



Montel Williams is "Living Well," and eating green

By **Diane O'Donnell**

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NEW YORK — It's 11 a.m. and Montel Williams has already put in a kick-butt day. In the gym by 7:25, he chugs a 32-ounce green drink while putting in 40 minutes on the elliptical. Then on to a half-hour of resistance training and some stretching, followed by a two-hour radio interview.

In the TV talk-show host and author's ultrabusy world, green drinks — blended concoctions of whole fruits and veggies — get him up and going in the morning and power him through the day. The nutritional elixir is also a cornerstone of his new book, co-written with William Doyle, "Living Well: 21 Days to Transform Your Life, Supercharge Your Health and Feel Spectacular" (New American Library, \$24.95).

The book is crammed with Williams' personal reflections, simple recipes, workout routines and tips, and expert advice from dietitians and doctors.

Speaking by phone from his office in Midtown Manhattan, the 51-year-old Williams explains how his new regimen of diet and exercise helps him combat multiple sclerosis — an autoimmune disease that affects the central nervous system — as well as anything else life throws at him.

Q: Back in 2003, you came out with "Body Change: The 21-Day Fitness Program for Changing Your Body ... and Changing Your Life!" Your latest book also uses a 21-day formula. Why does 21 seem to be the magic number?

A: It takes 17 days to make a habit. That's been verified by every psychiatrist and psychologist in the world and about 50 different types of studies. I think 17 days is a hard number to pick, so what I've tried to do is break it into three-week cycles in everything. That's what I build my entire routine around.

If I need to start a new workout routine, I know I need to do it 17 times before I can actually let it sink in and know whether or not it's really affecting me and if it's going to form a habit. So I made it 21 days just to give people an extra four days to make it sink in.

Q: Early on in your new book, you extol the virtues of the green drink. How'd you come up with this concoction?

A: The truth to this one is this whole book is the evolution from the fact that two and a half years ago I started noticing my symptoms just seemed to feel more severe, and I wanted to go in search of something that would mitigate and lessen them.

I met someone, a friend of mine who suffered from ulcerative colitis, who told me about the fact that she literally stopped a doctor from removing a large piece of her colon just by changing the way she ate. And I thought, "Well, if she can impact her illness this way, then maybe I could do the same thing."

So I started out initially just by doing green drinks, and then when I realized how good that made me feel after 21 days, I decided to really seek out anything I could do dietarily that could impact my disease.

So for a two-year period of time I have basically lived this regimen — everything I talk about in this book.

By employing these principles for the last two years, I have impacted my symptoms of MS by at least 30 percent and in some cases 40 percent. And in some cases alleviated the need for medication ... because I came out very clearly in my book "Climbing Higher," that I suffer from depression.

I have not taken one antidepressant since I've been on this regimen.

Q: When we talk about these green drinks, we're talking about fruits and vegetables?

A: I do it in a myriad of different ways. Here's the thing: It's green drinks, but it's also about eating more greens. The reason why I say "drink" or "smoothies" is because it's easier to get it in. I'm on a very busy schedule. For me to sit down and eat 16 ounces of salad, sometimes three times or four times in a row in a week, it's kind of tough. But if I can blend up one salad, and juice another one in a soup the next day, I'm getting in vegetables.

Q: Were you always so eager to munch on vegetables?

A: No. I've always exercised and I've always thought that I was healthy, but I wasn't a big vegetable person. For me, I'd eat the French fries and potatoes and work out and try to get rid of it that way rather than eat the green beans.

It wasn't until I started realizing how good I felt after 40 days of green drinking. I remember I went to see my mom, and she said, "Baby you look really good. What have you been doing? Look at your skin." And I hadn't even noticed. I looked in the mirror and I said, "Dang. I have a glow."

Not only did I have a glow, but where are the wrinkles on my face? Gone. Why? Because as I'm juicing I'm putting in more and more vegetables, and I'm also hydrating my system. You're also filling your body with antioxidants and phytochemicals, with all kinds of good nutritional things. All the things that you're putting in is bursting through your skin.

Q: So you totally revamped your diet. In your book you state you're not a fan of the "D" word. Why?

A: No, I don't like the word "diet." I'd rather call it an eating regimen because diet represents these little plans that have a beginning and end date. If you take a look at the word "diet" on the Internet, you'll get about a million entries, because there's about a million and a half diets, and if any of them worked, there'd only be one. So, diets don't work.

I'm talking about a lifestyle change. This is not something you can do for the next month and then sit back and rest on your laurels; this is something you need to do for your life. This is called fitness for life — and what it does is, it'll transform your life.

Q: What does "Living Well" mean for you right now?

A: Being able to get up and meet the challenges of every day. No matter whether they be emotional, whether they be up, down or in between, to meet the challenges every day head on, have the energy to do it, have the emotional strength to do it and have the wherewithal to know that after I've succeeded, I can now rest and enjoy what I've accomplished. That's what I try to do every day.

Q: You've never let MS stand in your way. Can you explain why you feel Americans look at illness as a weakness?

A: When we hear the word "illness," we immediately think somebody's frail and weak. Truthfully, I may be ill, but I'm for damn sure not weak. The difference is I know I have MS, no ifs, ands or buts about this disease, but I'm never going to allow it to have me.

Even though I've gotten this diagnosis, that doesn't mean I have to stop living. And I'm going to keep living. I'm going to try to make sure that everything I do is in an effort to make me live better, have more fun, live healthier and live with a bigger smile on my face.

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