



July 13, 2011 – Grand Rapids, MI

## Checklist

On Monday, I wrote about choreographing every move on your path to getting healthy and fit. The question is: how are you going to remember everything that you're supposed to do? Create a checklist. There are good reasons behind it.

Airline pilots have used checklists for many years—they have a lot to do before a flight besides just checking the fuel level. Those checklists were developed because of previous plane crashes. That's a tough way to learn the lesson, but the critical factor is that they learned from their mistakes.

Surgical units are now doing the same thing. A recent study reported that mortality related to surgery was cut in half and complications resulting from surgery were reduced from 11% to 7% after implementing pre-op checklists. Granted the mortality rate was only 1.5% to begin with, but I think everyone who undergoes surgery would prefer that it be zero. That's the value of using checklists.

On a less life-threatening level, Paula and I both have checklists of things we've forgotten to pack when traveling; my projector's not much good without its cord, I don't like wearing my suit without a belt, and Paula simply must have her eye cream and dental floss. We don't actually check things off, but reviewing the list reminds us of easy-to-overlook items.

What should your fitter body checklist look like? That's really up to you. What to eat or when to exercise. Packing gym clothes, drinking water, or taking supplements. The lists are going to be as diverse as the number of readers of this message.

Spend a couple of days thinking about the things you forget to do that could help you get healthy and fit, and start jotting some notes. That's the start of your checklist—because like the checklist of minor repairs around our house, your fitter body checklist will always be a work in progress, changing as you become more fit.

What are you prepared to do today?

***Dr. Chet***

**Reference:** N Engl J Med 2009; 360:491-499.

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