

Darla "Stay Healthy" Leal celebrates being **Fifty and Fit** this month and her fans want to know ...



Photos by Gene X

Q. How do you keep your metabolism from flat-lining?

A. I do not count calories, but do listen to my body and eat several small healthy meals per day and exercise 4 to 6 times per week. I do not deprive if I want a splurge now and then, and I probably will eat more one day to the next depending on the demands of my body, and lots of water.

Q. Breakfast lunch and dinner...what do you do not to make it boring or repetitive?

A. I can be a creature of habit for breakfast enjoying my oatmeal. I get more creative with different vegetable and protein selection for lunches and dinners. I enjoy cooking with a variety of spices, crock potting and grilling. There is always a great selection of vegetables and fruits in season, and I change up my lean proteins with fish, chicken, or ground turkey meat. I really enjoy my healthy taco night.

Q. How do you stay motivated?

A. I enjoy the way healthy feels and the quality of life it provides me, and that is what motivates me the most. My occupation as a personal trainer and helping people adapt healthy lifestyles also motivates me as I believe that I need to walk the talk to do what I do. There are days when motivation feels hard just like anyone else, and finding my mental strong on those days is what gets me through a workout.

Q. How do you rotate your workouts?

A. I listen to my body and if a muscle group is sore, I avoid that and work other muscle groups. My back tends to take the longest to recover and I may work that only one time per week. I constantly change up my routine for muscle confusion, to stay motivated and reduce boredom.

Q. What was your physical condition when you first started down this path? Were you healthy when you started?

A. I have been an athlete since junior high and I

would have to say I was pretty healthy. My parents provided the example of cooking at home, utilizing garden vegetables, and fruits. My younger years did play a big role in how I am living my life as a healthy adult.

Q. Do you feel like you want to eat all day long due to working out?

A. Absolutely YES. I listen to that call and graze throughout the day on organic grains, nuts, seeds, vegetables, yogurt, lean meats, and fruit. I am eating something healthy every 3 hours.

Q. What did inspire you the first time?

A. My physical education teachers and coaches where my first inspiration. I really excelled under their coaching and ate up the praise like crazy. It pushed me to be more and have confidence in my abilities.

Q. Is age really just a number?

A. In my opinion, YES. My attitude about life, how I feel and respond to life's circumstances keeps me young from the inside out. I do not believe that turning fifty means frumpy, and I often pass for thirty something and that puts a smile on my face. Taking care of me physically, emotionally and spiritually is truly my fountain of youth.

Q. Have you tried a different workout style like Crossfit since turning 50?

A. I have always incorporated a variety of workout styles to keep my fitness life fun, challenging, and motivating. I am not a cross fitter as I do have a cervical injury that would prevent many of the repetitive moves required, but do apply challenging varied workouts to include HIIT which happens to be one of my favorite ways to exercise.

Q. Attitude is everything. 50 is the beginning of the 2nd half of your life. Do you have any negative issues with turning the Big 50?

A. I love this question! I do agree that attitude is everything, and I feel very positive about life in general and turning fifty. I am looking forward to

what the 2nd half of my life's journey is going to bring my way. Probably the only negative issue is heading into menopause and the body changes that go along with that, but overall, I am hoping for a smooth transition and coming out the other side with great stories to share. Life is too short not to laugh.

Q. How do you stay disciplined?

A. Healthy is my lifestyle, and I would feel not like me if I did not eat healthy and exercise on a daily

to my faith in God, to persevere through all circumstance and be the BEST me through this journey of life.

Q. How do you keep motivated to diet and exercise when you have a young family and you're so tired all the time?

A. I stay motivated knowing that by taking care of me, I will be able to provide the best me for my family. I do not consider it selfish to take the

MY STAY HEALTHY PANTRY

Check out a few of the items that I have on hand to maintain my healthy physique

- ✓ Lean meats: chicken breast, ground turkey, salmon
- ✓ Greek Yogurt, plain
- ✓ Organic cheese
- ✓ Almond milk
- ✓ Raw nuts and organic dried cranberries
- ✓ Dark chocolate
- ✓ Power greens: chard, kale, spinach
- ✓ Variety seasonal vegetables: Brussels sprouts, green beans, peppers, carrots
- ✓ Fruits: apples, pears, kiwis, mangos, bananas, tomatoes
- ✓ Sweet potatoes
- ✓ Onions
- ✓ Organic whole grain seeded breads and high fiber wraps
- ✓ Extra virgin olive oil and balsamic vinegar
- ✓ Variety spices for cooking
- ✓ Organic canned goods: beans, tomatoes
- ✓ Quinoa
- ✓ Organic steel cut oats
- ✓ Baking items: organic coconut sugar, whole wheat flour, almond and coconut flour, honey, maple syrup
- ✓ Organic eggs
- ✓ Spicy mustards and hummus
- ✓ Red wine

basis. I have been living this life for over thirty years and the discipline has come from repetitive behaviors over those years that now come as naturally as breathing to me.

Q. Everyone has a distinct and very personal motivation... Mine is three years cancer free... What is yours?

A. Surviving the struggle of an unhealthy marriage and ultimate divorce years ago, overcoming two major surgeries with one involving a double cervical fusion and unfortunately a herniation above the fusion, and early onset cervical dystonia. My healthy lifestyle, husband and family has provided the hope and strength, in addition

time to take care of me, and that time allows me to de-stress, focus on my inner thoughts, and ultimately feel happier and more rested.

Q. I feel great at 51, running, cycling and strength training. Menopause has me wondering, when it happens, if I need to adjust anything?

A. I am in this boat with you. The only thing I have noticed going through the changes is that my body requires more rest and recovery. I maintain the same challenge level when it comes to my exercise although there may be some days where my energy is lower. My motto to Stay Healthy is "a short workout is better than no workout."

Darla Leal **FIT AT 50!**

