

PUBLICATION

Women's Health Tip – June 2015

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Jackson, Mississippi, attorney Anna Powers has traveled the world and lived in some of the globe's most fascinating places, picking up bits and pieces of fitness and nutrition practices along the way that shape her very active, vitamin-packed existence today. But this self-proclaimed bookworm wasn't always wellness-minded. A little bribery inspired a lot of passion, and now this busy attorney aims to work out six days a week and pours a lot of time each week into healthy food prep. Why? She says she is worth it – and so are you!

Tell us about your fitness routine.

I try to fit in an hour of exercise six days a week. My fitness routine varies from week to week, but a typical week would consist of weightlifting on two or three days, Zumba one day, yoga one day and running on the other days.

What are your favorite activities?

My favorite cardio activity is running. It's a great way to de-stress and clear the mind. There's also a wonderful running community in Jackson; my running group meets near the office two nights a week to run four miles up and down a hill. It sounds a little crazy, but running that hill builds endurance and mental fortitude.

On Tuesday nights, I teach a Zumba class at a local health club. Seeing my students enjoying the dances and letting loose is very rewarding. Zumba's great because anyone can do it, no matter how fit you are. It uses your own body weight, and all the moves can be modified for beginners.

Yoga is another favorite. Yoga is all about inclusiveness and accepting yourself exactly where you are in the moment. From a purely physical perspective, the stretches that we do in yoga are invaluable for maintaining flexibility and staying injury-free while participating in activities like running and weightlifting. Finally, I have been enjoying tabatas workouts over the past year. Tabatas is a form of high-intensity interval training that helps build endurance quickly.

Tell us about the role nutrition plays for you.

Nutrition is key! If you are not feeding your body quality nutrition, you cannot achieve vibrant health. I try to maintain a primarily plant-based diet with an emphasis on foods that alkalize the body. The goal is to keep the body more alkaline, less acidic and less inflamed, which lowers the risk of infection and chronic disease. Whole foods are best, and organic and/or local fruits and vegetables are mainstays in my diet.

One of the best investments I've made this year was a high-quality juicer. Toss in a few cucumbers, some lemons, celery, Granny Smith apples, and a bunch of kale to the juicer, and presto – liquid sunshine! The wonderful thing about juice is that the body can immediately absorb the wonderful nutrients without having to use energy on digestion. *Editor's note:* Anna's juicer recommendations and favorite recipe are including at the end of the article. There are also resources on alkaline-rich foods.

Have you always been into fitness? Tell us about your journey.

My mother is a yoga instructor, and fitness has always been important to my family. There's a funny story behind my passion for running. When I was younger, I loved to read so much that I never wanted to play outside – I was totally content staying inside with a book all day. To get me out and moving, my mom offered to

pay me \$1 for every mile that I ran. I needed money to buy the books I wanted to read, so in short order I was running four or five miles a day (and earning some serious cash)! Over the years, I've tried out many different fitness activities, including dance, gymnastics, karate, wind-surfing and mountain-biking. In 2004, I decided to follow in my mother's footsteps and complete a 200-hour yoga teacher training so that I could become a registered yoga therapist. Teaching yoga and Zumba while in law school helped me financially and also kept me connected with the community. I am very thankful to have a working body that allows me to get out and exercise – not everyone has that privilege! For as long as I'm physically able, I plan to continue running, dancing and doing yoga. Someday, I want to be one of those octogenarians still running in 5K races.

You've been to and lived in interesting places. Is wellness in America much different than other places?

In my personal experience, I found Europeans to be more adventurous with their fitness routines, possibly because the climate and natural surroundings are so conducive to working out outdoors ... Europeans also seemed to be much more focused on a diet filled with natural, whole foods. There's a fruit stand on every corner, which makes healthy snacking very accessible. I'm hoping that Americans will begin to move toward whole foods and away from processed ones. I feel confident that once people tried out a diet of mostly whole and unprocessed foods, they would quit craving the processed "foods!"

And how do you balance working and working out?

It can seem overwhelming to think about fitting six hours of exercise into an already jammed work week. One way to handle this is to break the hour down into small sections of time. There are days when I might take a short run in the morning and then do 30 minutes of yoga in my living room that evening. Workouts like tabatas are great because no equipment is needed and they can be done anywhere. And, of course, there are days when there really isn't time for a formal workout. On those days, I would just do some push-ups, sit-ups, lunges, squats and simple stretches.

What is your wellness philosophy?

My wellness philosophy is quite simple: "You are worth it!" The world today is incredibly hectic, and we have so many pressures, stressors and things vying for our time. I remind myself daily that I am worth the time it takes to make a green juice or a balanced meal instead of just wolfing down a granola bar in the car or picking up a burger on the way home from work. I'm worth the hour that I take away from my other responsibilities to exercise my body. Ultimately, maintaining good nutrition and exercising on a regular basis makes me more productive during the hours that I am working because I feel a sense of peace when I am living a balanced life. And, for me, a peaceful mind free from distractions allows me to focus on producing my highest-quality work.

Anything else to add?

Yes! I would like to say thank you to the people who are reading this – it has been my pleasure to discuss the topic of fitness and wellness. Please feel free to email me if you have questions about anything I mentioned. True fitness is a lifestyle, and every positive choice (no matter how small) yields a positive result. Remember that you are worth it!

Resources:

Defining Alkaline (pH): <http://kriscarr.com/blog/a-little-ph-refresher-course/>
Alkaline Diet: <http://kriscarr.com/blog/5-easy-steps-to-an-alkaline-diet/>

Anna's Juicer Recommendation:

For a juicer, I use the Breville Juice Fountain Plus. The clean-up is easy for this one! Breville has several great models of juicers at different price points, so that's a good starting place. The Omega 8003 is another great

model – that one is a masticating juicer which means that the juice will last a little longer if you don't want to drink it right away (centrifugal juicers like the Breville model I use oxidize the juice so it is better to drink it right away or at least later that same day). I also hear great things about the Huron Slow Juicer, but I haven't tried that one.

"Green Goodness Smoothie" aka "The Anna POWER Shake" (She didn't name it that - we did :-))

Here is the Whole Foods recipe with which I start every morning – the only equipment needed is a blender.

- 1 Avocado
- 1 Banana
- 1 Cucumber (peeled if not organic)
- A few big handfuls of romaine or spinach lettuce (or both! Why not?)
- Coconut water
- Ice

Blend and enjoy :-)