



## The 20 Principles of Rogue Health

A short while ago I wrote a piece that summed up [my current anti-aging program](#). I thought I would do something similar here and in one place articulate the 20 Principles of Rogue Health.

### **Science-based, non-mainstream principles**

These principles are based on my reading of the scientific literature as to what makes for the best practices for men's health, how to maintain good body composition – low body fat and relatively high muscle mass, and what drives and how to slow the process of aging. Most of these apply equally to women.

Note that mainstream medicine, as well as most health and fitness writing, does not emphasize or sometimes even talk at all about many or most of these principles. That's why I normally don't discuss the best way to get abs, or walking for exercise, or lowering cholesterol. Some of these are bunk, others less so of trivial importance. By heeding these principles, I believe you can have much better health than by adhering to mainstream advice.

### **The 20 Principles of Rogue Health**

1. **Maintenance of a lean body mass** with a relatively low level of body fat is important both for health and for slowing aging. Fat tissue is not neutral, but produces inflammatory cytokines that lead to overall, generalized inflammation, which is bad.
2. **While having too much fat is bad, having too little muscle may be worse.** This can be seen in the fact that [waist circumference is a much more accurate indicator of health than body mass index](#). Muscle is a highly metabolically active tissue, and contributes to glucose metabolism and insulin sensitivity.
3. **We all lose muscle as we age**, and most people do nothing about it. Lost

muscle, if taken far enough, leads to sarcopenia, frailty, and loss of independent living in old age. [Increase and maintenance of muscle mass](#) is one of the most important health interventions around.

4. [Insulin sensitivity](#) is important for health and aging. A decrease in insulin sensitivity (an increase in insulin resistance) is often seen in aging, and is the main feature of type 2 diabetes. But it doesn't have to be this way, and attention to diet and exercise can maintain youthful levels of insulin sensitivity.

5. [Weightlifting](#), also known as strength training or resistance training, is the best form of exercise for staying lean, maintaining and growing muscle, combating the frailty of aging, and maintaining good insulin sensitivity.

6. [High intensity interval training \(HIT\)](#), is a very effective form of exercise and can be used as an adjunct or, for some, a replacement to weightlifting.

7. **Aerobic exercise**, that is exercises such as running, walking, or the use of cardio machines in the gym, have health benefits, but as such they come in **a distant second to weightlifting and HIT**. They are very ineffective for fat loss, mainly because [they don't build muscle and may in fact accelerate its loss](#). Distance running can actually be harmful, leading to joint injuries that sometimes necessitate surgery, and serious heart problems.

8. **You can't outrun a bad diet**. Weightlifting and HIT are the only exercises that have been shown to have a material effect on fat loss, but even here, if fat loss is the goal, attention must be paid to diet. It's extremely easy to eat more than enough calories than you exercise away. "Burning" calories through exercise is close to nonsensical. Hunger always wins.

9. If hunger always wins, then to lose fat one must choose a way of eating that dampens hunger. [Low-carbohydrate diets](#), which forbid or radically lower sugar and refined carbohydrates like flour, are the best for controlling hunger.

10. **The cholesterol hypothesis of heart disease is nonsense**. [Statins](#) have tiny effects on mortality with the potential of large, deleterious side effects.

11. [Paleo is a healthy way to eat](#). Much debate has surrounded this issue, including even what it really is. While I don't advocate fanaticism regarding paleo eating, the avoidance of vegetable oils (not including olive oil), sugar, and high glycemic carbohydrates like flour can only be a good thing, in my opinion. Saturated fat is good for you.

12. Aging is a multifactorial process, and causes of it are the subjects of immense amounts of research, but much of it seems due to a [growth-longevity trade-off](#). Environmental and genetic influences that cause growth also cause aging. The most likely candidates for these include the hormone IGF-1, and iron. Keeping these under control won't abolish aging by a long shot, but they are within our control at least to an extent.

13. [Calorie restriction](#) (CR) robustly extends lifespan in lab animals, but [intermittent fasting](#) gives most or all of the benefits of CR without any of its nasty side effects like constant cold, hunger, and low libido, or long-term effects like frailty and lowered immune function. Intermittent fasting therefore retards aging, and can aid fat loss without decreasing muscle mass.

14. [Quit eating all the time](#). Even if you don't practice a defined version of intermittent fasting, eating all the time – grazing, snacking – is a destructive lifestyle practice, leading to obesity. Perhaps more importantly, it interferes with the body's daily rhythms which are so important for health.

15. Aging is characterized by a decline in the process of [autophagy](#), the physiological process used by cells to rid themselves of cellular junk and to recycle it. Hence, aging is also characterized by an increase in cellular waste as well as oxidative stress. Fasting (not eating) strongly up-regulates autophagy, and this is perhaps the main reason for its beneficial effects on health and aging.

16. [Hormesis](#) is the process in which a low dose of a toxic compound or stressor elicits a beneficial response from the body, and it is critical to health and anti-aging. Some examples of hormetic stressors include exercise, fasting, phytochemicals such as resveratrol, curcumin and EGCG (from green tea), and even cold showers and solar radiation. Hormetic practices should be incorporated into one's daily life for long life and health. Be hormetic, not a couch potato.

17. [Aging is controlled in part by AMPK](#), which is a cellular nutrient/energy sensor. Many of the same things that cause hormesis activate AMPK, including those mentioned above, but also coffee, tea, and aspirin.

18. [Testosterone](#) is important for men. Although "exceptionally healthy" men may retain youthful testosterone levels into old age, for the majority, testosterone declines. Furthermore, among all men, T levels are lower than what they were a generation ago, causes not fully known at this point. Therefore attention should be paid. Weightlifting and a sound, no junk-food diet can help immensely. Stay lean, as obesity leads to lower testosterone and higher levels of estrogens in men. Beyond that, if more help is necessary, one can consider an [aromatase inhibitor](#) or [testosterone replacement therapy \(TRT\)](#).

19. [Iron](#) can reasonably be suspected as being a primary cause of aging, as well as the cause of the lower life expectancy and higher heart disease and cancer rates versus women. Iron accumulates with age, since the body has no regulated means of getting rid of it; in women, menstruation serves to keep iron levels low. Every man should know his ferritin (iron) level, and if too high, should take measures to bring it down. And by too high, I don't mean too high by normal laboratory values, which have absurdly high upper limits. Blood donation and iron chelation are the major means of decreasing iron.

20. [Stay active](#). Drive yourself daily, whether in learning, exercise, or other projects. The obesity epidemic may partly be due to ignorance, but I

tend to think it's mainly due to lack of caring about oneself, or to put it another way, to laziness. As for aging, people just let themselves go, and spend hours in front of the television – the average over-65 person in this country watches nearly 8 hours of TV a day. To stay lean and muscular, to fight aging and disease, requires an active effort. Do nothing and you succumb to entropy and dissolution.

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