

# FOUNDATIONS TO A HEALTHY LIFESTYLE

## WEEK 4

“Nothing is impossible, the word itself says 'I'm  
possible!'”

– Audrey Hepburn



**YMCA of Greater Westfield**  
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## WEEK 4

### FITNESS CHALLENGE

## PLANK: GOAL TO DO A MINUTE 3X PER WEEK

The plank is an isometric core strength exercise that involves maintaining a position for the maximum possible time. Planks require your arms, your legs, and all of your abs, making them an all-encompassing workout and a more efficient way to exercise.

#### **BENEFIT OF PLANK**

- You'll improve core definition and performance.
- They engage all major core muscle groups including the *transverse abdominus*, the *rectus abdominus*, the *external oblique muscle*, and the *glutes*.
- You'll decrease your risk of injury in the back and spinal column. It allows you to build muscle while also making sure that you are not putting too much pressure on your spine or hips. According to the *American Council on Exercise*, doing planks regularly not only significantly reduces back pain but it also strengthens your muscles and ensures a strong support for your entire back, especially in the areas around your upper back.
- You'll significantly improve your posture
- A good posture keeps your bones and joints in the correct alignment which means both your bones and joints will be better maintained and healthier, but also means the overall effectiveness of your muscles will be improved
- You'll improve overall balance. You'll become more flexible
- Flexibility is a key benefit of doing planks regularly, for this form of exercise expands and stretches all your posterior muscle groups – shoulders, shoulder blades, and collarbone – while also stretching your hamstrings, arches of your feet, and toes. With a side plank added in to the mix, you can also work on your oblique muscles.

Wall plank: In a normal plank position and with proper technique, place forearms against a wall and walk the legs out to a manageable angle. The more far away the legs are from the wall, the harder the exercise.

**Plank on knees: A standard plank but you rest the lower body on the knees instead of the toes. Straight arms, hands under the shoulder.**

**Standard plank is performed as described above on the toes instead of knees**

**Elbow plank is performed as described above on elbows and toes**

**Choose the type of plank that best fits your fitness level**

Children and beginners may choose to divide your time to achieve a one-minute plank throughout the course of the day.

Advance do 6 to 12 reps of planks for 1 minute / three times a week

Email a picture demonstrating your favorite plank to Ryan at [rlevine@westfieldymca.org](mailto:rlevine@westfieldymca.org) to enter your name



## WEEK 4

# NUTRITION CHALLENGE

## MEATLESS DAY ONCE A WEEK

The challenge is not to eat any meat for one day.

It is built around the Meatless Monday challenge. Encouraging people to reduce meat in their diet and the health of the planet. It is a way to increase more fruits, vegetables and whole grain into our daily consumption.

Meatless meals are built around beans, lentils, nuts, vegetables, fruit, whole grains, and other plant-based food.

### Benefits of eating less meat

- Eating a diet of plant-based foods boosts your immunity
- There are known benefits to eating a diet high in vitamin-packed foods full of C, A, E, D, B, and minerals like zinc, iron as well as potassium and calcium. Plant-based foods like deep leafy vegetables, fruits, nuts, whole grains, legumes, and seeds are full of these essential vitamins and minerals, antioxidants, and phytochemicals that supply the body with the building blocks of your immune systems' defense
- Eating plant-based and ditching meat and dairy reduces your risk of heart diseases
- High saturated fat levels in red meat and some dairy products have long been known to contribute to heart disease, the leading cause of death in the United States, while a diet rich in plants can *reverse* symptoms of heart disease.
- Eating a diet high in fiber-filled plant foods reduces your risk of cancer
- Eating Plant-based is more sustainable for our planet
- Consider this: Eating just one plant-based meal a day for a year is the equivalent of saving the same carbon emissions as driving across the country, according to science offered by the organization started by Suzy Amis Cameron,

Tips & recipes: [www.mondaycampaigns.org/meatless-monday/recipes](http://www.mondaycampaigns.org/meatless-monday/recipes)

**Email a meatless recipe or picture to Ryan at [rlevine@westfieldymca.org](mailto:rlevine@westfieldymca.org) to enter your name into a weekly drawing**

