

No More “Regular Days”
**Why Executive Women
Need A Systematic Approach
To Health**



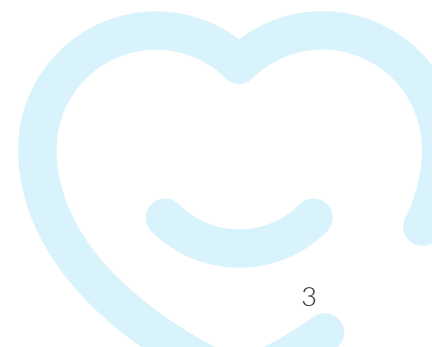


**Physical health is fundamental
to leading with confidence.**

**Physical health is essential
to reaching aspirational goals.**

This is why women with ambition who seek executive roles must take a systematic approach to achieving and maintaining personal health, synthesizing practical health information, selecting appropriate tools, and accessing trustworthy advice. A comprehensive, personalized, and systematic approach to health helps executives make better decisions, inspire their teams to be healthier, and, therefore, be more productive. Activating these women in leadership creates the necessary ecosystem for enhanced career stamina for all women.

For the purposes of this paper, an executive woman is considered to be anyone who identifies as a woman and who makes decisions that affect the bottom line of her organization. This paper outlines the health landscape all women must navigate in order to buffer against age-related declines in physical health. It then describes unique health challenges caused by executive realities. While long work hours are a factor across the board, the challenges specifically addressed herein include: the detrimental effects of frequent travel; the food environment; and the cardiovascular risk arising from time spent sitting in meetings. By adopting a systematic approach to meeting the CDC's recommendations for healthy living, executives can experience new levels of personal energy and contribute professionally in sustainable ways.



About Hello Health

The HelloHealth system helps women shift their thinking from the idea – and expectation – that they can self-recharge. Instead, it engages them in a systematic approach to self-care that enhances their resilience. While the system was developed and validated through one concierge medical practice for executive women, HelloHealth now offers onsite workshops for groups of women looking to avoid burnout, proactively manage stress, and enhance their personal energy levels.

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The contents of this paper are neither intended nor implied to be relied on for medical diagnosis, care, or treatment concerning any individual. Under no circumstances does this paper create a physician-patient relationship; nor does it constitute engagement in the practice of medicine or the provision of any health care service to an individual patient. This paper should not be used as a substitute for professional diagnosis and treatment. Consult a healthcare provider before making any healthcare decisions or to obtain guidance about any medical conditions. The authors of this paper expressly disclaim responsibility and shall have no liability for any damages, loss, injury, or liability whatsoever suffered as a result of reliance on the information contained in this paper.

The role of physical health in relation to career stamina is underemphasized. Declining health affects women at a younger age compared to men and contributes to a shortened time window for women to achieve the highest leadership positions.

In a broad range of fields, the ratio of women in top leadership positions—as equity law partners, medical school deans, and corporate executive officers, for instance—remains stuck at a mere 10 to 20 percent. Their “share of the voice”—the average proportion of their representation on op-ed pages and corporate boards, as TV pundits, and in Congress—is just 15 percent. In fact, it is now estimated that women will not reach parity with men in leadership roles in the United States until the year 2085.ⁱ Meanwhile, 45 percent of women employed by private companies report they would like to become CEO or hold a position in senior management.ⁱⁱ

The reasons women have stalled in achieving parity with men are complicated and numerous. One underlying cause, however, is underemphasized yet fundamental to progress: the current work environment threatens the very health of women in leadership. Today’s executive woman shoulders responsibilities in her career that obliterate the time she needs to meet minimal requirements for health. The work ecosystem imposes limits on her physical movement and frequently disrupts her attempts to maintain healthy habits.

The executive woman may be theoretically opposed to sacrificing her health for success at work; in practice, however, that is what she does. She often views herself as healthy even when she feels exhausted, anxious, joyless, or overworked. There is always “so much to do.” She does not examine her work environment with an eye toward protecting her physical health, so she has not built coping mechanisms to defend herself. Poignantly, she does

not realize how much of her physical health has been lost until she makes it to the doctor’s office.

The narrow window for catapulting herself into the C-suite comes between the ages of 40 to 44 — a significant age range physiologically given its implications for reproductive health, cardiovascular risk factor accrual, and cancer risk. Though executive men face similar challenges, their female counterparts develop health problems nearly a decade earlier. Moreover, women encounter obstacles to taking advantage of health facilities available at their work sites, and when they become unwell, suffer greater consequences to their careers.ⁱⁱⁱ HelloHealth has found that executive women are more aware of and concerned by the following aspects of their work ecosystems:

1. Lack of sleep is a status symbol. Consequently, sacrificing sleep in return for a stellar work product remains an expectation.
2. Frequent travel increases sedentary time, disrupts sleep habits, disconnects the traveler from social and emotional supports, and decreases intake of fresh produce, while simultaneously increasing total calorie and salt consumption that are the hallmarks of dining out. Excess calorie intake from meals consumed away from home is a major contributor to obesity.^{iv}
3. Work hours in excess of 12 hours – often pulling the “second shift” – absorb the time needed to meet CDC-recommended guidelines for aerobic exercise, strength training, and sleep. Bingeing on sleep, exercise, and alcohol often results.
4. Being accessible to work around the clock, including vacation time, off hours, sick leave, and maternity leave. Technology routinely disrupts the time devoted to rest and relaxation.

The Health Landscape for Women

All women are navigating a health landscape that features the following obstacles:

- genetic predispositions
- physiologic truths of aging, including an increased risk of cancer, heart attack, and stroke
- whether, when, and how to become mothers
- hormonal fluctuations that affect day-to-day energy levels and sense of comfort

The figure below, entitled “Bioreserve and Aging,” illustrates general trends by decade, beginning with a woman’s twenties and ending in her sixties.

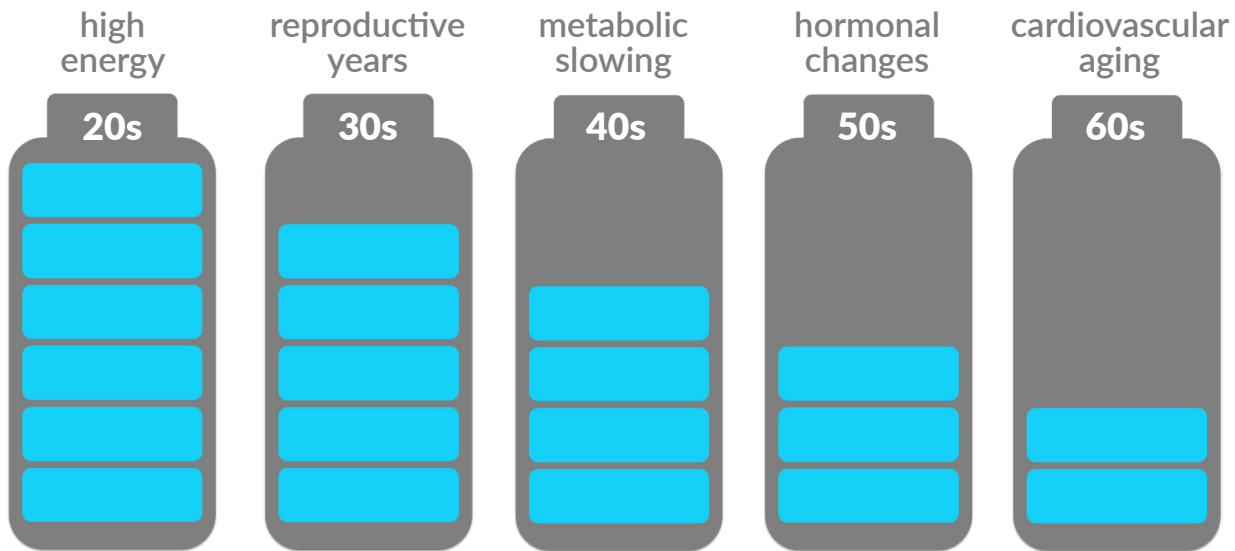
Each decade marks a change in personal energy levels that correlates with physiologic aging. Generally, a healthy woman’s twenties are marked by continuing bone mineralization and strengthening. Bone density reaches its peak in her thirties. A woman’s decision to become a mother has geographic variability. In the southern states, women with career ambition tend to delay having children until they are around 26 years of age (still older compared to less ambitious counterparts). Women living in the northeastern states who attain higher level executive positions tend to “put off” motherhood until their thirties and forties.

Around age forty, a woman will begin to notice that she does not “bounce back like she used to.” When she says this, she is comparing how she feels now to how she felt back in her twenties when innate biologic resilience was at its peak. Most women experience metabolic slowing in their fortieth decade, which is largely a result of lean muscle mass loss. The loss of lean muscle mass, if not blunted by regular and consistent strength training exercise, underpins weight gain that is most noticeable in their forties and fifties. Of note, only 20 percent of American women strength train.^v

In the fifth decade, women detect mood and energy shifts related to hormonal changes and menopause. The sixth decade is marked by cardiovascular risk equivalent to men.

NOTE: While improving longevity may change the trend of executive women leaving the work force after the age of 65, later decades are not discussed here.

Bioreserve and Aging



cancer risk increases with age, weight, and smoking

The leading causes of preventable death in American women are heart attacks, strokes, and cancer. Each cause directly correlates to the fact that it has become increasingly easy to gain body weight and harder and harder to avoid it. Women weigh an average of 17 pounds more than they did in 1994. The food environment in which an American women lives is a strong predictor of body weight gain. Excess calorie intake from meals consumed away from home are a major contributor to obesity. The percentage of women aged 20 and older who are obese is 38.5 percent.^{vi}

The food environment is influenced by the following trends:^{vii}

- Americans are cooking less and less often and eating away from home more and more often.
- More than half of food dollars are spent on restaurants and convenience meals. In 2015, for the first time, Americans spent more money eating away from home than they did on groceries.
- When they eat out at restaurants, Americans eat 20 to 40 percent more calories than they do at home.

NOTE: Restaurant entrees contain 1,200 calories on average— more than two-thirds of the daily total needed by a woman in her forties and 75 percent of the daily total needed by a woman in her sixties.

- Alcohol consumption contributes to weight gain. The ratio of women aged 18 and over who had four or more drinks in one day at least once in the past year: 18.9 percent.

Executive women must navigate a health landscape whose hallmark is the need for constant change and adaptability due to executive realities that present unique obstacles to healthy living, even with the best of intentions. An internal negative dialogue can make these obstacles loom even larger.

An executive woman faces major obstacles simply because she is an executive, including:

- **Unique sets of time-related pressure.** Time is not under her control. Instead, time belongs to everyone else – her team at work, superiors, and colleagues upon which her contribution depends. At home, her time belongs only partially to family responsibilities. There is an option to work 24/7 and forego all personal time. Her schedule is often not her own and is often set or managed by an administrative assistant or other office manager. If she stands any chance at all at becoming healthier, discretionary time must be created, consolidated, and defended.
- **Unusually high urgency at work.** The executive woman routinely faces immediate and pressing tasks that must be performed at the expense of less urgent, even if important, tasks. Increasingly, she attends to these urgent matters to the detriment of less urgent – though important – tasks, including preventive health measures and healthy personal habits.
- **A high calorie, high sodium, unpredictable food environment.** Due to her travel schedule for both work and pleasure, entertaining clients, and socializing with her colleagues and teammates, the executive woman has unpredictable access to fresh produce - the single most important component of a healthy diet. Food available to her is often highly processed convenience foods that are high in sodium, added sugar, and saturated fat. She must eat away from home often and is regularly exposed to dining environments where excess calories, in the form of alcohol and saturated fat, are consumed as a matter of course.

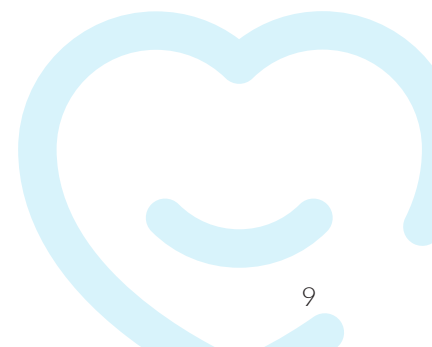
The chart below lists the minimum daily time requirements for healthy living, according to CDC guidelines for what to eat, strength training, aerobic exercise, and sleep. Because strength training and aerobic exercise can be performed on a weekly basis, the estimated minimum time requirement for healthy living on a daily basis is approximately nine to thirteen hours. It is important to note that time for eating does not include meal planning, grocery shopping, or food preparation.

GOAL	HEALTH
EAT	2+
STRENGTH	0.5 - 1
EXERCISE	0.5 - 1 WALK
SLEEP	≥ 7
DAILY TIME REQUIREMENT	9 - 13 HOURS

Now consider the typical work habits of a woman in business, medicine, law, or consulting:

- She works an average of 58 hours per week – about ten to eleven hours per weekday, plus six hours on the weekend. (By comparison, Gallup research shows the average full-time employee works about 47 hours per week).^{viii}
- She sleeps about six hours a night during the week, which amounts to about two fewer hours than average employees.^{ix}
- She starts her day no later than 6:00 a.m.^x
- She ends her day by 11:00 p.m. or later.^{xi}
- Most of her workday – as much as 6+ hours – is occupied by meetings. As she rises in leadership positions, she will spend as much as 50 to 70 percent of her time at work sitting in meetings.^{xii}
- Communicating by text, phone, and email is a line item on her daily agenda.^{xiii}
- She is likely to be a mother, but she waits to have children and has them in a planned fashion at the average age or 26 or older.^{xiv}
- She shoulders the bulk of household and childcare duties.^{xv}

Given the above demands, it is no wonder that the executive woman's main challenge to healthy living is time. She is likely to face major obstacles to healthy living simply because her work ecosystem creates the conditions for what we at HelloHealth call the state of pre-illness.



Pre-illness is the state of ill health caused by lack of attention to self-care because the pain or discomfort of illness is not perceptible. Pre-illness arises from the executive woman's lack of certainty about the amount of time she devotes to the four areas of physical and mental health outlined in CDC guidelines. The chart below illustrates the unintentional nature of managing one's time in a state of pre-illness, in comparison to the minimum time requirements to maintain health.

GOAL	PRE-ILLNESS	HEALTH
EAT	irregular	2+
STRENGTH	unlikely	0.5 - 1
EXERCISE	varies	0.5 - 1 WALK
SLEEP	if possible	≥ 7
DAILY TIME REQUIREMENT	unsure	9 - 13 HOURS

The executive woman is likely to become pre-ill if she lacks an actionable plan to meet minimum health requirements. She also needs a strategy to adapt her plan to rise to health challenges caused by executive realities.

Executive women are cognitively overloaded.

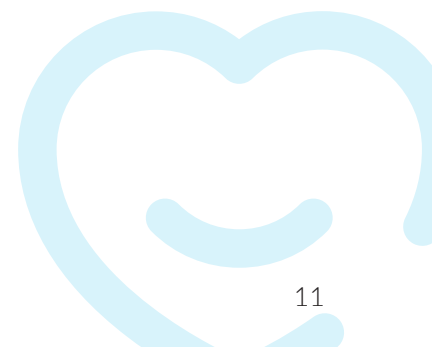
On average, an executive woman takes part in about twenty meetings weekly. She likely participates in making hundreds of decisions on behalf of her team and company each week. Meanwhile, a barrage of rapid-fire communications, in the form of email, text, and direct message, vies for her attention. Addressing them requires several hundreds more micro-decisions daily. Factoring long commutes into the equation, she arrives home still purging cognitive clutter. For a woman in this position, it is difficult to limit her productive day (including the "second shift" and other obligations) to fewer than fifteen hours a day. Mental and physical exhaustion renders her unable to even define her own needs – let alone make time for self-care.

Currently available health information is either irrelevant and siloed or relevant but inaccessible.

Much of the vast amount of health information offered up by popular media is irrelevant to a woman whose time is at a premium. There is so much new health information available that it is impossible to discern whether it applies to her or not. Further, the sheer volume of poorly synthesized information fuels worry about personal health. This is because popular media sites mistake fitness for health, make time-intensive recommendations, and present seemingly important bits of potentially relevant data in poorly contextualized ways. Conversely, relevant information provided by large healthcare systems and in traditional physicians' offices is communicated on a level that is too basic to resonate with a woman who is an expert in her own domain.

Mainstream diet and exercise advice does not work for executive women.

Mainstream diet and exercise advice is premised on a lifestyle of predictable days with a set routine. It assumes, for instance, that the executive woman has control over the food that will be offered and that someone will even be home to cook. Given the executive woman's travel schedule, number of meetings, responsibility for entertaining clients, and the like, she needs a flexible, personalized, and systematic way to apply the principles of healthy eating and exercising.



Key Points

The role of physical health in relation to career stamina is underemphasized. Declining health affects women at a younger age compared to men and contributes to a shortened time window for women to achieve the highest leadership positions.

Executive women must navigate a health landscape whose hallmark is the need for constant change and adaptability due to executive realities that present unique obstacles to healthy living, even with the best of intentions. An internal negative dialogue can make these obstacles loom even larger.

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In comparison to the typical American woman, the executive woman encounters disruptions caused by work that require she gain and regain momentum toward healthy living. The energy to restart deserves specialized support from health professionals.

Conclusion

Every woman needs a systematic approach to personal health. To contribute at work in sustainable ways, an executive woman in particular needs unique tools and adaptable processes that facilitate and encourage engagement in her health as a leadership strategy.

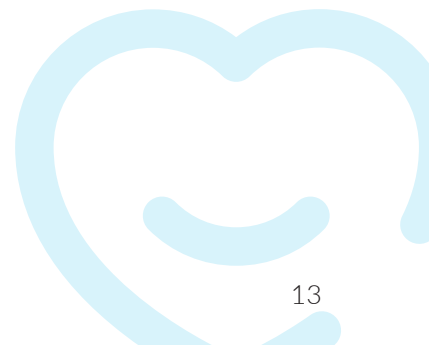
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