

A sunburst graphic with numerous thin, light gray lines radiating from a central point behind the text.

# Healthy Moms Podcast

BY **Wellness Mama**<sup>®</sup>  
simple answers for healthier families

Episode 117: Fitness at Any Age With Flipping 50's  
Debra Atkinson

Child: Welcome to my Mommy's podcast.

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Katie: Hello, and welcome to The Healthy Moms podcast. I'm Katie from [wellnessmama.com](https://wellnessmama.com), and I'm here today with Debra Atkinson who is the host of The Flipping 50 TV Show and The Flipping 50 podcast. I think this is gonna be a really fun interview, and she's gonna shed some light on topics that I get questions about, and don't have any personal experience with yet. So she's a master personal trainer and a wellness coach with over 30 years of experience in the fitness industry. So she works with women who are pro-aging with vitality and energy, and not in denial that natural and healthy aging happens, which I love. And she has authored hundreds of articles and four books, including, "You Still Got it Girl! The After 50 Fitness Formula for Women" and "Navigating Fitness After 50: Your GPS for Choosing Programs and Professional You Can Trust." And I think it's gonna be a great interview. So welcome Debra. Thanks for being here.

Debra: Thanks for having me. I'm excited.

Katie: Yeah. It's gonna be fun. So I always love to hear someone's story first. So I'd love to know, how did you get here? How did you start Flipping 50 and why is this topic important to you?

Debra: Oh, what a great question. And I had to, I was smiling as you introduced and said, you know, things I don't have any experience with yet. And I was thinking, "You lucky girl." So many of my listeners would be thinking, "Oh, my gosh. Just you wait." So I've been in fitness for 34 years, and, you know, all along the way, I was one of those old souls, even in college. So I was always given the older adults, and I was raised by older parents. Maybe they had something to do with this. So I was very comfortable with them, love them. I've been getting experience in working with menopause, perimenopause, hormone change my entire life, without really appreciating it until I got here. And then realized, I wish I would have been doing some things differently in my 20s, and my 30s, and my 40s. And I'm so excited for this next generation to age. Because I think we as

baby boomers, I'm in the very tail-end of that, I'll tell you that. We're gonna change the rules, but you all are gonna come up and you're gonna really, you know, raise the expectations for, you know, "Here's how I plan to age." And it's just another candle and means nothing else. There's no limitations.

And the more I got closer to Flipping 50, the 5-0, and really just let me be clear. So Flipping 50 to me means preparing for it even before you're there. And it's the whole 50 to 100. We're gonna just do it better and differently going forward. But as I got toward that, I was having my own little mid-life crisis, if you will. I wanted more, and, you know, you can be any age and experience that. But I was happy, I was content in my position, my job, and my home where I was living, and yet, I felt like I was just gonna not be meeting my potential if I continued to do what I did. And I said, "If I don't start now at 49, I'm not gonna change." So I took a huge risk at everything. I got 100% in and actually wasn't quite where I needed to be with my business. So I bit off a lot, and so I needed to sell my house to continue to kind of go the direction I wanted to. But that in turn was a good thing as well. But I went through a lot of hormone changes at the time when I was also going through a lot of stressors or vice versa. And realized the hard way, what it is that really makes the difference, when you have very little time to give. And, you know, you need the exercise maybe to negate stress, and you need it because you love it, and you need some "me time," but you can't fit it in. And what I realized is actually that short amount of time and pressure can get you better results than a lot of time does. So that's really sort of how I started directing all my energy toward hormone and exercise in that connection, which is true of both genders and of us at any age, that can be a little bit more real for women who are, and again, they are late 40s and older.

Katie: Got it and I'm with you. I'm actually...I'm excited for the emerging and really rapidly advancing science of health aging, because...

Debra: Yeah.

Katie: ...I think you're right, the next few decades are gonna be pretty awesome as far as what we're discovering with genes and epigenetics, and what we can do and not do. And I think we're gonna see some amazing things. But I wanted to clarify before we go further, because I haven't hit the big 4-0 yet, or the big 5-0 yet, and I think a lot of my listeners are there too. But I just wanna clarify, like, the things we're gonna talk about are applicable at any age. You just, especially, have a focus for people who are maybe struggling over 50. Is that right?

Debra: That's absolutely right. But when you look at women, you know, from the time we hit menstruation, you know, it's like every month the gift keeps giving, and, you know, when you go through pregnancy they have prenatal changes, postnatal changes, we have hormone changes fluctuating our entire lives on a bigger scale than men do. So absolutely, it's totally applicable.

Katie: Yeah. Isn't that the truth? I love like seeing the data of, like, if you look at a man's hormone, it's like they change slightly during the course of 24 hours. Like the cortisol and melatonin even testosterone. But if you look at women, it's like a roller coaster each month. And then even after menopause, it's still constantly moving. We're never like, just kind of staying the same like men are. So let's talk about that, how does metabolism change after having kids, or in the 40s or 50s? What's going on biologically, and can some of that be avoided?

Debra: Absolutely. And first of all, let's say this, it is a myth that metabolism has to change as a result of

menopause. The rules to the game change. It's kinda like somebody came in and said, "Well, no we're not gonna have three outs anymore per inning. We're not gonna, you know, have, you know, X amount of at bats, or we just need to change the strategy, and get in tune with, all right. The exercise that we used to do in our 20s and 30s is not gonna work anymore. So if you wanna feel as good as you did, and this can be true of anyone who is under a great deal of stress, or maybe who is sleep deprived, because that is stress, in that there is more cortisol streaming through your blood and/or maybe less if you've done that for too long and you're tapped out. So we've all got those game changing rules. And we just need to adjust probably with the unintuitive way of doing it. And here's what we've been all raised to believe. We work harder and we'll get better results.

But with exercise, if you think I'm gonna work harder, I'm gonna do another day, I'm gonna go longer, that often will dig you deeper into the hole, and send you the opposite direction. So when we do that, metabolism may in fact, backfire and slow because your body is protecting you. But there are studies that show across the globe, looking at women from everywhere on earth. There is no connection with menopause and a slowing of metabolism, or with weight gain, which is the result of a slow metabolism. And it's only really true of women in the United States. So it's got a lot more to do with our lifestyle in the way we're tackling it, than it does with any science, or any change that says, "Okay, flip the switch. Now you're slowing down."

Katie: That makes perfect sense especially when I think of people like Mark Sisson's and the JJ Virgin's of the world who seem to almost like reverse age and...

Debra: I know.

Katie: You know, so what are those things? Like why do you think we're struggling so much in modern times? Because I totally agree with you, I think things are much different, and much more difficult than they were say for our grandparents. But I also like you don't think they're irreversible. So what do you think are causing those factors?

Debra: Some of the biggest factors are really simple. You know, it's nothing that's rocket science. So when we are really honest with ourselves, we, you know, look at how much are you exercising now compared to 10 years ago when your metabolism was better? And, you know, a lot of women being very honest have to say, "Less" you know, not the same, it's not working, and/or how are you eating now compared to 10 years ago. And you know, point to these phenomena, not throwing anybody under the bus, but, you know, a lot more of us are enjoying wine now more than ever. And I know we'd love to tout the health benefits of wine. But I have to say if you're a woman who's struggling with weight, or weight loss resistance and not getting the results you think you should from eating healthfully and exercising, sugar from that wine is not your best friend. You may need to walk away from it for a little while, just not forever. But it's probably contributing to the problem, and it's not that you can't do it. It's that right now we've got to take out all the little pieces and test what does work. And that's the other thing. We tend to...when we wanna see a change we go after everything in the line of fire.

So we change our diet, we change our exercise, we do this and that and the other thing, and we're gung ho, but for a very short time can we uphold that. And that's not even the problem. The problem is we haven't tested one variable at a time. If we think back to, you know, fifth grade science, that's where we learned, you know, if you're gonna test something, we keep everything else the same, we change one variable. Let's test it, and then get a results and move on, and we'll test the next thing. And that really kind of solves things, is to

makes things much easier as a puzzle to see, "Okay, I did this, here's what happened, now I'm going to move on."

Either we keep it in, we take it out, or we tweak it, but that's really the basis for, "How do we change the game, how do we get ahead of things again, and really get honest with what might be changing our metabolism and affecting us. The last one is hideous stress. You know, and it doesn't matter how old you are. And we're all gonna have stressors because we have such a meaningful life, right here. You know, probably every listener has, you know, somebody pitter patter, you know, and that creates stress, that meaningful lives.

So you know, if you're going to have people you love in your life, you're gonna have stress that comes along with it, whether it's because of loss, or change, or just it being a really busy time for everyone. So the resilience that you get from eating the right foods, from exercising correctly, sleeping well, that's the difference. And I think when you slide into stress, and you haven't got that in your back pocket, it gets a little harder. You can still come back and lay that foundation. It's a little harder to do when you're under fire. But for those people like JJ, who had discovered, you know, this is where I need to be when you go through huge stressors, you are more resilient and you can handle it better.

Katie: Yeah, that's a great analogy. And I also love that you brought up sugar in relation to wine. But I would love to delve into sugar in general because I think women are more prone to sugar cravings than men just with the hormone fluctuations. And as we know, so many of hormone changes lead us to crave things like chocolate which has magnesium but also sugar, or whatever it might be. And I personally am very anti-sugar myself. Just it doesn't work for me, but I'd love to hear your take on it, and if that's an effective strategy for women as they age, to like limit or reduce their sugar. And how you suggest that often?

Debra: Yeah, great question. And I think you're right. As women are going through hormone fluctuation for sure, the ones that I'm talking to most often sugar becomes a big deal. And it's like you are driving down the middle of the road, and you have a wide shoulder on both sides, maybe in your 20s and your 30s, but the road starts to narrow and there's no shoulder. So you don't have to wiggle room. You've gotta keep it between those lines, and navigate a little bit better and cleaner. So can you have a treat? Yes. And it's just the impact of it, when you have it, the timing of it. Here's why wine is the challenge for most of us. Most of us are going to want a glass of wine before dinner. Maybe while we're cooking dinner, or, you know, prior to eating a meal, and sometimes prior to making our decision about what we're going to eat. And that's where we get in trouble.

So we lose our inhibitions, and, you know, at one point I know I would have said, you know, "Well, I don't wanna have anything before I eat because it'll kill the buzz, you know, or before I have my wine." right? So we actually need to switch that, and there's a reason why there are nuts and olives on the counter, you know, at a bar. It's actually smart. They're not just trying to get you to eat that salt so you drink more, but there is some science behind. That's a good thing. So taking it in and how you soak it in, that's the important piece. So whether that's literally sugar, as in desserts and cookies and treats, or it's in carbohydrates that rapidly are digested and turned to sugar, we're all at some level of sensitivity on a continuum. So definitely it's looking at that, but the better way to do that in terms of cutting out sweets versus, can we crowd source them? That's what I call it. Crowd them out by talking about, let's try to include more protein at every meal. Try to include more fibrous kinds of vegetables at every meal. Minimum fruit, some is fine, but you don't wanna overdo that. Either especially alone, don't eat a fruit naked, make sure it's got something with it, like protein and fat. And

that changes the impact. That and when we look at exercise. So of course we're gonna talk about fat today, but exercise can really help you stabilize your blood sugar and decrease cravings if it's used correctly.

Katie: So let's talk about exercise, then. I know there's a lot of research about exercise being important, especially during aging for things like keeping bones strong, and for proper digestion, and hormone regulation. But what are really the requirements for exercise for someone as they age, and how can a person know what are the right ways to exercise?

Debra: Great question too. And, you know, the exercise prescription changes a little, not dramatically. But it's not as textbook, you know, as when we were younger. Or if you were listening and you're under stress, it changes a little bit for you too. So less is more, that's the first thing to remember, that if you feel like you're crunched, and you just, you don't have time, or, when am I gonna fit this in between work and family, and all of the other obligations that we all have, just in dealing with life, you know. We have the laundry, we have to load and unload the dishwasher. Those things never go away. And so learning to navigate around them with less exercise but more purposeful exercise.

For hormone balance, moving exercise to earlier in the day, the higher intensity exercise that you're gonna do whether that's weight training to fatigue, or that's high intensity interval training, the earlier in the day that's done, the more you're working with your cortisol levels, most of us get up. And if you have adrenal fatigue, this is not you, but most of us get up, when we have a little bit more energy, or more productive already in the morning. And that's a sign your cortisol levels are probably about where they need to be or closer to it than not early in the morning. So to work with that cortisol when you have that energy is smart. And then later in the afternoon we tend to cortisol levels fall off, and that's a better time for doing calming types things like yoga, and walking, and especially outdoors, anything you can do outdoors.

But without your heart rate monitor, without worrying how many steps you're taking, or how hard you're breathing, it's more about transitioning really from your day, to your evening into relaxation. That's a couple of really good hormone balancing tips. And that kind of just as tweaking the duration, the intensity, and the timing of the exercise you're doing.

Katie: That makes sense. And I love that you mentioned high intensity and weights. This is a question I always love to ask fitness professionals and trainers because there seems to be a perception at least in the movies and on TV. Like the, you know, very fit women they're out like running all the time, always running, and I think a lot of women feel like they need to go run a marathon to get in shape, and I've actually seen women try this, and it backfired. And it either messed up their knees or they gained weight because of the adrenal stress. So let's kinds of talk about the myth that weights aren't good for women and like what do you recommend? Should women be lifting weights if they're...if that something they like and that they're capable of?

Debra: Yes. And I'm gonna go out on a limb here and say, you should be lifting weights even if you don't like them, because your muscles and your bones, and your hormones do. And you will learn to like them, I promise. Because here's what most of us when we lack motivation, we lack it because we either don't know what to do, or we don't see results or feel results quickly enough. And you'll see and feel results much more quickly with weight training, strength training, and than you do with a lot of aerobic activity. Certainly not long kind of extended duration activity that's associated with marathons or long endurance events. So getting in a little weight training really helps you. And if you're thinking my metabolism has slowed down, here's why it might have. Starting at the age of 30, so it's a huge motivator, I'm hoping for all of you.

If we don't do strength training, also called resistance training. If I use that interchangeably, we lose on average about a half a pound of muscle every year starting at 30. So if you're 50 or you're 60, imagine just doing math, and some of you might be thinking, "I'm so fit, you know. I exercise all the time." That's not me, but we can't outrun it, we can't out zumba it, we can't...you know, whatever your favorite activity is, plug that in. If you're not resistance training, you are losing it. You need to do resistance training to fatigue, because after 30, we're just not kind of stocking up and growing and having the same thing, and similar to bones. That happens at about age 25. We start to lose bone density. So strength training does a lot to help us do that, but let's look at what can we do. So how can I jump in and save you, right? If you're feeling right now like, "Oh, no I've been losing muscle mass."

The good news is starting just a traditional program. Nothing crazy, but a moderate program where you're doing most major muscle groups three times a week. You can expect to gain three pounds of lean muscle mass, and lose four pounds of fat in a month. Now, do the math. That major scale is not going to tell you the whole answer, but, here's the disclaimer, your clothes are gonna get loose. You're gonna have to go shopping, right? And you can expect those same changes happen the first 12 weeks so you could lose up to nine pounds, or gain nine pounds of lean muscle mass, lose 12 pounds of body fat. You're definitely gonna be seeing some inches change, you know, at those places where you most want to change. And yet the scale still, right? The mass hasn't changed dramatically. But it will be the look and the feel. Nothing gives a woman more internal power, I think strength and confidence, like strength training does when it comes to exercise.

Katie: I 100% agree to that. That's why we see those pictures on Instagram of women, who are like the same weight, but they started like weight lifting, and they look entirely different. Their waist is much smaller, and they obviously have much more muscle tone than they did in the first picture, but the scale hasn't moved. But all the studies, we all know that lean muscle mass from having muscle, even if you weigh the same, having more muscle and less fat that can be...an extremely helpful thing for very many aspects of health. And I know from personal experience, I've always loved lifting weights. And many times in my life I've been able to lift well over my body weight. Sometimes even close to one and a half times or double. And those times I was never like muscularly bulky at all. In fact, those were usually when I was like my tiniest, because the weights naturally do that. But the objections I know often people think of are two-fold when it comes to lifting heavy weights. One is that they don't wanna get bulky, and look like a body builder, and the second is they think it's not efficient, because if you look at the little charts, running is really good at burning calories. And lifting weights for 20 minutes isn't good for burning calories. There's a long term play there. So can you explain and kind of answer those two objections?

Debra: Yes. Absolutely. And I love that you said that about lifting twice your weight, and when you were doing and you were so strong, you were smaller and not bigger. So great point in terms of the argument of, "No, you're not gonna bulk up, actually if you're doing it right." And that's where this comes from. So first of all, let me throw this out. Your calories burned are not in control of your body weight. Optimal body weight is about your hormone balance. So that one, if this is the first time you're hearing it, might take you six more times to hear it and I'm okay with that. But plant that seed, when you feel better and have more energy, you will begin to look better. So that internal environment and changing it is what's most important. It's really not about calories in calories out anymore, not with food it's about quality, and now with exercise, it's about quality. So come back to that full circle, now it's about this.

So we want to really make sure that you know your body type. So for those women who have lifted weights,

and felt like they bulked up, there are two reasons usually why that might be true. One is very often, you were taught a bulk protocol. There's this specific science behind what we want to happen. And hypertrophy, or gaining muscle size, happens less easy in women. But there's no arguing. If you're a woman listening and you've had it happen, I'm not gonna to tell you that you won't because you know what happened to your body. But the three sets of 10 repetitions, so many of us learned as beginners, this is where we start, that actually a bulk protocol. So not all of us are gonna bulk by doing it, but we have three different kind of body types. And if you are a more muscular body type, it's a mesomorph, is what it's called. You may be one who adds more muscle very, very quickly. That probably would not be the ideal protocol for you if what you want is, yes stronger but you rather stay a little more sleek. That can happen. It just needs to be the right protocol for you. So there's two other body types. The endomorph, you're a little bit more rounded curvy girl, more Marilyn Monroe. And then the endomorph, and you have a hard time...I'm sorry, endomorph is the curvy girl, ectomorph is the thin. And you're having a hard time putting curves on. Each of those body types needs a different kind of protocol to be at her very best.

Katie: That makes sense, and I think you're right. I think lifting weights in general has been largely a male dominated field for very long. And most men do actually wanna put on muscle size, even more so than strength. At least a lot of the guys I've talked to, they're more focused on looking muscular than actually being strong. And personally, I take the strength any day. But I think you're right, because there are people like, I don't know if you've heard of Jerzy Gregorek, who is a trainer of The Happy Body, but he and his wife are both, I think he's in the 60s, and she might be in her 50s or even 60s. I'm not sure how old she is. But they both are extremely fit. They're not bulky at all, and they both, I think are still competitive Olympic weight lifters in their division, lifting very large weights and they're not bulky people at all. So I think you're right that it's finding that kind of sweet spot for you. So what kind of program do you typically find works best for someone as they age?

Debra: Ideally, you know, it's gonna to come down to what can your joints handle? So as you're, you know, whether in you're in your 40s, it's actually starts to happen. You know, in knees or shoulders. You've lived a good life, maybe played some sports, you've had fun. The more high impact sports, the more your joints are probably dictating what you need to do. But I'd love to see people lifting heavy. So until about six to nine months ago when a recent study came out, you know, that would have been what I'd advocate. If you were healthy, slowly progress to the point where, say, maybe you start with somewhere between 15 and 20 repetitions to fatigue, working your way down over weeks, even months, to the point where you do find your fatiguing at fewer than 10 repetitions. 10 is actually traditionally the number where, if you're fatiguing, you actually are doing good for your bone density. And that's about 80% of one rep max, which maybe too much science for anybody listening. And you don't do one rep max ever it's not safe and smart to do that. But the equivalent is where you need to be for bone density. So if you can do that for every single joint in your body, say, your lower body is fine, but your shoulders, or your wrists maybe give you problems, then those exercises that are affected, you stay with a lighter way and do what you can safely do to get good results for the muscle with no pain, and kind of find that threshold, that happy spot. And then it's looking at, you know, what's your time constraint? How can we put the most important exercises into the least amount of time so that you can still say, "Yes, I'm consistent. I can do this. I can do it in 10 minutes, or I can expand, and I can do this in 20 minutes if I got it." That's kind of best case scenario.

So let me tell you about the study. About six to nine months ago, somewhere in that range, a new study came out that showed we can in fact still impact strength and hypotrophy, which together change our metabolism. We can boost metabolism provided we reach fatigue. So if you're grabbing that smaller set of weights, don't



feel bad about it, but don't stop at 15. Go to the point where you'd reach fatigue.

Now, I would describe a hard stop. I would say if you can do more than 30 repetitions, increase your weight just a little bit, you know, don't go crazy and need 50 repetitions to reach fatigue. But fatigue being this place, the place where you start to cheat, or you start to feel like you cannot do another one with really good form. That's fatigue. And there's a big difference between getting tired when you exercise, and really reaching fatigue when you exercise.

Katie: I agree. From my experience, like fatigue, is that point where not only are your muscles kind of like hitting the upper limit, but your brain starts talking to you, too, like, "This is dumb. Why are you still doing this?" Like, you start to get the mental ques. It's like, "That was good. Take a rest for a second."

Debra: Your brain is really nice. Mine says something else.

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Katie: But I love that you're talking about this because, I think...like I said, a lot of women are afraid to lift weights. And when you look at the hormone output, back to the calorie thing for a minute, even if like on paper, if you're just measuring calories for your metabolic rate, like if you may burn more if you're gonna run for an hour, than if you do a little bit of weight lifting but over the long-term. And you can talk about this, I'm sure, but over the course of the day, the metabolic effects of weight lifting are actually greater from what I've read, because you have a sustained effect of that. And it lasts as you build muscle. You're actually burning more at rest, right, than if you just are running all the time?

Debra: You nailed it. Exactly, right. So yes, I mean, if we just take, "Okay, here's 30 minutes you could run, 30 minutes you could weight train." And we'll look at the end result, you know, really for both of them, neither one is great, right? I mean, not if you're thinking number of M&M'S, or, you know, hamburger, or salmon, it doesn't matter, still have a ton of calories. So yeah, that's what we're after and it's called what you're talking about is it ends up helping you burn more calories all day. So let's say you're sitting down listening to this podcast right now, had you exercised earlier today strength training wise, you would be burning energy at a

faster rate, burning calories at a faster rate right now than had you run earlier today. It's just the science. And at the end of the year, if you've built up plenty of strength training workouts, not that you don't do some cardio, we need some, your heart after all is the most important muscle that you've got, you just need to not overdo it. But if you proportion that out and give priority to the strength training in your schedule, at the end of the year your metabolism is gonna be bumped up so much more. It's like the gift that keeps giving; a good gift. Whereas, running in order to get the same effect, you have to go for another run, and keep doing it. You can't stop. And that's what tends to beat you up. But that phenomenon, of how many calories you burn after, not during is what so crucial is called the E-P-O-C, or the Excess Post Oxygen Consumption. After exercise, how much more do you burn? And studies show time and time again that with strength training alone, even compared to cardio alone, or strength and cardio together, strength training wins for burning more using more oxygen. And the reason that's important is oxygen consumption means more calories burned. For every one liter of oxygen you consume or breathe in and out, you burn five calories. Now, that doesn't sound like it's gonna add up quickly, but it does. And over time, you're sleeping and burning more calories. That's a sweet thing.

Katie: Yeah, I love it. And like the data is so fascinating of two people of the same weight, but one has more muscle mass than the other, that one's gonna burn and be able to eat so many more calories to maintain their resting metabolic rate than the other. Like you said, it builds over time. So you're literally, if you lift weights regularly, you're burning more while you sleep, literally. And while you sit, and if you're watching a movie you're burning more and maintaining that muscle. And another point I'd love to talk about with relation to weight lifting, is the mobility. Because I think if it's done correctly, and I should preface by saying, you know, work with a trainer or like look at your programs, or something that's gonna teach you correct form, because that's hugely important. But if you're training correctly, and you're doing exercises like squats and deadlifts, and pull ups, any movements that are leading to full mobility, I think that's another very often overlooked important aspect of health. But we have people getting injured doing things like just walking into their job, or, you know, getting off their couch, like mobility is getting to be a big problem. And for my age group, I know midwives recommend, for instance, squatting a lot during childbirth because the mobility aspect obviously is very, I mean, during pregnancy to help with childbirth, because that flexibility is really helpful. But I've also seen some really fascinating studies on this for bone protection in as women age, that it's not just the strength that's super important, but maintaining the mobility and the function of the joint protects against the hips, having problems or the knees or whatever, so if you found this as well then let's talk about the mobility side too.

Debra: Yeah, that's a great comment. And specifically it starts earlier than you think. If you are, for instance, you're losing mobility in your ankles, and that for all of us is really an age-related thing. If you carry a little extra weight, you're probably a little bit more vulnerable to this happening earlier. But when you think about it that's our foundation, right? So if your ankles don't have the mobility, and we're talking, you know, draw circles with your toe, full circle right and left, point flex, point the soles of your feet inward and outward, little activities you can do under your desk and nobody has to know, or you can do them anywhere when you're sitting, if you're watching TV or relaxing, hit those. But that's one, you know, that is often negated.

We focus a lot on our knees and hips, shoulders maybe, because they're the first place we'd feel what I call a Nagel, right? When it starts to whisper to you, it's not yelling yet, it will, if you don't pay attention, but we don't necessarily feel it in the ankle, but we can lose mobility really easily and quickly. So it's looking at taking care of those joints, because like you said, when we're talking bone density, we all worry about falls because that's what leads to a fracture in older age. And we're building to that right now. We're either building away

from it or closer to it by strength training and the mobility we have. And yet, what we know is, you know, at a certain point as trainers working toward bone density, but strength training is one thing. But really what we wanna do is prevent that fall from ever happening. And that is definitely about mobility. And it's making sure your right hip and your left hip are fairly equal.

You're never gonna be perfectly symmetrical. We're just not, but you don't want one to be far more flexible than the other, or far stronger than the other. We need to periodically test by doing one legged, or we call it unilateral work, doing a one legged squat, which might mean with no weight doing, you know, a one arm press or pull so that you can actually see how I'm I doing side to side as opposed to using even a barbell? You know, using both arms doesn't give you fully the information on how much balance you have, but that's a great comment. And that's what gets us into trouble. And oftentimes it'll be like this, maybe you have a knee on the right leg that, you know, was injured at one point. It often, the body does mysterious things to be in balance. And that's what it strives for, so sometimes then it will be your left hip that starts to be the problem. The body will find a way to be in balance, to get it done, even if that means you're compensating somewhere else. So avoiding that compensation is super important to both avoid falls, but just avoid injury. And, you know, on the flipside, do the things you love to do pain free.

Katie: Yeah, for sure. And I think you're so right. I love that point about the body compensating. And so in...I homeschool my kids, and in anatomy class with them, the way I've explained this, and also explained to them the reason that they wear minimalist type shoes is that if you have for instance, a Barbie doll who can't move her ankles, can't move her knees, or her feet, that's like a right angle and set in stone, and you put a heel on that, the person is leaning forward at a like, roughly a 45 degree angle. But obviously, you know, a human who does this, they can't walk around leaning forward at 45 degrees. So our body naturally corrects and we stand up tall, but in the process of doing that you're putting extra stress on your ankles, and your hips and your knees, and all the joints that are involved in straightening that up. So you're so right. The body adapts almost instantly, but there can be kind of long-term consequences down the road.

Debra: Absolutely. Yeah, all of those little things that we do that, you know, if you do them occasionally, like if you put on a pair of heels, you know, once a month to go out to a big event, probably not a problem, but if you wear heels every day, you know, your body is, yes, growing into a pattern that may be working against you. So sometimes, most times, we don't even notice it. So it's great to have someone else assess you. What's your pattern? What are you doing when you're moving? You know, did you realize that you're limping? You know, sometimes people are so unaware of what we are doing, because we're just too close to it.

Katie: Yeah, Absolutely. So another thing, like, I know people were worried about, especially as they age, and it seems to kind of maybe coincide with hormone changes and menopause, is gaining belly fat more easily, or fat in areas where you wouldn't want it like the upper arms or the legs. So can you talk about why this happens, and what someone can do about it? Is it as simple as going back to, like lifting weights, or is that helpful for that as well? Or what other things should they be doing?

Debra: Oh, boy. If I had the complete answer to this question you and I would both just be on the beach. But here's my short-term answer, so belly fat and bat wings, you talked about, you know, probably two of the most trouble spots for most people, and it can happen sooner than menopause. But it's related to two different things. So the belly fat definitely is related to estrogen dropping, which we know is gonna happen when a woman goes through menopause for sure, but it can also happen at other ages when estrogen levels just may not be channeling in the right direction, or you're not methylating correctly, so all of your hormones

are just not operating well. That tends to be, you know, indicated by estrogen. But the two other hormones that are like the belly fat boudos are cortisol and insulin.

So if you can, yes, find your way to the weight room by even more. It's an intangible, and that's why it's probably so challenging, is reduce your stress level. And we talked about, if you have a meaningful life, you're gonna have stress. So it's not getting rid of them, right? You can just lock them up, but you've gotta find, you know, what are the things you look forward to doing. And if it's been a while since you've done some of those things, get them back. Find small ways.

I was just talking about this with a client today. And, you know, she's under a lot of stress, and she is struggling. And we talked about, you know, if you had three days to yourself, what would you do with it? That might be things you haven't been doing. She mentions horseback riding. And they happen to have a barn, right outside and she does have a horse. She just hasn't ridden in months. And I said, "Okay." So, you know, we're gonna try to work that back in, because adding joy can offset the stress. It doesn't mean that stress is going away, but you will be more resilient if you have that joy to balance it. So that intangible has nothing to do with exercise, but then again, everything. Because even exercise is stress, so we wanna be sure that we hit it, get great exercise, and then we go down with it. It doesn't take tons of exercise if we have those other areas of our life in balance. It's all integrated. We can isolate anymore and say, "I'm just gonna exercise this away, or to get more." So that's the belly fat, is working on that stress, so that you don't crave things that spike your insulin and then help you deposit the belly fat.

The good news about belly fat, exercise where that belly fat is very responsive to exercise. So if you do find the right intensity, duration, and frequency. And we're talking, you know, a little less frequency. Maybe once, two times of interval training, one long slow kind of a workout, getting in at least twice a week, strength training, and it could be as little as 10 minutes. It doesn't have to be an hour long. If you're getting in that, you're probably going to see some results. Provided you're making good choices at the table. Okay, so, well, don't leave that one. But in terms of that upper arm fat, I have ladies who call it all kinds of things. None of them good, right? The bingo wings, the bat, bat wings, bingo arms, whatever. That is less responsive, unfortunately to exercise. So I'm not saying you shouldn't exercise, and you should, but doing tricep exercises alone, or exercises for your arms alone won't do it. We wanna come back to what were those things that we know boost your metabolism more? Those are major muscle groups. So we're looking at squats, and big presses, and big pulls, like rows, and chest press, and lunges. Those things that have a major impact on your entire body will also help that area, though it may seem less specific.

If you start with only arm exercises, and you're not doing those others, you won't see as much results, because that fat is not getting any boost from metabolism. So you wanna help yourself by doing that circle of inner friends first, major muscle group exercises, and then do the arm exercises too. But with arms, you're gonna have to pay more attention to your nutrition, cutting out some of those extracurricular sweets and treats, the carbohydrates that don't serve you well.

Katie: That make sense. And I think that's maybe the thing that weight lifters and body builders have known for a long time, and a lot of other people don't. Is that, like you can't really just spot reduce and just doing crunches alone is not gonna fix that. Like you said, it's part of a bigger picture, kind of an overarching picture to do with that. And so I'm curious for people who are listening, who, like, hear what you're saying and agree with you but haven't ever really done the weight lifting side or the high intensity side. What would you recommend as a place to start? So kind of like, if you only had a short amount of time to exercise, or a limited

amount of time to get away from your kids, what would you recommend?

Debra: So here's where I would start. You know, if you've got...you're at home and you're doing this, I would say you wanna look at this like a target. Like a bull's eye. So in the very middle, if I've only got 10 minutes, here's how I spend my time literally. I would do a squat, or a lunge, either one, but I tend to navigate towards squat, because it's definitely top of your thighs, bottom up your thighs, your glutes, so quadriceps, hamstrings, and glutes, those major muscle groups are super important. Some kind of a row, bent over a row if I'm at home, or a lat pulldown if I'm at a gym, and a chest press with dumbbells. So I've got a little bit more balanced, but I can go as heavy as I need to, to fatigue. And I wanna fatigue by about 15 to 20. So starting out, that's a good repetition range to fatigue, because you wanna give your joints and ligaments a chance to catch up. Your muscles and even your brain may feel like, I can do more, I can do more. And that's okay. When you first start, it's good to walk away from these first couple workouts, feeling like, I could've done more. It's smart. Just let yourself kind of regroup with the next couple of days is, how do I feel? No aches and pains, I'm feeling fine. And let yourself take all steps forward instead of, you know, one step forward two steps back, because you start gung-ho with an injury. So for weight training that's definitely how I would start.

And when we're talking, you know, we wanna foray into interval training, 20 minutes of interval training. And this is beginners, intermediate, advanced, you know, if you have a short time, because the perception of how hard you're working is relative to any one of us. So we can all do it right, we can all do it beside each other. My speed may not be yours, my incline might not be yours, but it doesn't matter who you are. You can do this. And age, gender doesn't matter either.

So I like to warm up for about five minutes, very progressively. Meaning, one minute I might do this, at minute two I'm gonna make sure I bump up either my speed or incline, and so forth until about five minutes. And then, I'm gonna do a minute hard and a minute easy for 10 to 12 minutes and then cool down. That's it. And that's all I do on a lot of days. That is all I have time for. In fact, just a little bit ago, I actually did something very similar for 30 minutes. I mean, that's the only window of opportunity I had. And rather than say it's not worth it, I don't have an hour. That's what I did. So it's also good for maintenance.

Katie: I love that. And you're combining the benefits of the interval training in a sense with the resting, the on and off, and the weights. And I agree with you, like if people who think you need an hour to workout, like I promise you, if you lift heavy weights and do it even for like 10 minutes with really heavy, you will be just be as tired if not more tired. That's amazing.

Debra: Yes.

Katie: So you already, you touched on a lot of different things. But, you know, exercise is definitely a passion for you. I know you don't...you've written, I've read your blog. You've written about a lot of other things that are important for health, for energy, and for sleep, and things that we should add in besides exercise. So can you just have a recap of healthy habits and things you would recommend to people for improving their energy and losing weight, and increasing confidence, aside from just the exercise?

Debra: That's a long wish list, Katie. Okay. So yes, let's talk about. Okay. And the reason I talk about sleep is because it all comes back to exercise. So as a fitness coach, strength and conditioning coach for, you know, everything, from athletes to 93-year-olds, it's the same. If we don't have the right things in place for the exercise to be effective, to do its magic, then you're just gonna be getting tired with no results. So I talk about

the sleep because sleep will actually help you promote the right hormones, and kind of demote the wrong ones. So if we miss sleep, we're sleep deprived, either short shooting ourselves with too little, or maybe that quality isn't great. You're waking up in the middle of night. Not always can you control that, I realize. We're not gonna have the release of the growth hormone, which actually helps you kind of lay down that muscle. If you really want to make sure that you're boosting metabolism, we need to have that. And if we're not sleeping, cortisol is actually gonna be at the wrong place at the wrong time. You know, cortisol gets a bad rap, but we need cortisol to be higher in the morning to come up. And we need it to become down in the evening so that we can relax and get a good night's sleep. And sometimes that dial gets turned. And you're staring at the ceiling at 2:00 a.m., but you wanna put your head down at 2:00 p.m., right? To take a nap. And sometimes that's frowned upon depending on what you have to do. So it's important that you get that sleep, and set hygiene for yourself just like you would for a child. Literally, we need to go back to that. You know, when your eyelids get droopy, let yourself go to sleep. And, you know, if you even cut off an hour of sleep a night, maybe half hour in the morning, half hour at night, that's an hour every day. That's a full night sleep by the end of the week that you've lost, and that makes a huge difference in your exercise progress and the results you're gonna get. So that's why it's so important.

And then the other thing is nutrition and the timing of it. The biggest mistakes I see women make with their exercise is, one, not eating enough. And it almost, always for women that's the case. It's not the opposite. It's not eating too much. It's not eating enough. It's not eating the right kind of food at the right time. So we need to make sure that we get high quality protein in. Specifically, if you're doing strength training, it really matters, but if you're consistently doing cardio too much, you haven't quite got our message here yet about doing a little less, but higher intensity, your muscles are breaking down at a faster rate than they're building up. And particularly, if you don't give them protein, which is the building block of muscle. So a little hint here, wait an hour after you finish that high intensity work, because there's a blunting effect, and it gets to be more blunting as you age. But for about an hour, your muscles can't synthesize protein as well as they can between an hour and two hours after your workout. So if you're due for, you know, a yummy smoothie, or you're gonna sit down to have lunch, you know, a chicken breast, or whatever your preference is, do it between an hour and two hours after your work out. So that timing is crucial, and a little bit of carbohydrate is still important. Those carbs are not the bad guy, it's just making sure they're the right kind. And for those of you who are exercising in the morning, and you've made that switch, I like to see a little bit higher carbohydrate at night, to help you both relax and sleep, kind of it's the chill comfort food. So invite sweet potatoes to dinner, or quinoa, or brown rice, and it's also what's in your system about 16 hours before a workout, gives you energy. So the night meal is actually gonna fuel your morning workout. So those are a couple major lifestyle tips that really help the exercise you're doing pay off.

Katie: Yeah, absolutely. And I know that you have blog posts about these, and also courses. So I'll make sure to link to your website in the show notes. But for someone who's listening an audio only, where could people find you, especially if they're in this phase of life and want to get stronger and to incorporate exercise more? Where can they find you online?

Debra: They can find me at [flippingfifty.com](http://flippingfifty.com), and that's all words, two words, no spaces, no numbers, all spelled out. And a couple of resources, so The Flipping 50 TV tab, we actually started doing shows last summer, about a year ago, and we do episodes that actually answer a reader's question, literally. You know, it might be a teacher is telling me, you know, during my stressful teaching days, I have to start early, I barely get time for lunch, and, you know, I'm wanting to eat a whole bag of Doritos, all by myself, you know, we go through literally what can she do with exercise and meals. So literally, seeing how I answer someone else's

question, there'll be a takeaway, no doubt for you, so visit that for sure.

Katie: Awesome. And like I said, I will have links to those included. But thank you so much. This has been a really fun episode. I love that we are so aligned on the importance of weight lifting. And I love the work that you're doing with women. So thank you so much for being here.

Debra: Thank you. I'd love to work out with you some day.

Katie: That would be so much fun. And thanks to all of you for listening. I will see you next time on the Healthy Moms Podcast.

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