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THE EPOCH TIMES

# MIND & BODY

## Habits to Live a Long Life

A healthy life requires good  
habits and good times **3**

**8**  
Foods That Brighten  
Your Skin  
PAGE 5



## WISE HABITS

# Committing to My Commitments

Finding the heart to push through and fulfill our commitments is a difficult process and worth every effort

## LEO BABAUTA

How often have you half-heartedly committed to something, never fully following through on that commitment?

How often have you said you were going to do something, and then just dropped it because you were too busy or didn't have the energy?

How many times have you said you were going to take a course, read a book, take on a challenge, start a new hobby, write a book, start a business, and then barely even start on it?

For me, this all happens at an alarming rate. My commitments are often not even half-committed, they're like quarter commitments. And interestingly, I'd say I'm better at it than most people. Maybe not the best in the world, but better at sticking to my commitments than 75 percent of the world.

And I suck at it, in many ways. I start a diet and barely last a couple of days on it. I pick an exercise program and last three weeks. I buy a book and barely get a quarter of the way through. Over and over, my commitments fall like flies.

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## Deeper Commitments

What would it be like to be so deeply com-

mitted that we'd be unshakable? What would it be like to be the person who would walk through walls to meet their purpose in life? How much more would people trust us if we showed up fully every single time we committed to something?

Our lives could be transformed. I've been meditating on commitment lately and experimenting with it in my life. Looking at where I'm only half-committed (or less), where I don't really believe I'll meet my commitments. And learning how to go deeper into that commitment. Or cut it out, if I can't commit deeply.

Here's what I'm learning about being more deeply committed:

**1** Take away choice. When we're only half-committed, we keep the door open for other options. We think, "Sure, I'm going to stick to this diet, but if I go to a family gathering..." But if we're going to commit, let's remove all possibility in our minds of doing anything else. Choose better options at dinners out. Don't take a second plate at the family dinner. Keeping your commitment is the only option.

**2** Do it with your entire being. Going through the motions doesn't count. If you're going to do it, do it with your entire being. Put your whole heart into it or don't

do it at all. Only half showing up for people is painful to them. Only half showing up for yourself is, too.

**3** Remember your deeper why. You're probably not taking your commitments seriously because you've forgotten why they are important. It's just another thing on your endless to-do list. Remember the deeper reason you committed—maybe it's to serve people you care deeply about. Keep them in your heart. Write out why you care about this commitment and keep it visible.

**4** If you aren't fully doing it, ask what's holding you back. What's stopping you from fully showing up? There might be fear, or maybe you aren't giving it the weight and focus it deserves. Pause and be with this resistance or floppiness, and ask yourself what it would take to deepen this commitment.

**5** Add commitments only slowly. We want to do everything but over-committing leaves us unable to fulfill our commitments. Most of us should reduce our commitments and be very deliberate about adding new commitments. Meditate on a potential commitment for a few days. Commit to it only for a week or two to see if you can fit it in your life. Then don't add another for a little while, until you're sure you can handle it.

**6** Get out of commitments you aren't going to uphold. Most of us are over-committed—which means we can't possibly meet all our commitments. We should see if there's a way we can meet those commitments for as long as we said we would, but get out of them once we've fulfilled that commitment. That should be our first choice—do what we said we would and end it when we can. Next choice is to renegotiate the commitment if necessary—maybe we said we could do it for a year, but we can only do it for the next few months. Maybe we said we could do it every day, but all we're able to do is three days a week. Let the person know, and apologize to them. Lastly, get out of the commitment if you can't do either of the above. Apologize, but recognize this is necessary if you're going to meet more important commitments. This is a matter of prioritizing. If you have to get out of a commitment, let that be a grave lesson in overcommitting yourself.

I write these not so much as advice for everyone else, but as advice for myself. This is what I'm learning, and it's so important.

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Fulfilling our commitments leads us toward becoming the kind of person we can respect and whom others can rely on.



SHUTTERSTOCK/STOCKSTUDIO

# Habits to Live a LONG LIFE

A healthy life requires good habits and good times

## ALINA PETRE

Many people think that life expectancy is largely determined by genetics.

However, genes play a much smaller role than originally believed. It turns out that environmental factors such as diet and lifestyle are key. Here are 13 habits linked to a long life.

**1 Avoid Overeating**

The link between calorie intake and longevity currently generates a lot of interest. Animal studies suggest that a 10 to 50 percent reduction in normal calorie intake may increase maximum lifespan.

Studies of human populations renowned for longevity also observe links between low calorie intake, an extended lifespan, and a lower likelihood of disease.

What's more, calorie restriction may help reduce excess body weight and belly fat, both of which are associated with shorter lifespans.

That said, long-term calorie restriction to too great a degree is often unsustainable and can include negative side effects, such as increased hunger, low body temperature, and a diminished sex drive.

Whether calorie restriction slows aging or extends your lifespan is not yet fully understood.

**2 Eat More Nuts**

Nuts are nutritional powerhouses. They're rich in protein, fiber, antioxidants, and beneficial plant compounds. What's more, they're a great source of several vitamins and minerals, such as copper, magnesium, potassium, folate, niacin, and vitamins B6 and E.

Several studies show that nuts have beneficial effects on heart disease, high blood pressure, inflammation, diabetes, metabolic syndrome, belly fat levels, and even some forms of cancer.

One study found that people who consumed at least three servings of nuts per week had a 39 percent lower risk of premature death.

Similarly, two recent reviews including over 350,000 people noted that those who ate nuts had up to a 27 percent lower risk of dying during the study period—with the greatest reductions seen in those who ate one serving of nuts per day.

**3 Try Out Turmeric**

When it comes to anti-aging strategies, turmeric is a great option. That's because this spice contains a potent bioactive compound called curcumin.

Due to its antioxidant and anti-inflammatory properties, curcumin is thought to help maintain brain, heart, and lung function, as well as protect against cancers and age-related diseases.

Curcumin is linked to an increased lifespan in both insects and mice.

However, these findings have not always been replicated, and no human studies are currently available.

Nevertheless, turmeric has been consumed for thousands of years in India and is generally considered safe.

**4 Eat Plant Foods**

Consuming a wide variety of plant foods, such as fruits, vegetables, nuts, seeds, whole grains, and beans, may decrease disease risk and promote longevity.

For example, many studies link a plant-rich diet to a lower risk of premature death, as well as a reduced risk of cancer, metabolic syndrome, heart disease, depression, and brain deterioration.

These effects are attributed to plant foods' nutrients and antioxidants, which include polyphenols, carotenoids, folate, and vitamin C.

Accordingly, several studies link vegetarian and vegan diets, which are naturally higher in plant foods, to a 12 to 15 percent lower risk of premature death.

The same studies also report a 29 to 52 percent lower risk of dying from cancer or heart, kidney, or hormone-related diseases.

What's more, some research suggests that the risk of premature death and certain diseases increases with greater meat consumption.

However, other studies report either nonexistent or much weaker links—with the negative effects seeming specifically linked to processed meat.

Vegetarians and vegans also generally tend to be more health-conscious than meat eaters, which could at least partly explain these findings.

Overall, eating plenty of plant foods is likely to benefit health and longevity.

**5 Stay Physically Active**

It should come as no surprise that staying physically active can keep you healthy and add years to your life.

As few as 15 minutes of exercise per day may help you achieve benefits, which could include an additional three years of life.

Furthermore, your risk of premature death may decrease by 4 percent for each additional 15 minutes of daily physical activity.

A recent review observed a 22 percent lower risk of early death in individuals who exercised—even though they worked out less than the recommended 150 minutes per week.

People who hit the 150-minute recommendation were 28 percent less likely to die early. What's more, that number was 35 percent for those who exercised beyond this guidance.

Finally, some research links vigorous activity to a five percent greater reduction in risk compared to low- or moderate-intensity activities.

**6 Don't Smoke**

Smoking is strongly linked to disease and early death.

Overall, people who smoke may lose up to 10 years of life and be three times more likely to die prematurely than those who never pick up a cigarette.

Keep in mind that it's never too late to quit. One study reports that individuals who quit smoking by age 35 may prolong their lives by up to 8.5 years.

Furthermore, quitting smoking in your 60s may add up to 3.7 years to your life. In fact, quitting in your 80s may still provide benefits.

**7 Moderate Your Drinking**

Heavy alcohol consumption is linked to liver, heart, and pancreatic disease, as well as an overall increased risk of early death. However, moderate consumption is associated with a reduced likelihood of several diseases, as well as an 18 percent decrease in your risk of premature death.

Wine is considered particularly beneficial due to its high content of polyphenol antioxidants.

Results from a 29-year study showed that men who preferred wine were 34 percent less likely to die early than those who preferred beer or spirits.

In addition, one review observed wine to be especially protective against heart disease, diabetes, neurological disorders, and metabolic syndrome.

To keep consumption moderate, it is recommended that women aim for one to two units or less per day and a maximum of seven drinks per week. Men should keep their daily intake to fewer than three units, with a maximum of 14 per week.

It's important to note that no strong research indicates that the benefits of moderate drinking are greater than those of abstaining from alcohol.

In other words, there is no need to start drinking if you don't usually consume alcohol.

**8 Prioritize Your Happiness**

Feeling happy can significantly increase your longevity.

In fact, happier individuals had a 3.7 percent reduction in early death over a five-year study period.

A study of 180 Catholic nuns analyzed their self-reported levels of happiness when they first entered the monastery and later compared these levels to their longevity.

Those who felt happiest at 22 years of age were 2.5 times more likely to still be alive 60 years later.

Finally, a review of 35 studies showed that happy people may live up to 18 percent longer than their less happy counterparts.

**9 Avoid Chronic Stress and Anxiety**

Anxiety and stress may significantly decrease your lifespan.

For instance, women suffering from stress or anxiety are reportedly up to two times more likely to die from heart disease, stroke, or lung cancer.

Similarly, the risk of premature death is up to three times higher for anxious or stressed men compared to their more relaxed counterparts.

If you're feeling stressed, laughter and optimism could be two key components of the solution.

Studies show that pessimistic individuals have a 42 percent higher

risk of early death than more optimistic people. However, both laughter and a positive outlook on life can reduce stress, potentially prolonging your life.

**10 Nurture Your Social Circle**

Researchers report that maintaining healthy social networks can help you live up to 50 percent longer.

In fact, having just three social ties may decrease your risk of early death by more than 200 percent.

Studies also link healthy social networks to positive changes in heart, brain, hormonal, and immune function, which may decrease your risk of chronic diseases.

A strong social circle might also help you react less negatively to stress, perhaps further explaining the positive effect on lifespan.

Finally, one study reports that providing support to others may be more beneficial than receiving it. In addition to accepting care from your friends and family, make sure to return the favor.

**11 Be More Conscientious**

Conscientiousness refers to a person's ability to be self-disciplined, organized, efficient, and goal-oriented.

Based on data from a study that followed 1,500 boys and girls into old age, kids who were considered persistent, organized, and disciplined lived 11 percent longer than their less conscientious counterparts.

Conscientious people also may have lower blood pressure and fewer psychiatric conditions, as well as a lower risk of diabetes and heart or joint problems.

This might be partly because conscientious individuals are less likely to take dangerous risks or react negatively to stress and more likely to lead successful professional lives or be responsible about their health.

Conscientiousness can be developed at any stage in life through steps as small as staying on top of a desk, sticking to a work plan, or tying on time.

**12 Drink Coffee or Tea**

Both coffee and tea are linked to a decreased risk of chronic disease.

For instance, the polyphenols and catechins found in green tea may decrease your risk of cancer, diabetes, and heart disease.

Similarly, coffee is linked to a lower risk of Type 2 diabetes, heart disease, and certain cancers and brain ailments, such as Alzheimer's and Parkinson's.

Additionally, both coffee and tea drinkers benefit from a 20 to 30 percent lower risk of early death compared to non-drinkers.

Of course, any health benefits can be easily undone by too much sweetener or artificial flavors.

And remember that too much caffeine can also lead to anxiety and insomnia, so you may want to curb your intake to the recommended limit of 400 mg per day—around four cups of coffee.

It's also worth noting that it generally takes six hours for caffeine's effects to subside. Therefore, if you have trouble getting enough high-quality sleep, you may want to shift your intake to earlier in the day.

**13 Develop a Good Sleeping Pattern**

Sleep is crucial for regulating cell function and helping your body heal.

A recent study reports that longevity is likely linked to regular sleeping patterns, such as going to bed and waking up around the same time each day.

Sleep duration also seems to be a factor, with both too little and too much being harmful.

For instance, sleeping less than seven hours per night is linked to a 12 percent greater risk of early death while sleeping more than eight hours per night could also decrease your lifespan by up to 38 percent.

Too little sleep may also promote inflammation and increase your risk of diabetes, heart disease, and obesity. These are all linked to a shortened lifespan.

On the other hand, excessive sleep could be linked to depression, low physical activity, and undiagnosed health conditions, all of which may negatively affect your lifespan.

**The Bottom Line** Longevity may seem beyond your control, but many healthy habits may lead you to a ripe, old age.

These include exercising, eating well, and getting enough sleep.

Taken together, these habits can boost your health and put you on the path to a long life.

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Nuts are nutritional powerhouses.



SHUTTERSTOCK/STOCKSTUDIO

200 PERCENT

Having just three social ties may decrease your risk of early death by more than 200 percent.



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# How to Start Exercising

## If You're Out of Shape

Finding the time, motivation, and methods to get fit is easier if you ease into it

ANDREW LAVENDER

Perhaps your doctor has recommended you exercise more, or you've had a recent health scare. Maybe your family's been nagging you to get off the couch or you've decided that it's time to lose some weight. How do you find the motivation, time, and resources to get fit, particularly if you haven't exercised in a while? How do you choose the best type of exercise? And do you need a health check before you start?

Overcoming Barriers to Exercise

Motivation

Understanding the effect a sedentary lifestyle has on your health often hits home only after a serious event such as hearing bad news from your doctor. For some people, that's enough motivation to get started.

Surviving a heart attack or stroke can also be frightening enough to provide a great deal of motivation.

So, if you have not exercised for several years or haven't exercised before, it's a good idea to get a health check before starting.

Then you need to find enough motivation to stick with your exercise program. You can try tracking your training or fitness level and setting some achievable goals to keep going.

Lack of Time

Finding the time and effort to fit exercise into your daily routine is challenging. We know being "time poor" is a common reason for not exercising. And many people such as office workers, and vehicle or machine operators have low activity levels at work and don't feel like exercising after a long day.

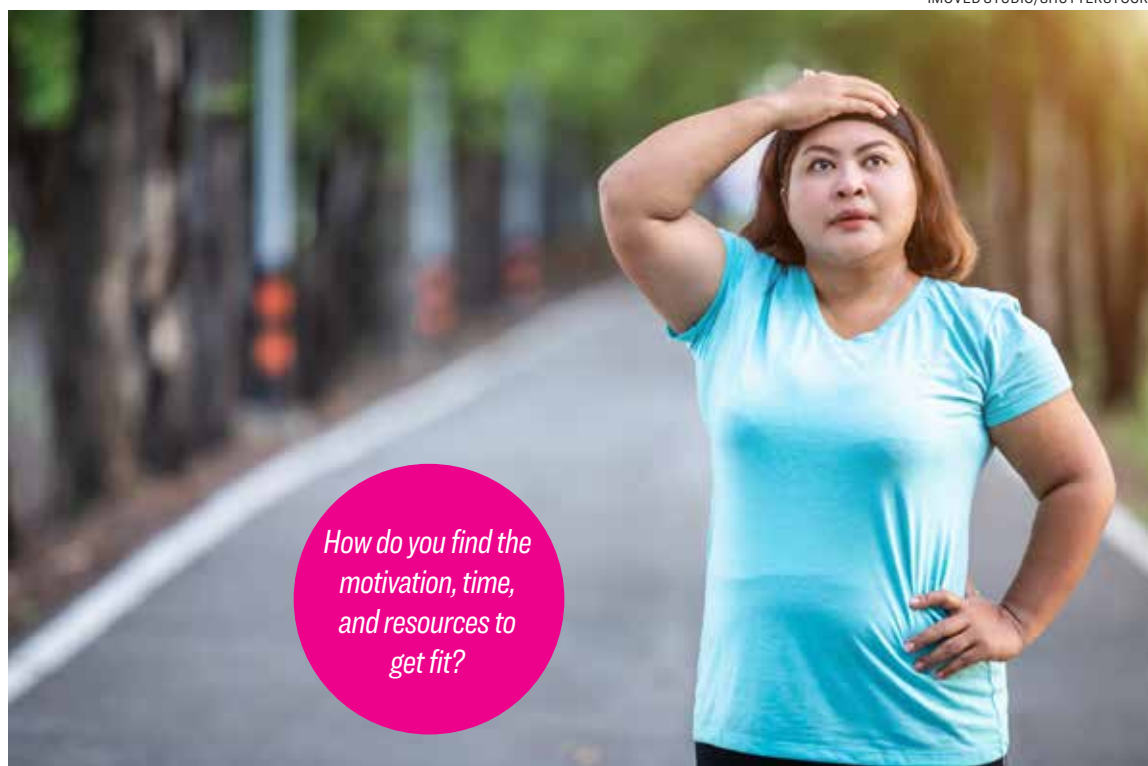
One way to get around these barriers can be to attend a group exercise session or join a sports club. If you find exercise boring, you can encourage a friend to join you or join an exercise group to make it enjoyable. If you played a sport in your youth, that might provide an option.

Having a friend to exercise with or teammates to support you gives a sense of commitment so that you have to be there and will be challenged if you fail to show up.

Resources

You don't need to join a gym with a lot of fancy equipment to get fit. There are many YouTube videos of safe routines that you can follow and adjust as you get fitter.

Many exercises—including squats, push ups, and sit ups—don't need special equipment. Rather than lifting weights



IMOVED STUDIO/SHUTTERSTOCK

But if you are overweight or obese, taking up exercise can place great strain on your joints, particularly the articulating surface, the cartilage surface of bones that contact each other. So hips, knees, and ankles can become inflamed and painful.

So it may be best to include exercise that reduces weight bearing, such as exercise in water or using a stationary exercise bike or rowing machine. Once you've lost some weight and your cardiovascular function has improved, then you can add more walking or jogging to your exercise program.

Food That Powers You Along

A healthy diet you can maintain in the long term is a very important part of any fitness routine. Not only can it help you lose weight, but it also can provide the right type of fuel to power your new exercise program.

Getting plenty of fiber from fruit, vegetables, and whole grains will help to reduce weight and keep it off while exercising.

Sugar, especially the type found in fizzy drinks and sweets, is low in nutrients and increases the risk of diabetes, metabolic syndrome, and cardiovascular disease. So cut down on refined carbohydrates like some bread, sugary cereals, and refined pasta since these include sugars we are trying to avoid and have had their fiber removed. Replace them with oats, carrots, or potatoes.

It's best to avoid fast diets, which tend to be restrictive and difficult to maintain. They can lead to a yo-yo effect where you lose weight only for it to return.

In a Nutshell

Once you've decided to start exercising, and had a medical check if needed, start slowly and build your exercise routine up over weeks and months. Make it interesting and enjoyable, perhaps by working out with a friend or group. Set some achievable goals, try to stick to them and don't give up if you have a setback.

Weight loss and getting fit requires different approaches for different people so find what works for you and make it part of your lifestyle. Increase the intensity and frequency of your exercise gradually from a minimum of three times a week for 20 minutes to longer, more intense sessions more often.

Andrew Lavender is a lecturer at the school of physiotherapy and exercise science at Curtin University in Australia. This article was first published on *The Conversation*.

How do you find the motivation, time, and resources to get fit?

at the gym, you can fill milk bottles with water instead.

You'll Huff and Puff—but It Gets Easier

You might be thinking about starting an aerobic exercise class, or walking, jogging, swimming, or cycling. All need oxygen to provide energy over several minutes or longer.

When we perform aerobic exercise, our heart rate increases along with our breathing rate and depth. This is because this type of exercise requires oxygen to provide energy to keep going.

When we are not used to this type of exercise our body is inefficient at using the oxygen we breathe to generate energy for our skeletal muscles. That's why when we start an exercise program we huff and puff more, get tired quickly and may not finish the exercise.

But if we keep exercising regularly, our bodies become more efficient at using oxygen and we become better at generating enough energy for our muscles to work. After weeks of regular exercise, the number and efficiency of our body's mini-powerhouses—mitochondria—increase in each cell. This increases the energy they can supply to the muscles, makes exercise easier, and helps us recover faster from each session.

That's why it's important to continue exercising, even after a shaky start or a few set-backs. Yes, it can be a big challenge, but aerobic exercise gets easier

over time as the body gets used to providing the energy it needs.

Yoga or Stretches? What to Expect Easier

Yoga is a great way to start an exercise program and you can perform it at various levels of intensity. Stretching and other moves improve flexibility and strength. Yoga also emphasizes breathing and relaxation through meditation.

Yoga, like other forms of exercise, will be challenging to begin with. But it does get easier over the weeks as your body adapts. So, it is important to be persistent and make the exercise part of your routine with at least three sessions of up to one hour every week.

At the start, you can get sore muscles. While this can be uncomfortable, the soreness goes away after about a week. You can reduce this soreness by starting with low intensity and building gradually over the first month.

Once your muscles become used to the new movements, the soreness will be minimal as you progress.

Watch Your Joins

We know being overweight or obese has detrimental effects on the heart, bones, joints and other organs including the pancreas, which regulates blood glucose (sugar) levels. Obesity also can affect brain health and is linked to poor cognition.

The good news is that regular exercise can help reduce these negative effects.

If we keep exercising regularly, our bodies become more efficient.

## Morning Exercise Improves Decision-Making in Elderly

Moderate-intensity exercise has notable impact on cognitive ability, which is good for the elderly and the young



LJUPCOC SMOKOVSKI/SHUTTERSTOCK

A new study out of Australia has found that exercise in the morning can improve cognitive performance such as decision-making across the day compared to prolonged sitting without exercise. "Sedentary behavior is associated with impaired cognition, whereas exercise can acutely improve cognition," say the authors of the study.

The study titled, "Brain Breaks" led by the Baker Heart and Diabetes Institute and The University of Western Australia shows that there are distinct responses in cognitive performance and physical activity.

The study looked at a little more than 65 males and females aged 55 to 80 years. It examined the effects of light morning exercise on a treadmill with and without brief eight-minute walking breaks during an eight hour day of prolonged sitting. They compared the aspects of cognition and concentration including psychomotor function, visual learning, working memory, attention, and executive function, such as decision-making.

The researchers found that the benefits of exercise on memory and learning comes from a brain-derived neurotrophic growth factor, a protein which plays an essential role in the survival and growth of information-transmitting neurons in the brain. The conclusion was that this protein was elevated for eight hours during both exercise conditions, relative to prolonged sitting.

The study published in the British Journal of Sports Medicine also showed that it wasn't just a little morning exercise that was best for cognition. The best results for short-term memory came with the combination of exercising in the morning along with a brief, but frequent light intensity walking breaks throughout the day.

Physical activity researcher Michael Wheeler says "With an aging population which is looking to live healthier for longer, these studies are critical to people enjoying a productive and satisfying quality of life."

"This study highlights how relatively simple changes to your daily routine could have a significant benefit to your cognitive health. It also reveals that one day we may be able to do specific types of

exercise to enhance specific cognitive skills such as memory or learning."

Manipulation of Exercise

An interesting note on the study is that Wheeler believes that not all aspects of cognition respond in the same way to a given dose of exercise. He believes it may be possible to manipulate the pattern of exercise throughout the day to optimize specific cognitive outcomes.

One day we may be able to do specific types of exercise to enhance specific cognitive skills.

Michael Wheeler, physical activity researcher

The researchers for this study are on a mission to promote "brain breaks" throughout the day as a way to combat the global epidemic of too much sitting. Their "brain breaks" are now being implemented in Australian schools to help refocus and reenergize students throughout the day and help with their decision-making.

This research outlines just how important it is that uninterrupted sitting should be avoided throughout the day. To maintain optimal cognition, moderate-intensity exercise such as a brisk walk is encouraged by doctors for the daily maintenance of brain health.

This article was originally published on *Bel Marra Health*.

# Foods That Brighten Your Skin

Feed your skin what it needs to shine like it wants to

ALLISON TANNIS

Is your skin looking a little dull? You could try tricks like scrubbing your skin with exfoliants or put a higher watt bulb above the bathroom mirror to brighten your complexion. But, your skin will never fully radiate and glow like healthy, youthful-looking skin if you're not eating well.

What Causes Dull Skin?

Our skin can be divided into three layers: epidermis, dermis, and hypodermis.

The outermost layer of your skin, the epidermis, is made up of mostly dead skin cells, which can build up creating a dry, flaky, white or even yellow appearance. Dry and flaky skin also can be caused by a lack of oil and water in the skin's second layer, the dermis. Feeding the dermis with oil, water, and other nutrients is the job of blood vessels. Certain nutrients can help your skin look more youthful, radiant, and beautiful.

## Foods To Brighten Your Skin

1. Carrots

Brightening Nutrient: Vitamin A

With about 1.6 billion skin cells on your body, turning over every 28 days, your body is constantly making skin cells.

Eating foods that support cell growth can help ensure your body is able to create the most beautiful skin possible. Vitamin A supports the growth of beautiful new skin cells. It plays a vital role in cell differentiation. In fact, as early as 1941, scientists highlighted the importance of eating vitamin A rich foods for healthy skin after it was discovered a lack of vitamin A in a person's diet leads to abnormal skin growth. Carrots are a well-known source of vitamin A. Eating carrots can give your skin a sort of tanned appearance—but, be careful as too much can make your skin look orange.

2. Sesame Seeds

Brightening Nutrient: Zinc

Putting zinc cream on your face can prevent sun damage, but it makes sense that your body puts five to six times more zinc in the skin's epidermis than the dermis. Zinc is a great antioxidant in the outer layers of the skin and can promote wound healing. Antioxidants stop free radical damage in the



POULISTILLINS/ISTOCKPHOTO

skin, which disrupts new cell formation, weakens collagen strength, and causes spots. Putting zinc on your skin may be great for the beach, but not the office—try digging into zinc-rich foods like oysters, lamb, sesame seeds, and green peas and feed your skin from the inside-out.

3. Oranges

Brightening Nutrient: Vitamin C

Your complexion becomes less bright as you age. Just look at the skin of older people—it's drier, more pale and spotty. Age spots, or photoaging, are caused by sunlight eliciting an increase in pigment in certain cells of your skin (melanocytes). Preventing skin aging has never been easier—vitamin C is a potent antioxidant that fights damage caused by sunlight, and is a co-factor required for the collagen formation which gives the skin its strength. There are lots of sources of vitamin C to enjoy including oranges, raspberries, limes, and kiwis.

4. Sardines

Brightening Nutrient: Omega-3 fatty acids

It's well known that omega-3 fatty acids support a healthy cardiovascular system—but, did you realize that also means healthy skin cells? That healthy glow of beautiful skin comes from healthy skin cells being fed by thousands of small blood vessels. Studies have shown that omega-3 fats help the skin's oil (sebaceous) glands, improving skin conditions like acne and psoriasis. Plus, omega-3 fatty acids are capable of mediating inflammation. By reducing the amount of inflammation, omega-3 fatty acids help reduce puffiness and redness in the skin. The best source of omega-3 fatty acids are fatty fish (sardines, salmon, tuna, mackerel, anchovies) and, for the vegans, there are seeds (like flax and chia).

5. Yogurt

Brightening Nutrient: Probiotics

Red blotches on the skin are a sign of inflammation caused by trauma (e.g. rubbing of the skin, ultraviolet light or chemical damage), allergic reaction or rosacea. Eat away inflammation. Probiotics found in yogurt are a well-known mediator of inflammation. Top yogurt with berries for extra inflammatory fighting

Beautiful skin comes from healthy skin cells being fed by thousands of small blood vessels.



## New to College? Spend Some Time Alone

Seeking solitude—for the right reasons—can be good for first-year college students, research suggests

SANDRA KNISPEL

How young adults manage to navigate the stressful transition to college has long-term implications for their academic performance and ability to stick with their studies. Research has shown that one frequent pitfall during this transition from high school to college is social isolation. Loneliness, of course, can have a seriously detrimental effect on a student's mental health, potentially leading to depression.

But being alone isn't necessarily bad, suggest new findings in the journal *Motivation and Emotion*.

"Approaching solitude for its enjoyment and intrinsic values is linked to psychological health, especially for those who don't feel as if they belong to their social groups," says lead author Thuy-vy Nguyen, who received her doctorate in psychology from the University of Rochester in 2018 and who undertook a large part of the research for this study in Rochester.

"These findings highlight the importance of cultivating the ability to enjoy and value solitary time as a meaningful experience, rather than trying to disregard it, or escape from it," says Nguyen, who'll join Durham University in England this fall as an assistant professor.

PRISCILLA DU PREEZ/UNSPLASH



Seeking time alone can help a person know who they are and what they want.

Alone for the Right Reasons

What then marks the difference between useful and potentially detrimental solitude? The key is positive motivation, according to the researchers. A healthy, autonomous seeking of alone time is associated with greater self-esteem, a greater sense of feeling related to others, and feeling less lonely.

Conversely, someone who wants to be alone because of negative social experiences more likely will feel the negative effects of solitude, such as isolation or social withdrawal. The reasons matter as they determine how we experience solitude and the benefits we can get from it, the study concludes.

Nguyen is building on the research of her mentors, Edward Deci and Richard Ryan, co-founders of self-determination theory (SDT). The theoretical framework of SDT fits nicely into the investigation of how individuals' motivations for spending time alone contribute to well-being, the researchers note. Per definition, autonomous motivation for being alone refers to a person's decision to spend time in solitude in a manner that is valuable and enjoyable for the person.

Time for Yourself

Previous research had shown that spending too much time socializing during the first year of college—and as a result, having little time spent alone—may be associated with poor adjustment.

But over the course of two studies, conducted with 147 first-year college students in the United States (testing for self-esteem) and 223 in Canada (testing for loneliness and relatedness), the team was able to untangle the interaction between new students' social life and their motivation for spending time alone as a predictor of their successful adjustment to college life.

Nguyen says the interplay between solitary time and our social experiences has not been empirically studied before, at least not in this way.

"In previous research, it has been framed in ways that those with more access to social connections tend to have a better time in solitude. But in our study, having a healthy motivation for solitude actually is associated with wellness for those who

power. For higher dosages of probiotics, try a supplement.

6. Kale

Brightening Nutrient: Antioxidants

Age spots, freckles, and moles can be sprinkled across your skin. For those of us with naturally occurring freckles, they're a dimension of our beauty. But, when skin spots are caused by the sun, we need to act. Protect against the damaging effects of the sun on your skin by sinking your teeth into antioxidant-rich foods like brightly colored fruits and vegetables. Kale contains over 45 different antioxidant compounds called flavonoids. Not a fan of kale? Mix it in with your favorite salad lettuce, or bake up some homemade kale chips.



7. Wheat Germ

Brightening Nutrient: B vitamins

A million skin cells are lost each day and replaced—phew, you spend a lot of energy making skin cells. Brewer's yeast, mushrooms, and wheat germ are packed with B vitamins, which help your cells use energy from carbohydrates, protein, and fat. Help your skin have enough energy to make its daily quota by eating foods rich in B vitamins. Never tried wheat germ before? Simply sprinkle on salads, pasta, or granola.

8. Lima Beans

Brightening nutrient: Molybdenum

You'll need more than B vitamins to keep up with that daily quota of a million skin cells a day. A nutrient called molybdenum can help. Molybdenum helps in the synthesis of DNA, which is needed to make a new cell. Lima beans and other legumes (edamame, green peas) are a good source of molybdenum to help your skin synthesize new, beautiful, and bright cells.



Allison Tannis is a nutritional expert and author. For more details about how your skin is designed and how you can feed it to look more beautiful in Allison's book "Feed Your Skin, Starve Your Wrinkles." This article was first published on *Naturally Savvy.com*

have less access to social connections," says Nguyen. Key findings include:

- First-year students who valued and enjoyed their alone time seemed to display greater psychological health
- Solitary time can be useful for detaching oneself from societal pressures and getting back to one's own values and interests, which in turn allows for better behavior regulation (with a greater sense of autonomy, choice, and self-concordance)
- The association between freely chosen motivation for solitude and psychological health is stronger for those who don't feel they belong in college
- The findings held across two independent samples of first-year students—one at a private university in the United States and one at a public university in Canada

One frequent pitfall during this transition from high school to college is social isolation.

"Being alone does not make you a loner, which is a very easy stereotype to internalize when you first enter college—especially when you think that everyone around you is socializing when you are not," adds Nguyen. "Solitude is a personal experience for everyone, so it is a time for you to take if you want, and just explore different ways to make it a meaningful and enjoyable experience for you."

Coauthors of the study are from Carleton University in Ottawa, Canada, and Ghent University in Belgium.

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# How Your Smartphone Can Encourage Active Living

TARUN KATAPALLY

Physical inactivity is the fourth-leading risk factor for death globally and has reached the status of a global pandemic—a definition that is usually associated with infectious diseases like influenza.

Even those of us who are physically active every day can be quite sedentary. Working out every day, yet spending the rest of the day sitting in a chair, has become the norm for many in the modern world.

We know that even moderate increases in physical activity are associated with reduced risks of physical illness such as cancer, heart disease, stroke, Type 2 diabetes, and Parkinson's disease. We also know that exercise improves our mental health and academic performance.

Apart from the considerable risk of disease and death, physical inactivity is responsible for a substantial global economic burden, with annual conservative costs to health care systems worldwide exceeding \$53.8 billion.

Despite this incriminating evidence against physical inactivity and despite investments in active-living interventions, there has been little change in global physical inactivity levels.

**It is time to fight fire with fire, by repurposing the same devices that make us more inactive—smartphones.**

As an active-living researcher who uses technology to understand physical inactivity in populations and to influence policy, this state of passivity makes me extremely impatient. It's time to fight fire with fire by repurposing the same devices that make us more inactive—smartphones.

### Mobilizing Smartphones

Before my colleagues and physical activity advocates shun this idea, I would like to clarify that I am absolutely not suggesting that we need more screen time.

First, screen time cannot be generalized, as it is accumulated across a multitude of devices with varied motivations and effects.

Second, of all screen-time enabling devices, smartphones are the truly ubiquitous ones, which in essence makes them tools of equity in the 21st century that provide access to billions of people around the world.

Third, and probably more pertinent to physical activity, smartphones are the only digital tool we carry with us everywhere, and that has the functions (GPS, accelerometers, camera, audio, video) to sense, share, and mobilize data between consenting citizens.

Still, we don't think about smartphones when tackling the physical inactivity pandemic. To me, the smartphone is the elephant in the room.

### Figuring Out What Makes Us Move

There is no indication that we will revert back to the days without these devices, so why not leverage citizen-owned smartphones to address one of the most pressing health issues of our lifetime?

Active citizenship is not limited to physically active populations. In fact, I am not interested in making active individuals more active (I am one of those people) and thereby widening the existing gap between the active and the inactive. I am interested in making active people more engaged and inactive people more active—by using the same device that is currently a barrier to active living.

I am not sure if we can use screen time to reduce screen time, which is something that we are trying to understand. But, it isn't radical to use a device that almost everyone owns to figure out what makes us move.

SMART Platform is one such initiative. We engage citizens through their smartphones to understand the amount of physical activity they accumulate and how, why, where, when, and with whom they move.

### Engaging With People Is the Key

By taking pictures and recording audio and video, among many other innovative approaches, people we engage with are helping us build complex pathways to understand active-living patterns and develop initiatives to address urgent health crises.

For instance, through the SMART Platform, we are conducting multiple projects such as the SMART Indigenous Youth, which engages indigenous youth and educators in rural and remote areas through smartphones to understand how land-based active living can improve mental health.

Youth- and educator-owned smartphones are playing an important role in remote engagement in this project, which is essentially a community-based intervention embedded into school curricula.

Each school in this community trial is implementing its own culturally appropriate land-based active living intervention informed by traditional knowledge, language, and community preferences. The land-based activities include plant identification, hunting, trapping, and fishing, among other activities driven by the seasons. In essence, educators and youth are using their smartphones to provide their perspectives as citizen scientists to help explain how the intervention is changing patterns of youth behavior.

Thus, the implications of effectively using this device go well beyond narrow discussions about screen time or even active living. This device can provide a voice to people and promote active citizenship.

If you are interested in starting a global movement to move, please contact us at [smart\\_study@uregina.ca](mailto:smart_study@uregina.ca)

Tarun Katapally is an associate professor at the University of Regina in Canada. This article was first published on *The Conversation*.



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# Using the Mind and Body to Fight Cancer

The Simonton method aims to put patients in the right state of mind and heart to battle cancer

JONI RAVENNA SUSSMAN

The connection between cancer and emotional states was observed nearly 2000 years ago by the physician Galen who noted that "cheerful women were less prone to cancer than were women of a depressed nature," according to Dr. O. Carl Simonton in his book "Getting Well Again." By the late 1960s, Dr. Herbert Benson, a cardiologist at Harvard, and Jon Kabat-Zinn, a molecular biologist, each separately noted numerous health benefits among patients who practiced meditation.

But in the 1970s, Simonton took the mind-body connection a step further. As a radiation oncologist, he noticed that some of his patients with serious diagnoses would live and thrive, while others with more manageable cancers declined rapidly. He surmised, like Galen before him, that psychological and emotional factors were at work, with the most pervasive and dangerous among them being a sense of hopelessness.

After researching the results of tests conducted in the late 1960s by Robert Rosenthal and his colleagues on "expectancy effects" (think self-fulfilling prophecies), Simonton developed specific protocols to give patients a sense of control and optimism. He guided patients through visualization sessions to mobilize T-cells (a type of white blood cell) and taught them relaxation techniques and simple meditation.

Many responded very well to the approach. Soon, patients from all over sought Simonton's help. He developed a stand-alone retreat week where patients could learn the tools and techniques and then return home to continue with their medical treatments.

Much of the medical community remained doubtful about Simonton's results. Since a full 30 percent of all test subjects exhibit the placebo effect automatically, many chalked Simonton's results up to nothing more than that.

"Some of it may be tied into the placebo effect, yes. But it's more than just the placebo effect; it's a focused, directed approach," said Dr. Renato Monaco, a practicing psychiatrist in Newport Beach, California. Monaco met Simonton many years ago along with one of Simonton's patients who'd recently been diagnosed with a terminal, stage-4 brain tumor.

"The patient was a singer. Every other doctor had given up on him," says Monaco. "But I ran into the patient again 10 years later. I was amazed. He sang for us."

While the medical community agrees that there is power in thought and emotions, most doctors still don't understand how the biochemistry of human emotions and thoughts work.

How does a self-fulfilling prophecy work on the bio-energetic level? No one can pinpoint the precise mechanisms or pathways that allow focused visualization of an army of T-cells gobbling up cancer cells—in whatever way one imagines that for him or herself—to actually affect that very process. But we do know our thoughts and emotions can enhance or hinder the immune system and other healing systems in the body.

"Focused intention takes place in the frontal lobe, the executive center of the brain," said

(Top)  
Patient session group photo at the Simonton Cancer Center in Los Angeles in this file photo.

(Right)  
O. Carl Simonton.



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“The take away for cancer patients and really anyone facing a serious illness is that there are many ways we can help ourselves in this journey, many ways we can improve our physical and mental well-being.”

Karen Simonton

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“Some of it may be tied into the placebo effect, yes. But it's more than just the placebo effect; it's a focused, directed approach.”

Dr. Renato Monaco,  
a practicing  
psychiatrist in  
Newport Beach,  
California



Monaco. "As long as the other centers in the brain, like the cingulate cortex or the basal ganglia and the deep limbic system don't interfere, it's possible to harness the healing power of thought."

Continuous angry, fearful, or self-penalizing thoughts and feelings—what some refer to as "ruminations"—are known to be harmful. Most patients can point to a traumatic event in their life that occurred approximately 18 months before developing cancer, or any other serious disease. "Rumination leads to ruination," according to Monaco. Among other things, the Simonton method works to alleviate the negative emotions while bolstering the positive ones.

It should be noted, however, that the Simonton method also relies heavily on the support of another caring person—a spouse, partner, or friend—to lend encouragement. The idea is that harmony of mind and body extend beyond the individual to our relationships. The ideal path to healing fosters a harmonious environment both within and without.

Today, Simonton is recognized as a pioneer in mind-body medicine. The Simonton Center's approach to fighting cancer combines an emotional intervention with medical methods and psychological treatment to create an environment and mentality that support healing.

Karen Simonton, who was married to the doctor for 27 years and worked with him for 22 years before he died in 2009, said the science supporting a mind-body connection has accumulated over the years.

"Now, of course, we have much more information about how the brain and our physiology interact," she said.

"In our household, all health problems were examined," she said. "Everything from the common cold, to skin rash, and cancer has an emotional component to it, and this was always addressed with our children as well."

Proponents of the method have claimed that patients have a survival rate twice the national norm with many experiencing dramatic remissions or total cures. Skeptics, however, say it's difficult to draw concrete conclusions concerning efficacy because of the lack of high-quality clinical trials.

The Simonton method aims to prolong survival time and improve quality of life. No data on the safety of this method as a combination of mind-body modalities can be found. But the different modalities have good safety records when used separately, so it stands to reason that when combined they would remain innocuous at the very least and life-saving at the very best.

Today, the Simonton method has programs to address other terminal illnesses in addition to cancer. Though the center has been rebuilding since the California wildfires burned their offices to the ground, retreats are still being taught in an area outside of Los Angeles.

"The take away for cancer patients and really anyone facing a serious illness—is that there are many ways we can help ourselves in this journey, many ways we can improve our physical and mental well-being," said Mrs. Simonton.

"Our body and mind are not just interconnected, they're literally entangled."

Joni Ravenna Sussman is a freelance writer specializing in health and wellness. Her articles have appeared in dozens of national and regional publications over the years. She is also a playwright and TV writer. Contact her at [Joni.Ravenna@gmail.com](mailto:Joni.Ravenna@gmail.com)

Simonton Cancer Center (SCC) instructors in Japan. There are SCC Centers in the United States, Germany, Japan, Italy, and the Netherlands.



# NAPPING

## YOUR WAY TO SUCCESS

An afternoon snooze isn't popular in American business culture yet, but it should be

“Naps can improve mental focus, emotional state, and physical health.”

Riki Taubenblat, pediatric sleep consultant



Continued from Page 7

Dr. Alon Avidan, a neurology professor at the David Geffen School of Medicine at UCLA, and director of UCLA's Sleep Disorders Center says napping is a natural response to that dip in alertness that typically occurs a few hours after lunch.

"In other cultures, napping is socially acceptable. It has been a strategy to get rid of that temporary sensation of fatigue and sleepiness," Avidan said. "If you go to Spain, Italy, and Portugal in the early afternoon, you're lucky to find a shop open. Here in the U.S., of course, we have abandoned that idea and instead rely on working through using a cup of coffee."

Even in Japan, a country known for its strong work ethic and company devotion, naps get social respect.

According to Alexandra Kenny from information website Tourist Japan, napping is a common practice and a part of daily life. Kenny says that in Japan, it is common to see people snoozing in cafes, on the train, in shops, and even in offices. The practice is known as inemuri, which means "sleeping on duty."

Inemuri is even encouraged in some workplaces because it allows workers time to restore their focus while on the job.

"In fact, taking a nap is often a symbol of the success of a hard worker who is entitled to the rest," Kenny said. "It is part of the work-life balance in Japan. In turn, the workforce is more productive, efficient, and ultimately happier."

According to certified pediatric sleep consultant Riki Taubenblat, we are biologically

wired to want an afternoon nap. It's just that our culture pushes stimulants rather than sleep to get over that midday slump.

"In reality, they'd be much better served with a short nap. Naps can improve mental focus, emotional state, and physical health," said Taubenblat.

It's clear that sleep, in general, is essential for health, but there is also evidence that nappers may be healthier than non-nappers. Taubenblat points to a Harvard University study that tracked more than 23,000 Greek men and women. This was in the 1990s, as parts of Greece started pulling away from the traditional stesta culture to embrace the no-nap rhythm of the modern world.

Over the course of six years, researchers found that those who had abandoned their afternoon slumber showed a significantly higher risk of heart disease compared to those who still took regular naps.

Naps may also influence the length of our lives. On the Greek island of Ikaria, where the culture is still siesta-oriented, men are found to be four times more likely to live to the age of 90 than men from the United States.

Taubenblat believes a big reason why people have negative feelings toward naps is that their culture doesn't respect sleep.

"We live in a society where you get credit for bragging that you only slept four hours last night. Nobody pats you on the back for getting eight or nine," she said.

Gruhan thinks this sense of toughness via sleep deprivation stems from a notion that the ideal worker is one who can best emulate a machine.

"You get the most out of your machinery if you run it 24/7, because your variable costs are reduced and it's more efficient. So we have this idea that we have to be driving people like machines, 24/7," he said. "But that's an ignorant way to think about people, because we're not allowing them to work in conjunction with the natural process of being human."

### Strategizing Your Sleep

One way to conserve your energy is simply by taking a break—going for a walk, listening to some music, or just taking a few moments to clear your head can all help give your mind a rest so that it can better handle the next few hours on the job.

But Avidan says nothing replenishes the body like sleep.

"Think of it like an electric car. Even if you sit idle and let it rest, it doesn't expend any energy. But if you plug it in, it's going to allow the current to recharge," Avidan said. "That's what we're doing when we're asleep. We're allowing the brain to refuel and recharge in a way that no other state would allow."

To get the most out of your nap, however, you have to use this power strategically. Sleep for too long, or too late in the afternoon, and you may run the risk of insomnia—and reduce the amount of sleep you get at night.

"If an individual takes a nap at 5, 6, 7, or 8 in the evening, it can impair the ability to fall asleep at night, because they have partially restored their sleepiness, so the sleep drive at night is not going to be as strong," Avidan said.

According to Avidan, the ideal nap takes place within our natural, post-lunch energy dip—gen-



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The ideal nap takes place within our natural, post-lunch energy dip.

erally a 1 p.m. to 3 p.m. window. As for duration, we have two choices: a 20-minute power nap to relieve drowsiness, or a 45-minute to one-hour nap to fully restore cognitive function.

"Beyond that, we run the risk of waking up more groggy as we go through deeper stages of sleep, and we don't get the most from the strategic nature of the nap," Avidan said.

Perhaps if sleep research was better publicized, it would help erase some of the cultural stigmas we hold about napping. But Gruhan says this knowledge alone will not be enough. He says it will take a few more steps for the corporate culture to fully embrace sleeping on the job.

"The way you get it implemented, and this is key, is you have to have the senior people in the organization modeling the behavior," he said. "You could set up nap rooms and buy expensive nap pods, and implement HR policies that approve it. But until they see the executive team occasionally taking naps, employees are going to be leery."

Of course, everyone's sleep needs vary. Some do better with a daily power nap, while others only need one every once in a while. Gruhan says he only naps about once or twice a month on average. But that quick recharge makes a big difference in the quality of his work when he's hit by midday fatigue.

"After 15 minutes I am back to my best, and thoughts that weren't coming to me previously now come to me. Ideas and arguments that I couldn't make previously I can now make with ease," he said. "It's really a dramatic difference."

Gruhan knows that he's lucky—since much of his work is done from home, he has the luxury of organizing his schedule to fit his own needs. But he argues that if the modern workplace also adopts a rhythm more in line with the human body we will all be better off.

"It's about respecting your body and mind, and working in harmony with the signals that you're being given and not suppressing them or denying them," he said.

"There are times we have to show we're tough, but on a day-to-day basis we don't have to do that. We should embrace our intuitive side—the one that's more in tune with the cycles of nature. Then we would, in fact, be more effective."

# Mistakes That Slow Your Metabolism

Support a faster metabolism and burn more calories by avoiding these habits

FRANZISKA SPRITZLER

Keeping your metabolism high is crucial for losing weight and keeping it off. However, several common lifestyle mistakes may slow down your metabolism and make it difficult to lose any weight.

Making these mistakes on a regular basis can also make you more prone to gain weight in the future.

### 1. Eating Too Few Calories

Eating too few calories can cause a major decrease in metabolism.

Although a calorie deficit is needed for weight loss, it can be counterproductive for your calorie intake to drop too low.

When you dramatically lower your calorie intake, your body senses that food is scarce and lowers the rate at which it burns calories.

Controlled studies in lean and overweight people confirm that consuming fewer than 1,000 calories per day can have a significant impact on your metabolic rate.

Most studies measure resting metabolic rate, which is the number of calories burned during rest. Yet some also measure calories burned during rest and activity over 24 hours, which is referred to as total daily energy expenditure.

In one study, when obese women ate 420 calories per day for 4-6 months, their resting metabolic rates slowed down significantly.

What's more, even after they increased their calorie intake over the following five weeks, their resting metabolic rates remained much lower than before the diet.

In another study, overweight people were asked to consume 890 calories per day. After 3 months, their total calorie expenditure dropped by 633 calories on average.

Even when calorie restriction is more moderate, it can still slow metabolism.

In a 4-day study in 32 people, the resting metabolic rate of those who ate 1,114 calories per day slowed more than twice as much as that of those who consumed 1,462 calories. However, weight loss was similar for both groups.

If you're going to lose weight by calorie restriction, don't restrict your calorie intake too much—or for too long.

Cutting calories too much and for too long lowers your metabolic rate, which can make weight loss and weight maintenance more difficult.

### 2. Skipping on Protein

Eating enough protein is extremely important for achieving and maintaining a healthy weight.

In addition to helping you feel full, protein intake can significantly increase the rate at which your body burns calories.

The increase in metabolism that occurs

Not doing any strength training can cause your metabolic rate to decline.

Inadequate sleep may also lower your metabolic rate.

after digestion is called the thermic effect of food (TEF).

The thermic effect of protein is much higher than that of carbs or fat. Indeed, studies indicate that eating protein temporarily increases metabolism by about 20-30 percent compared to 5-10 percent for carbs and 3% or less for fat.

Although metabolic rate inevitably slows during weight loss and continues to be slower during weight maintenance, evidence suggests that higher protein intake can minimize this effect.

In one study, participants followed one of three diets in an effort to maintain a 10-15 percent weight loss.

The diet highest in protein reduced total daily energy expenditure by only 97 calories, compared to 297-423 calories in people who consumed less protein.

Another study found that people needed to eat at least 0.5 grams of protein per pound of body weight (1.2 grams per kg) to prevent their metabolism from slowing during and after weight loss.

### 3. Leading a Sedentary Lifestyle

Being sedentary may lead to a significant decrease in the number of calories you burn every day.

Notably, many people have lifestyles that mainly involve sitting at work, which can have negative effects on metabolic rate and overall health.

Although working out or playing sports can have a major impact on the number of calories you burn, even basic physical activity, such as standing up, cleaning, and taking the stairs, can help you burn calories.

This type of activity is referred to as non-exercise activity thermogenesis (NEAT).

One study found that a high amount of NEAT could burn up to 2,000 additional calories per day. However, such a dramatic increase is not realistic for most people.

Another study noted that watching TV while sitting burns an average of 87 fewer calories than typing while sitting—and 16 percent fewer calories than standing.

Working at a standing desk, or simply getting up to walk around several times per day, can help increase your NEAT and prevent your metabolism from dropping.

### 4. Not Getting Enough High-Quality Sleep

Sleep is extremely important for good health.

Sleeping fewer hours than you need



Excessive fructose consumption promotes increased fat storage in your belly and liver.

may increase your risk of a number of illnesses, including heart disease, diabetes, and depression.

Several studies note that inadequate sleep may also lower your metabolic rate and increase your likelihood of weight gain.

One study found that healthy adults who slept 4 hours per night for 5 nights in a row experienced a 2.6 percent decrease in resting metabolic rate, on average. Their rate returned to normal after 12 hours of uninterrupted sleep.

Lack of sleep is made worse by sleeping during the day instead of at night. This sleep pattern disrupts your body's circadian rhythms or internal clock.

A five-week study revealed that prolonged sleep restriction combined with circadian rhythm disruption decreased resting metabolic rate by an average of 8 percent.

### 5. Drinking Sugary Beverages

Sugar-sweetened drinks are detrimental to your health. High consumption is linked to various ailments, including insulin resistance, diabetes, and obesity.

Many of the negative effects of sugar-sweetened beverages can be attributed to fructose. Table sugar contains 50 percent fructose, while high-fructose corn syrup packs 55 percent fructose.

Frequently consuming sugar-sweetened beverages may slow down your metabolism.

In a 12-week controlled study, overweight and obese people who consumed 25 percent of their calories as fructose-sweetened beverages on a weight-maintaining diet experienced a significant drop in metabolic rate.

Not all studies support this idea. One study noted that overeating high-fructose corn syrup compared to whole wheat did not affect 24-hour metabolic rate.

However, research shows that excessive fructose consumption promotes increased fat storage in your belly and liver.

### 6. A Lack of Strength Training

Working out with weights is a great strategy to keep your metabolism from slowing.

Strength training has been shown to increase metabolic rate in healthy people, as well as those who have heart disease or are overweight or obese.

It increases muscle mass, which makes up much of the fat-free mass in your body. Having a higher amount of fat-free mass significantly increases the number of calories you burn at rest.

Even minimal amounts of strength training appear to boost energy expenditure.

In a 6-month study, people who performed strength training for 11 minutes per day, 3 days a week, experienced a 7.4 percent increase in resting metabolic rate and burned 125 extra calories per day, on average.

In contrast, not doing any strength training can cause your metabolic rate to decline, especially during weight loss and aging.

### The Bottom Line

Engaging in lifestyle behaviors that slow down your metabolism can lead to weight gain over time. It's best to avoid or minimize them as much as possible.

That said, many simple activities can boost your metabolism to help you lose weight and keep it off.

Franziska Spritzler holds a bachelor's in nutrition and dietetics. She is a registered dietitian and certified diabetes educator. This article was originally published on Healthline.

## CHINESE MEDICINE

# A Hidden Cause of Back Pain

An alternative pain treatment for chronic back pain aims to improve circulation

LYNN JAFFEE

If you've never had back pain, you're the exception to the rule. About 80 percent of people in the United States will suffer from back pain at some time in their lives.

I've certainly had my share of back pain episodes, caused by stupid moves like twisting and reaching for soap in the shower or lifting a box that was way too heavy. Fortunately, my brushes with back pain have been minor; I've never been laid out and unable to move. And I know exactly what I did to cause my back to act up.

Unfortunately, many people who suffer from back pain have no idea why their back hurts. They didn't overdo it or lift something they shouldn't have. In many cases, especially back pain that seems to come out of nowhere, your spinal discs may be to blame.

Discs are your spine's shock absorbers. They're rubbery rings made of collagen filled with a gel center that is found between each of your vertebrae, the bones in your spine. Discs compress and absorb

energy when you walk, twist, turn, or bend to protect your spine and act as a cushion between the bones.

Your discs replenish themselves, but over time, and with day-to-day wear and tear, they degenerate. Discs can rupture, collapse, or bulge out to the side, which can be very painful. A ruptured or bulging disc can cause compression of the nerves in the area, resulting in shooting pain down your arm or leg, depending on the vertebrae affected. Disc problems can also cause back pain in the form of muscle spasms, which are your body's very painful way of limiting movement while the area heals. You may also experience swelling and inflammation with a disc problem.

The pain associated with disc trouble can resolve in a month or two, or may last years. Interestingly, some people don't feel any pain at all when a disc ruptures or bulges, however, they're in the minority. Your doctor may prescribe physical therapy, analgesics, and rest for your disc-related back pain. In severe or chronic cases, they may recommend fusion surgery, in which

the vertebral bones are fused together. The merged bones can no longer move, but this surgery decompresses entrapped nerves to relieve pain.

Acupuncture can relieve several types of chronic pain, including back pain.

Many people with back pain have turned to acupuncture after trying a number of medications or treatments that haven't helped their pain. The research supports their decision. A number of high-quality research studies have documented that acupuncture can relieve several types of chronic pain, including back pain. In Chinese medicine, your back pain would likely be diagnosed as a blockage of energy and blood. This simply means that circulation is hampered in the area, some nerves may be compressed, your muscles may be contracted and in spasm, and inflammation

and swelling are limiting your movement.

Acupuncture can help relieve your back pain in a number of ways. It stimulates your central nervous system to block the pain signals traveling to your brain and it releases endorphins, which are opioid-like neurotransmitters that help relieve your pain. Acupuncture increases circulation in the area and decreases inflammation locally where the needles have been placed. Acupuncture also helps to increase circulation, loosen tight muscles, and help you relax.

Chances are that at some time or another you'll experience back pain, and chances are it will be caused by the degeneration of a disc. Acupuncture can be a good choice for relieving pain and speeding up the recovery process, whether in tandem with other therapies or as a stand-alone treatment.

Lynn Jaffee is a licensed acupuncturist and the author of "Simple Steps: The Chinese Way to Better Health." This article was originally published on AcupunctureTwinCities.com

# Increasing Muscle Power Helps Promote Longevity: Study



After 40 years of age, muscle power starts decreasing.

Most people just think about the amount of weight being lifted...without paying attention to speed of execution.

Claudio Gil Araújo, professor, Exercise Medicine Clinic

We all know that increasing muscle strength is good for health, but new findings presented at the European Society of Cardiology's EuroPrevent conference in Lisbon are focusing specifically on muscle power and its connection to longevity.

Muscle power depends on the ability to generate force and velocity and to coordinate movement. For example, lifting a weight one time requires strength, but lifting it several times as quickly as possible requires power. Study author Claudio Gil Araújo, a professor at Exercise Medicine Clinic, explains, "Rising from a chair in old age and kicking a ball depend more on muscle power than muscle strength, yet most weight-bearing exercises focus on the latter."

For the study relating to lon-

gevity, researchers enrolled 3,878 non-athletes, aged 41 to 85 years old. The average age of the participants was 59 years old; five percent were over 80 and 68 percent were men. All the participants took a maximum power test using the upright row exercise between 2001 and 2016.

Each participant's maximal muscle power was determined by taking the highest value that they achieved over two or three attempts with increasing weight and then calculating the power exertion per kilogram of body weight.

The values were separated by sex and divided into quartiles for survival analysis. The findings of the study showed that during a median 5 to 6-year follow-up, 247 men (10 percent) and 75 women (6 percent) died. These findings showed that those

who had maximal muscle power above the median for their sex had higher survival rates than those in the lower quartiles.

Earlier studies had examined the benefits of increasing muscle strength in relation to life expectancy, but as Araújo explains, "This study is the first to look specifically at muscle power and how it relates to longevity."

### Increase Muscle Power

After 40 years of age, muscle power starts decreasing, so it is extremely important to implement a daily exercise routine that includes multiple exercises for the upper and lower body. Araújo suggests that to increase muscle power, it is important to choose a weight that is neither easy to lift nor so heavy that the person cannot lift it at all. Focus on one to three sets of six to eight rep-

etitions, each while moving the weight as quickly as possible. Return the weight to its initial position each time and be sure to rest a few minutes between sets."

"Power training is carried out by finding the best combination of speed and weight being lifted or moved," said Araújo. "For strength training at the gym, most people just think about the amount of weight being lifted and the number of repetitions without paying attention to speed of execution."

If an exercise becomes too difficult, or a weight is too heavy, reduce the repetitions or weight to avoid injury. Remember that it is always imperative to listen to your body. If there is any pain, stop the exercise immediately.

This article was first published on Bel Marra Health.





When trust is high, you have increased efficiency, increased speed, and lower costs.

CONNECT TO LEAD

# Trust

## The Lifeblood of a Healthy Society

A collapse of trust threatens every organization it afflicts, including a nation

SCOTT MANN

**B**ack in 2010, we were conducting a mission called Village Stability Operations. It was the largest community engagement ever done in Afghanistan. It involved Green Berets, Navy SEALs, other special operations forces, and infantry units working with rural tribes and clans throughout Afghanistan to stand up on their own to push back against the Taliban and take their communities back. Eventually, we would connect to the Afghan government and create a vast blanket of stability across the country.

It did pretty well until we walked away from the program in 2012–2013. We left a lot of people out there hanging, similar to what we did in Vietnam. The program collapsed under its own weight. We learned a lot in doing that program, lessons both bad and good.

One of the main things I remember about that experience was that in most of the communities we went into, there were massive fissures between different family groups that lived in each village.

They were competing over resources and honor, to both protect what they had and to acquire more. Frankly, most of these tribal feuds had been going on for decades, and in some cases, centuries. These trust gaps were so pervasive that you could not get any level of stability. The efficiency of the village was completely gone and the speed by which the village could make decisions was sluggish.

Until those trust gaps were bridged by responsible leaders, these communities would always be at risk for exploitation by Taliban and other bad actors. That was what we found ourselves facing day after day in

**In 1972, one-third of Americans said they didn't trust their neighbor. Today it's up to two-thirds.**

*Scott Mann is a former Green Beret who specialized in unconventional, high-impact missions and relationship building. He is the founder of Rooftop Leadership and appears frequently on TV and many syndicated radio programs. For more information, visit [RooftopLeadership.com](http://RooftopLeadership.com)*

these rough communities. We had to bridge those gaps and find ways to restore, maintain, and build trust.

That risk for exploitation is a reality facing many organizations here at home. Six years after retiring from the Army, I'm seeing a lot of similarities here at home with all of those Afghanistan villages that seemed to be under siege from within. You don't have to look that far to see that there are a lot more privacy fences in this world than there are front porches.

In fact, Gallup took a poll in 1972 that found one-third of Americans said they don't trust their neighbor. Today it's up to two-thirds. Another Gallup poll found that 77 percent of Americans believe the country is divided.

We have an epic erosion of trust. At the institutional level, we don't trust the media. We don't trust politicians. We don't trust bankers. We don't trust the mortgage industry. All these pillars of leadership that once held our society together are crumbling. That's bad for a free society, but do you want to know what's even worse than not trusting our institutional leaders?

We don't trust each other. We don't trust our neighbors like we used to. The trust that we've always had in this country, where individuals can trust beyond their in-group, beyond their race, their religion—that's eroding.

We're going back to what's known as "bonding trust." Bonding trust is the old, primal, tribal form of trust where you only trust the people in your family, clan, or tribe. You only trust the people who look like you and believe what you believe.

It is very, very turbulent for an organization—for a

nation—to have that. Think about your office, your corporation, your team: Do you see in-groups and out-groups competing overtly for budget or status?

Do you see people talking smack about each other? What's the impact of that? This goes far beyond healthy competition. It erodes the unifying vision of the company or organization. It creates chaos and instability. People don't feel safe and the speed of trust goes way down.

When trust is high, you have increased efficiency, increased speed, lower costs. When trust is low, you have higher costs and slower speed in getting things done. It's measurable. Bonding trust, which is when in-groups and out-groups are competing with each other inside an organization for their own personal agendas, causes serious organizational inefficiency.

When you have "bridging trust," where leaders and individuals can trust beyond their group, beyond their skin color, and beyond their socioeconomic status because they're rallied around a unified vision they can all slap the table and agree on, it will bring an organization to its feet and increase its speed.

As a leader, look around your organization and observe which one you have—bonding trust or bridging trust? Do you have a vision that unifies your different groups? Or are they all circling wagons and sharpening their knives? You'd better know as a leader, because if you don't, the same way that many of those villages were chewed up from the inside out in Afghanistan, the same can happen to your outfit.

Bonding trust or bridging trust? It's time to choose.

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