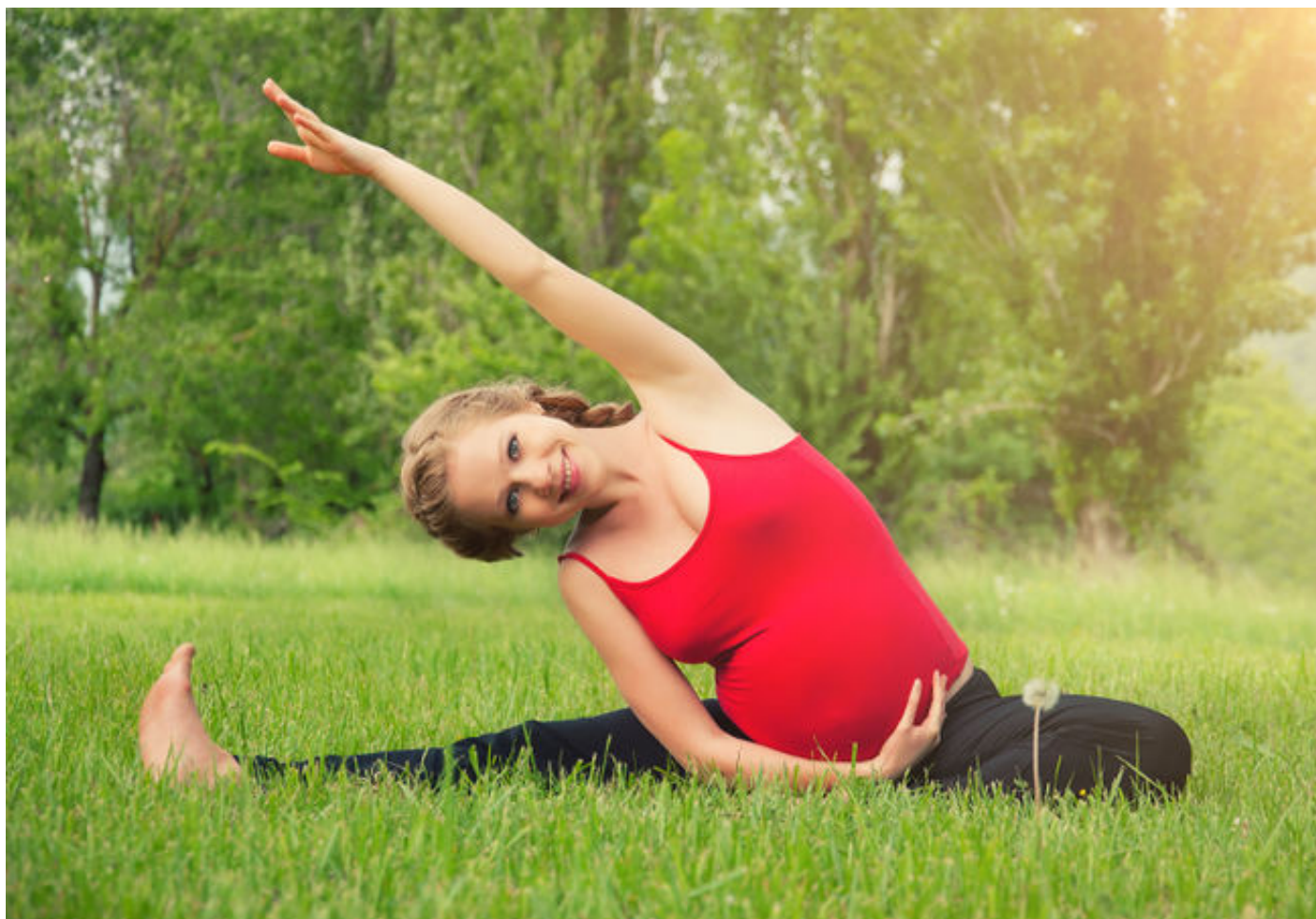


## LIFE HEALTH

# Health: Stretch to jumpstart day



By Melissa Carr, Special to 24 hours  
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Stretch after you wake up to get your body moving. (FOTOLIA)

For some, the start of a new year brings resolutions for change. Others specifically resolve not to make resolutions, feeling that it is simply setting up for failure within a few weeks. Either way, creating healthy habits is a good idea any time of year, and doesn't need to take oodles of willpower.

Most disease prevention and wellness care plans provide the best benefit when practiced routinely. You are hardly likely to receive much benefit from eating vegetables only every now and then. You will also miss out on most of the gains if you exercise just once a month or more sporadically. Following through with daily healthy habits makes for no-brainer routines with better positive outcomes.

There’s no big surprise that hydrating sufficiently, eating healthy whole foods, exercising regularly, breathing deeply with intent, sleeping soundly, and finding joy are the non-secret secrets to healthy living, but here are some easy things to do to make them habitual.

Start your day right. Before jumping — or crawling — out of bed, do like a dog or cat would do and stretch. Wake up your muscles, pump up your circulation, and get your breath moving deeper with a full body luxurious stretch. Stretching can move out the fluid that accumulates in your joints while you sleep, allowing you to feel less stiffness. It can also improve your energy, concentration, and focus as more blood circulates to the brain.

Drink 8-16 ounces of room temperature or warmer water with lemon squeezed into it first thing in the morning to rehydrate your tissues. The combo will improve your digestion, assist in the elimination of waste products, support your immune system, promote healing, foster healthy skin, and boost energy.

Eat breakfast. No, a coffee and donut do not count as breakfast. Eat something substantial and healthy — something that includes fibre, good fats, and protein. Oatmeal with hemp seeds, fruit, and almond milk would be an example of that. Rushed morning? Look for overnight-oatmeal-in-a-jar recipes. Or eat dinner leftovers — yes, it’s OK to have non-breakfast foods in the morning.

All that goodness, easily completed before you even leave the house — what a great way to start the day. A traditional Chinese medicine practitioner can also suggest acupuncture points, exercises, foods, or routines suited for you.

**Dr. Melissa Carr is a registered doctor of traditional Chinese medicine, caring for patients in an integrative medicine clinic in Vancouver.**

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## Poll

### Do you stretch in the morning?

Friday, January 9, 2015

- ☐ Yes - it kickstarts the day
- ☐ No - too much work

**VOTE** or view results

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