for gradually incorporating physical activity into their daily lives and gradually increasing both frequency and intensity.

**IT IS IMPORTANT TO MOVE;** sedentary behavior is a habit that harms our health.



IMPORTANCE OF PHYSICAL ACTIVITY,  
MOTIVATION TO EXERCISE



Why should we exercise?

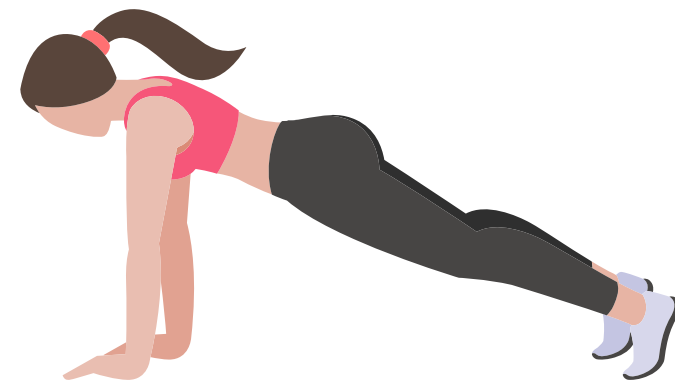
- Decreases the accumulation of age-related fat.
- Increases muscle mass.
- Helps manage stress better.
- Improves sexual performance.
- Enhances mental skills.
- Promotes longevity and quality of life.
- Improves metabolic rate.
- Reduces the risk of developing diseases.
- Improves bowel movement and reduces constipation.
- Reduces the chances of developing cancer.
- Lowers the risk of diabetes and osteoporosis.
- Boosts the immune system.
- Reduces the risk of heart diseases.
- Improves sleep quality.
- Enhances digestion.
- Improves mood.
- Reduces the desire to smoke and drink.
- Provides mental and physical energy.

For individuals who find immediate satisfaction in physical activity due to their personal history, following a training program poses no challenge.

However, for those who haven't developed an interest in such healthy habits throughout their lives, starting physical activity in adulthood can be difficult and even frustrating initially.

For individuals in the latter group, there are several recommendations that can help establish this habit:

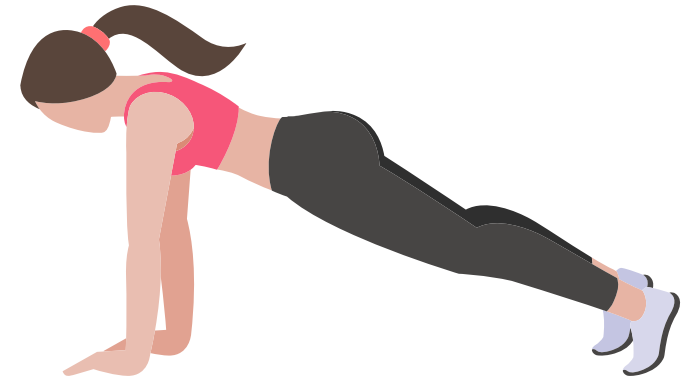
## IMPORTANCE OF PHYSICAL ACTIVITY, MOTIVATION TO EXERCISE



1. If you have never engaged in physical activity and plan to do so, you can start with something very simple: WALKING. There is no better activity than this, as it is easy to implement. Start by walking for half an hour a day and gradually increase by one minute each day until you reach and maintain one hour of daily walking. Wear appropriate shoes that are not too tight, such as athletic shoes.
2. Set short-term goals: If you have never engaged in physical activity, don't expect to incorporate athlete-level habits overnight. Take it one step at a time. Start with a light program and gradually increase it as you improve your capacity.
3. A suggested schedule is: Engage in physical activity 5 days a week, 1 hour a day. 30 minutes of cardiovascular exercise (brisk walking, elliptical, or swimming), 20 minutes of strength training (dumbbells or resistance bands), and 10 minutes of stretching.
4. There are different forms of physical activity: Find one that suits your lifestyle and preferences. In my case, I love walking and practicing QiGong, which I complement with resistance/strength exercises (plank, push-ups, and squats).
5. Manage your time: Lack of time is a common excuse. While this may be true, changing some priorities can help you find the free time you need. Remember that being in good physical shape improves overall performance, allowing you to accomplish more in less time.
6. Find a suitable location: The place where you choose to engage in physical activity should be comfortable for you, so that starting the activity does not require additional effort.
7. Enjoy yourself: The time spent on physical activity can be a moment to be with yourself (if you enjoy solitary activities) or an opportunity for social interaction, making new friends, and sharing experiences. Look for a social environment that suits your personality, where you can feel comfortable in a new space. Exercising with others also provides additional support, motivation, and encouragement.



IMPORTANCE OF PHYSICAL ACTIVITY,  
MOTIVATION TO EXERCISE



8. Trust a trainer: Sometimes, we may need an extra push and motivation. Working with a personal or group trainer can help you approach your training with more conviction, as you will feel guided and confident that you are following a good workout plan. Additionally, you will feel encouraged when your trainer acknowledges the importance of your progress.

9. Consult your doctor: Physicians often recommend different forms of physical activity that are suitable for individual conditions. Ask your doctor and listen to their advice, as they will know what is best for you, especially if you have any particular health concerns or conditions.

PROPER STRESS MANAGEMENT



**Stress**

It is a nonspecific response of the body to a specific stimulus (any specific demand placed on it, such as heat, cold, sleep, etc.).

Stress is always a physiological response to an external or internal stressor; it involves the secretion of hormones that produce distant changes in various parts of the body. These substances will affect behavior, producing a social effect in relation to one or more stressors that affect each person in a specific way.

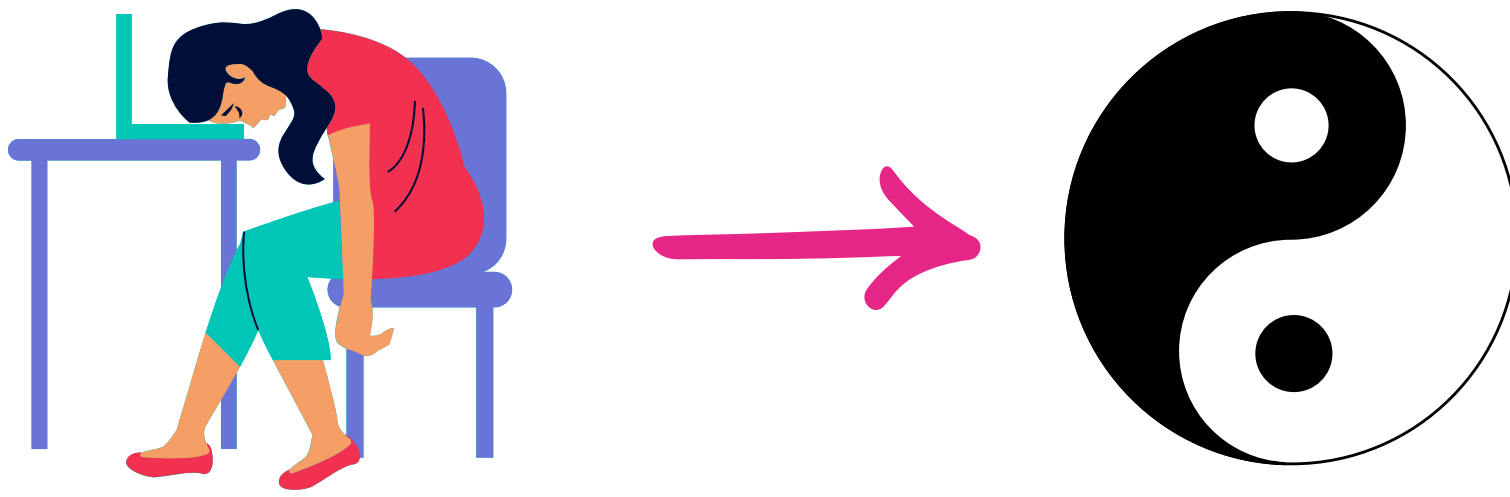
**Distress** is defined as harmful stress. It is stress that causes an excess of effort in relation to the load. It is always accompanied by physiological disorder, adrenaline, noradrenaline, cortisol, which accelerate functions and act away from the equilibrium point, leading to hyperactivity, muscle shortening, somatizations, and ultimately premature aging. These are the side effects of negative stress. The consequence of distress is a decrease in energy production at the cellular level.

A small amount of stress is good as it motivates us and enables us to act and think better. This is known as **eustress**, which is positive stress. The relationship with external and internal impressions does not create an organic imbalance; the body is capable of coping with situations and even finds pleasure in them. Eustress allows us to experience the world as a place where every millimeter is delightful. Eustress is also a state of consciousness in which thought, emotion, and sensation seem to organize themselves to provide an overall effect of joy, satisfaction, and vital energy. In reality, relaxation techniques guide us towards a state of eustress rather than calm, which is useless for our desires for action and achievement. The goal of relaxation techniques is to achieve action in the world without the negative effects of distress, preparing us for a creative life in which we can enjoy happy moments without fear and realistically face others that will inevitably occur. Creativity facilitates a life in which problems tend to be resolved. Problems exist for everyone; some take longer to solve, while others face them head-on.

We can understand that eustress not only increases vitality, health, and energy but also facilitates decision-making that allows us to take the initiative in personal development, enabling a level of consciousness capable of feeling life as a unique and valuable experience.



## PROPER STRESS MANAGEMENT



In many courses/workshops I have attended, I have learned various attitudes and activities that I apply randomly based on what I need at the moment.

Here are some of them listed below, I hope they can be useful for managing and controlling stress for you.

- Set aside time in your day for meditation.
- Create a harmonious family and work environment.
- Cultivate new knowledge.
- Engage in social activities and incorporate hobbies and recreational activities into your life.
- Don't burden yourself with too many responsibilities.
- Build an effective and harmonious relationship with your boss, colleagues, clients, friends, and family.
- Take your time and breathe slowly when you start feeling stressed.
- Analyze and write down the problems that concern you at work to discuss them with others and resolve them as soon as possible.
- Observe yourself to understand when you are upset, irritated, and impatient. Analyze why and how you can respond differently.
- Find humor in the situation.
- Avoid watching violent programs and news.
- Speak without aggression, listen attentively before responding, and avoid overreacting to situations.
- Differentiate what you can control from what you cannot change.
- Stay fit and eat healthily, as it has been shown to help respond well to the stress of daily life.

## PART 2



7

### OVERCOMING EXCUSES

These are the typical excuses I hear in my consultations:

**I don't have time.**

There is time, it doesn't necessarily mean we have to exercise every day. We don't need long exercise sessions either.

**I can't afford a gym.**

Cheer up because parks, stairs, and even the streets are free for walking.

**I'm not up for it anymore.** If you have this attitude, it means you urgently need to do something. Age catches up with everyone, but youth and vitality can be cultivated. Aging is inevitable, feeling old is a choice.

**Medical problems.**

A lot of conditions actually improve with exercise.

**I'm too tired.**

Even more reason to engage in physical activity, as it increases your energy levels.

**I'm too lazy.**

Make an agreement to start with a group of people who are also out of shape.

**Too much stress.**

Exercise precisely helps manage stress.

**I don't like exercising.**

You probably haven't tried enough options to find the one that can motivate you the most.

**I'm fine as I am.**

We can always improve.



## PART 2



8

### MAINTAINING FOCUS AND MOTIVATION

If you're trying to be more active, maintain your capacity and strength, or get back into physical activity, setting realistic and well-planned goals can be a powerful tool. It helps you stay focused and motivated.

Defining a goal will provide you with a clear path and a way to measure progress, as long as you follow some basic principles that I use in my guidance:

- Identify the ultimate goal. The goal should be realistic, specific, and personally meaningful and important to you, not to anyone else.
- Define the path to achieve that goal. This includes discipline, a specific exercise program, as well as changes in diet and lifestyle.
- Set small and specific goals. It could be as simple as training 4-5 times a week or achieving small increments in the weights you use.
- Regularly monitor your progress and celebrate it.
- Maintain flexibility as you need to adapt to changing circumstances. Life always brings changes, embrace them and adjust.
- Don't be too hard on yourself, but don't give up either.

If you need support to accompany you on this transformative journey, email me at [natalia@healthystartshere.online](mailto:natalia@healthystartshere.online) with your concerns.

## THANK YOU



Thank you very much for reaching the end of this guide.

If you put into practice some of my recommendations, you will surely see changes in your day-to-day life that will last forever. This is a one-way journey... the changes I propose are always long-term, that's why I never talk about a specific diet but rather a lifestyle. This approach keeps us motivated and not frustrated.

It's not a guide for instant gratification, but a commitment to yourself and your long-term health.

I have to express special thanks to my close family, who always support me in my "craziness" (which is not crazy to me, hahaha), my travel companion/my teacher, my children from whom I learn so much for the past 21 years, my dog who teaches me daily the importance of living in the present, of being patient and resilient, the unconditional love.

I am grateful to my maternal, paternal, and extended family who, despite the distance in different metaphysical planes, always encourage and trust in me. They have been the turning point in my transformation.

I am grateful to my friends who accept me as I am and allow me to BE.

I am grateful to all the teachers who have crossed my personal, academic, and professional life. Each of these synchronicities allows me to accompany others on their path of transformation.

Thank you, thank you, thank you.  
Much love and light to all!

Natalia





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