

Make the Healthy Choice

By Ambassador Beatrice Welters

My friends like to joke that I've discovered the fountain of youth. They even say I'm as energetic and youthful as a twenty-something! It's true – I feel as young as ever, but I don't owe my good health and energy to a magic fountain of youth. I maintain my vitality through my dedication and commitment to healthy lifestyle choices. Through regular exercise and smart meal choices, I keep myself sharp and ready to tackle the challenges of each day.

I want to share my approach to good health with Trinbagonians and I hope to encourage others to be proactive about their health. As part of my commitment to a healthy lifestyle, I formed a Council on Health Outreach to tackle some of the most critical health issues facing Trinidad and Tobago. The Council is composed of local health experts and Embassy staff who will help steer the Council toward the most effective engagement initiatives. I know many Trinbagonians who believe in being proactive about their health, and I look forward to connecting even more with them through this Council. To help launch the Council and encourage healthy choices, I'd like to talk a bit about my own exercise regimen and meal choices that keep me energetic every day.

My exercise routine includes walking, or a combination of walking and running, 10 to 12 miles each day. On top of that, I schedule weightlifting sessions twice a week and make sure to get in Pilates sessions when I am back in the United States. Lifting weights is especially important for women, who are at an increased risk of developing the bone disease osteoporosis as they age.

I'm an avid hiker, I've climbed Mt. Kilimanjaro twice, so my posting in Trinidad and Tobago is a perfect fit with its many hiking opportunities. I love climbing Hololo Mountain and Lady Chancellor with a regular group of fellow hiking enthusiasts. I even include my security team in my workouts. They may complain sometimes, but I know they value the healthy results!

This exercise schedule might intimidate some, but for me, exercising every day helps me mentally as well as physically. It helps me deal with the stress that often comes with my work. Walking 10 to 12 miles a day isn't for everyone. It's

important to listen to your body and push yourself while respecting your limits. If you need to start slow – start slow! It’s better than not starting at all.

The hardest part of a healthy lifestyle is choosing to commit. Once you make that commitment, take small steps, like walking a loop around the Savannah, and work up to more challenging physical goals. My commitment to exercise not only keeps me fit for my demanding job, but also helped me recover from major surgery. I amazed my surgeons with my quick recovery from surgery four years ago and they credited my speedy return to health to my commitment to exercise. I’ve also avoided the health issues that plague many Americans and Trinbagonians as they age, including heart disease and hypertension.

It’s not only daily exercise that keeps me in top form; it’s also my smart approach to food. I control portions, limit my intake of salt and sugar, and keep my diet high in protein. Which is not to say I don’t love food. As long as I practice moderation and stick to my exercise schedule, I can still enjoy my favorite foods – especially Italian food!

Wherever I go, I ensure that I maintain my healthy lifestyle regimen. Whether on vacation with my family or in the midst of a hectic travel schedule for work, I make time to get in my 10 to 12 miles a day – every day. It helps that I share a passion for healthy living with my husband, Anthony Welters. Together, we make our healthy lifestyle a priority.

I love sharing this passion and am thrilled to meet other exercise and healthy living enthusiasts in Trinidad and Tobago. By sharing my exercise practices and forming my Council on Health Outreach, I look forward to many opportunities to work with communities in Trinidad and Tobago in my continued efforts to promote healthy living.

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