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Your body doesn't go on vacation when you do

By Sarah Sobanski

We're heading out of rain season and heading into the sunny season. That means figuring out a way to stay healthy during cottage season ? or at least keep looking good for all those family vacation photos.

We go to the cottage to rest, relax and indulge. My favourite summer health tip is that to have a bikini body, you just put a bikini on your body ? or, for the men reading, to have a Fabio summer aesthetic, you only have to grow your hair and run into the lake.

That being said, it's hard to ignore the constant women's and men's health magazines showing six packs ? they don't seem at all similar to the one you picked up from Bancroft's LCBO after work today.

Let's be honest. They say you can quit drinking and shed the pounds ? but the sun is shining, and you've got a dock to get to. There must be a better way.

Let's look at changing the little things for a big impact. Your liver, your belly, and your mental health might thank you.

The first step to keeping a healthy lifestyle, and keeping reasonable, is to change your perspective. You're never going to look like you're Photoshopped. You also can't look at being active as work. I won't tell if you lounge in a Muscoka chair all afternoon, but you have to go for a hike in the morning, or a walk after dinner.

Why wouldn't you? Look around. There's the Hastings Heritage Trail, Eagles Nest and nothing but forest and lakes as far as the eye can see. Just make sure you wear long pants and tuck the hems into your socks if you're getting off the beaten track ? ticks.

If that doesn't suit your fancy, grab a canoe or a kayak and get out onto the water. There are plenty of places to rent in town. Fresh air can do wonders for regulating your energy levels ? you might find yourself sleeping better at night.

Or if you're the kind of person who uses the gym at the resort ? which I have never seen, but assume happens ? we have two local gyms. I've met the staff at both. They're friendly and helpful and will kick your butt into gear.

This is the time of year where you're thankful for the heat but the humidity is drawing sweat lines in your camisole. You really didn't know you had a roll there to begin with, did you? I'm telling myself that while I've been prepared mentally for the summer season since November, my body hasn't transitioned yet ? something about blood needing to thin or thicken to support my efficiency in the changing temperatures. I'll keep telling myself that until the winter again, but the time for change is now. Better to start somewhere than to never start at all.

Another thing to remember: it's easy to eat at the cottage. Try keeping the steak and lobster dinners to once a week. It's not a treat if you do it every day. And yes, a glass of wine every night does count towards your alcohol quota ? so does drinking the whole bottle.

Speaking with a local chef recently, he told me eating raw, plant-based foods is both the easiest and healthiest way to eat. I hear those words and think, *I'm not a vegetarian*. I do, however, love apples and fresh fruit.

Stack your day with healthy snacks if you plan to indulge at night. Don't skip meals and drink lots of water ? that heat stroke is lying to you.

As an aside, before you tell me you can't, you can burn. That golden skin from your European heritage is not going to stand up to a three-hour nap on the dock.

These tricks aren't going to change you overnight, but they might help you feel better in the long run. Starting with the little things might help you change your habits.

Watching what you eat or worrying about exercising regularly are probably the last things you want to think about when driving up to the cottage. Just remember, your body doesn't go on vacation when you do. Keep it simple while taking it easy.