

WEEK 10, 2020

THE EPOCH TIMES

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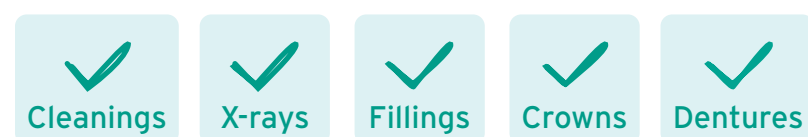
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TRUTH AND TRADITION

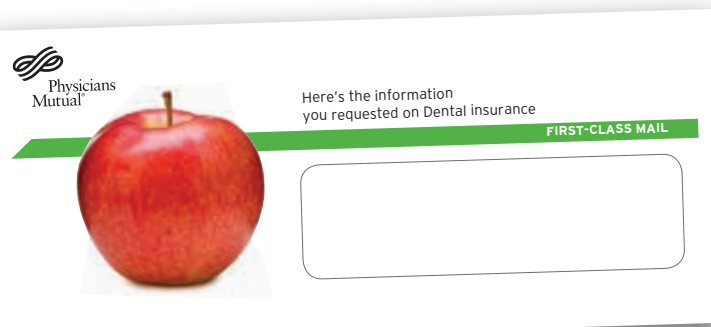
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FOOD AS MEDICINE

Mediterranean Diet Feeds Gut Bacteria Linked to Healthy Aging

Older adults can better avoid frailty, inflammation, and cognitive decline with these helpful bacteria

PAUL O'TOOLE

As our global population is projected to live longer than ever before, it's important that we find ways of helping people live healthier for longer. Exercise and diet are often cited as the best ways of maintaining good health well into our twilight years. But recently, research has also started to look at the role our gut—specifically our microbiome—plays in how we age.

Our latest study has found that eating a Mediterranean diet causes microbiome changes linked to improvements in cognitive function and memory, immunity and bone strength.

The gut microbiome is a complex community of trillions of microbes that live semi-permanently in the intestines. These microbes have co-evolved with humans and other animals to break down dietary ingredients such as inulin, arabinoxylan, and resistant starch, that the person can't digest. They also help prevent disease-causing bacteria from growing.

However, the gut microbiome is extremely sensitive, and many things including diet, the medications you take, your genetics, and even conditions like inflammatory bowel disease and irritable bowel syndrome, can all change the gut microbiota community. The gut microbiota plays such a huge role in our body, it's even linked to behavioral changes, including anxiety and depression. But as for other microbiome-related diseases such as Type 2 diabetes and obesity, changes in the microbiome are only part of the issue—the person's genetics and unhealthy lifestyle are major contributing factors.

Since our everyday diets have such a big effect on the gut microbiome, our team was curious to see if it can be used to promote healthy aging. We looked at a total of 612 people aged 65-79, from the United Kingdom, France, the Netherlands, Italy, and Poland. We asked half of them to change their normal diet to a Mediterranean diet for a full year. This involved eating more vegetables, legumes, fruits, nuts, olive oil and fish, and eating less red meat, dairy products, and saturated fats. The other half of participants stuck to their usual diet.

Small changes in one year can make for big effects in the longer term.

Mediterranean Microbiome

We initially found that those who followed the Mediterranean diet had better cognitive function and memory, less inflammation, and better bone strength. However, what we really wanted to know was whether or not the microbiome was involved in these changes.

Interestingly, but not surprisingly, a person's baseline microbiome (the species and number of microbes they had living in their gut before the study started) varied by country. This baseline microbiome is likely a reflection of the diet they usually ate, alongside where they lived. We found that participants who followed the Mediterranean diet had a small but insignificant change in their microbiome diversity—meaning there was only a slight increase in the overall number and variety of species present.

However, when we compared how strictly a person followed the diet with their baseline microbiome data and their microbiome after following the diet, we were able to identify two different gut microbe groups: diet-positive microbes that increased on the Mediter-



The Mediterranean diet has garnered another verified health claim after researchers discovered it fostered gut bacteria associated with improved cognition and healthy aging.

anean diet, and diet-negative microbes whose abundance was reduced while following the diet.

Diet-positive microbes are microbes that flourished in the Mediterranean diet. Diet-negative microbes either couldn't metabolize the diet, or they were unable to compete with diet-positive microbes. These diet-positive microbes were linked with less frailty and inflammation in the body, and higher levels of cognitive function. Losing the diet-negative microbes was also associated with the same health improvements.

When we compared the changes in the number of these microbes in the treatment group (those on the Mediterranean diet) and the control group (those following their regular diet), we saw that the people who strictly followed the Mediterranean diet increased these diet-positive microbes. Although the changes were small, these findings were consistent across all five countries—and small changes in one year can make for big effects in the longer term.

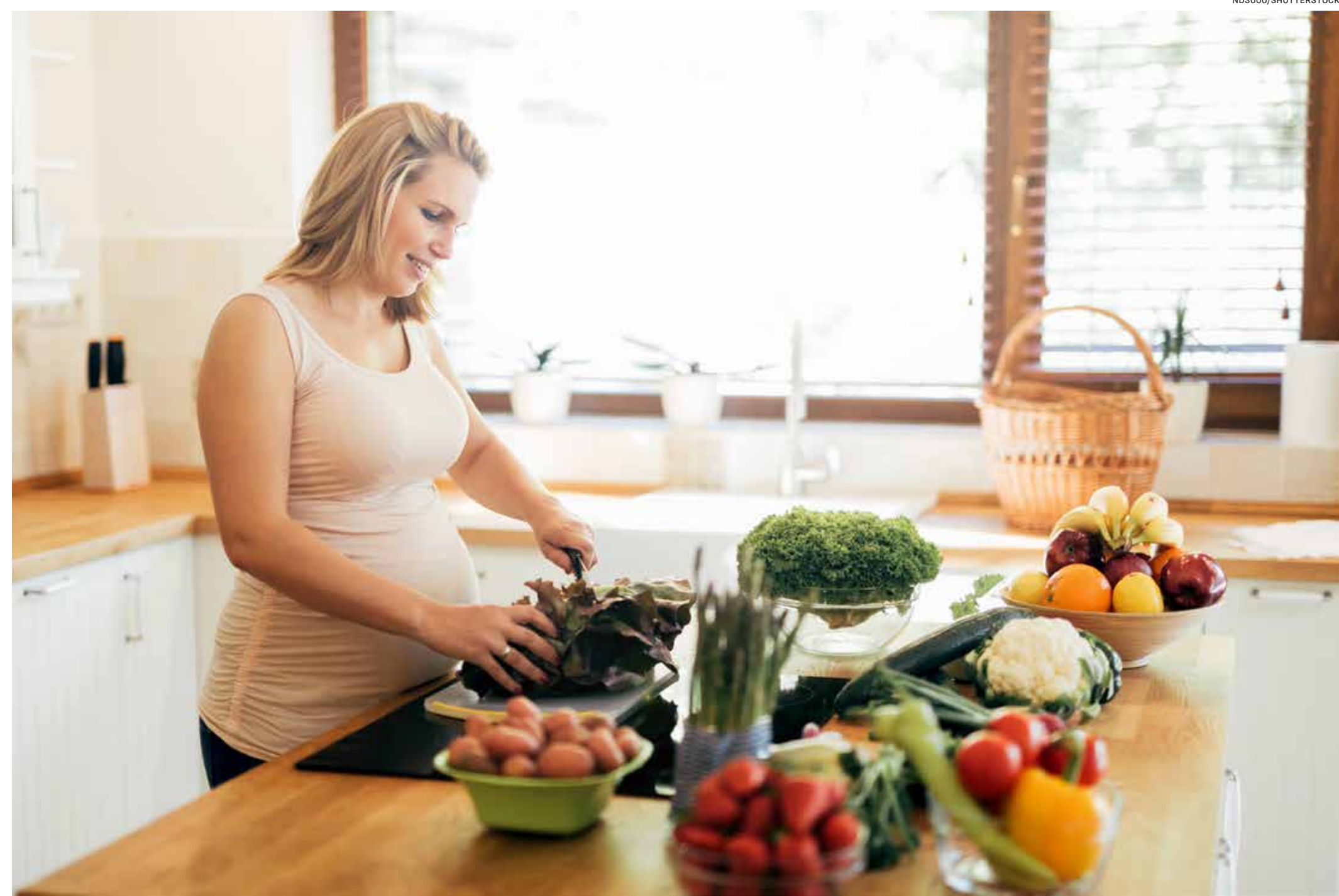
Many of the participants were also pre-frail (meaning their bone strength and density would start decreasing) at the beginning of the study. We found the group who followed their regular diet became frailer over the course of the one-year study. However, those that followed the Mediterranean diet were less frail.

The link between frailty, inflammation, and cognitive function to changes in the microbiome was stronger than the link between these measures and dietary changes. This suggests that the diet alone wasn't enough to improve these three markers. Rather, the microbiome had to change too—and the diet caused these changes to the microbiome.

These types of studies are challenging and expensive, and the microbiome dataset is often difficult to analyze because there are many more data-points to study than there are people in the study. Our findings here were possible because of the large group sizes, and the length of the intervention.

However, we recognize that following a Mediterranean diet isn't necessarily doable for everybody who starts thinking about aging, usually around the age of 50. Future studies will need to focus on what key ingredients in a Mediterranean diet were responsible for these positive microbiome changes. But in the meantime, it's clear that the more you can stick to a Mediterranean diet, the higher your levels of good bacteria linked to healthy aging will be.

Paul O'Toole is a professor of microbial genomics at the School of Microbiology and APC Microbiome Institute at the University College Cork in Ireland. This article was first published on The Conversation.



FOOD AS MEDICINE

Fruit and Vegetable Rich Diet Key to Avoiding Gestational Diabetes

You've heard a lot about the benefits of eating fruits and vegetables, but did you know that a diet rich in these natural foods can be key to having a healthy pregnancy?

In a study published in July 2019 in the peer-reviewed International Journal for Vitamin and Nutrition Research, a multi-disciplinary team of scientists in Tehran, Iran, investigated the association of consuming fruits, vegetables, and dairy products with instances of gestational diabetes mellitus (GDM) in pregnant women.

Gestational diabetes is a condition that afflicts women during pregnancy who did not have diabetes before becoming pregnant. GDM typically onsets around the middle of the pregnancy term, between 24 and 28 weeks, and can recur during subsequent pregnancies. Doctors will often recommend eating a balanced diet and getting regular exercise to control GDM, although some women also require insulin to manage the condition.

This prospective study was conducted over a period of 17 months on a random sample of pregnant women between 18 and 45 years of age who were in the first half of their pregnancies and who had agreed to attend prenatal clinics in any of five hospitals affiliated with universities of medical sciences in different districts of Tehran, Iran.

Participants' dietary intakes were assessed during the 6th week of pregnancy using a 168-item, validated, semi-quantitative food frequency questionnaire. Between 24 and 28 weeks of gestation, all participants underwent a scheduled oral glucose tolerance test to determine whether or not they had gestational diabetes mellitus. The diagnosis of GDM was based on criteria set by the American Diabetes Association.

Fruits and Veggies Lower Gestational Diabetes Risk

Of 1,026 study participants, 71 tested positive for gestational diabetes mellitus. Based on results of BMI (body-mass index) tests and the results of the food questionnaire, researchers determined that a diet high in fruit and vegetable intake was "significantly and inversely associated with GDM risk."

Women who consumed 2.1 servings per day or less had significantly higher odds ratio for GDM than those who consumed at least 4.9 servings per day, after adjustment for confounding fac-

tors. No association was found between dairy products and GDM. Researchers concluded that fruit and vegetable consumption in women of reproductive age can help prevent GDM.

Other studies have produced similar findings. A prospective cohort study published in November 2018 followed 1,337 pregnant women in Western China, assessing dietary intakes at 15-20 weeks of gestation with a validated food frequency questionnaire and determining GDM with oral glucose tolerance tests at 24-28 weeks of gestation.

A total of 199 women, 14.9 percent of participants, developed GDM. Exploratory factor analysis was performed to derive dietary patterns, three of which were identified: a plant-based pattern, a meat-based pattern, and a high protein-low starch pattern. At the end of the study, researchers determined that there was no significant association between early pregnancy dietary patterns and GDM risk later in pregnancy, but a high protein-low starch diet was associated with lower risk for GDM among women who were overweight pre-pregnancy.

In addition to the increased risk of recurring GDM in subsequent pregnancies, women with prior gestational diabetes mellitus are at higher risk of developing Type 2 diabetes. A March 2019 study published in the European Journal of Nutrition explored associations between dietary intake of fruits and vegetables and abnormal glucose tolerance among women with prior gestational diabetes mellitus.

In this Canadian cohort study, a total of 281 women with prior GDM were recruited around six years after their pregnancy. Dietary intake was obtained with a validated food frequency questionnaire, and anthropometric measurements such as height, weight, and BMI were measured along with glycemic components, during a clinical visit. These readings allowed researchers to stratify women according to normal glucose tolerance or abnormal glucose tolerance, a significant factor in the development of Type 2 diabetes.

Results of the study were determined via a cross-sectional analysis, showing that of the 281 participants, a total of 155 women had normal glucose toler-

ance and 126 had abnormal glucose tolerance. Women with abnormal glucose tolerance had significantly fewer fruits and vegetables in their diets and tended to have lower fruit servings than women with normal glucose tolerance.

To illustrate the big difference a small dietary improvement can make, a single serving increase of fruits and vegetables was associated with a reduced likelihood of having abnormal glucose tolerance. Researchers concluded that higher intake of fruits and vegetables in the diet may be associated with a lower likelihood of abnormal glucose tolerance and decreased risk of developing Type 2 diabetes among women with prior gestational diabetes mellitus.

Leafy Greens and Dark Yellow Vegetables Lower Diabetes Risk

Researchers from Harvard and the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention partnered to explore the dietary connection between fruit and vegetable intake and women at risk of Type 2 diabetes, once referred to as adult-onset diabetes but now occurring more frequently in children as well.

In the 2004 study chaired by Brigham and Women's Hospital at Harvard Medical School in Boston, Massachusetts, researchers analyzed prospective data from the Women's Health Study (WHS) taken from 1993-2003. They sought to evaluate the hypothesis that a high intake of fruits and vegetables protects against onset of Type 2 diabetes and to explore whether specific subgroups of fruits and vegetables differentially affect diabetes risk.

The WHS comprised 39,876 female health professionals who were at least 45 years of age and who were free of heart disease, stroke, or cancer at the time of the study and who had not been previously diagnosed with diabetes. Detailed diet information was provided by 38,018 (95 percent) of participants who completed a 131-item semi-quantitative food frequency questionnaire, which included 28 vegetables and 16 fruit types.

Participants were asked to accurately reflect their long-term dietary intake as a way of establishing good validity for the data. The average daily intake of individual fruits and vegetables was

calculated by multiplying intake frequency by portion size, with total intake computed by summing the intake of individual items.

Vegetables were divided into groups, including cruciferous (broccoli, cabbage, cauliflower, Brussels sprouts), dark yellow (carrots, yellow squash, yams, sweet potatoes), green leafy (spinach, kale, lettuce), and other (corn, mixed vegetables, celery, eggplant, mushrooms, and beets). Diagnosis of Type 2 diabetes was based on self-reports, the validity of which was confirmed according to the American Diabetes Association diagnostic criteria. Analytical models were adjusted for age, total calories, and smoking. Follow-ups were conducted for an average of 8.8 years.

Researchers determined that a diet high in fruit and vegetable intake was 'significantly and inversely associated with GDM risk.'

Results showed a "significant inverse relationship with diabetes risk and total fruit and vegetable intake," further supporting the findings of similar studies. It is important to note that not all fruits and vegetables were equal in terms of positive health impact. Of the specific foods studied, intake of green leafy and dark yellow vegetables was significantly associated with reduced risk of Type 2 diabetes, while starchy vegetables such as potatoes showed a significant positive association with Type 2 diabetes risk.

[Editor's note: Other studies suggest that the association of foods like potatoes and rice with diabetes is closely linked to an insulin bump caused by eating these foods with animal proteins.] To learn more about the powerful health benefits of a diet rich in fruits and vegetables, explore the fruit and vegetable research databases on GreenMedInfo.com

The GMI Research Group is dedicated to investigating the most important health and environmental issues of the day. This article was originally published on GreenMedInfo.com. Join the free newsletter at www.GreenMedInfo.com

HOLLY MANDARICH/UNSPLASH



The Super, Natural Benefits of Hiking

Nature hikes are good for our bodies, moods, minds, and our relationships

JILL SUTTIE

I'm a hiker—"born to hike," as my husband likes to joke. It does my heart and soul good to strap on a pack and head out on a trail, especially when I'm alone and can let my mind wander where it will. The experience of hiking is unique, research suggests, conveying benefits beyond what you receive from typical exercise. Not only does it oxygenate your heart, but it also helps keep your mind sharper, your body calmer, your creativity more alive, and your relationships happier. And, if you're like me and happen to live in a place where nearby woods allow for hiking among trees, all the better: Evidence suggests that being around trees may provide extra benefits, perhaps because of certain organic compounds that trees exude that boost our mood and our overall psychological well-being.

Hiking in nature is so powerful for our health and well-being that some doctors have begun prescribing it as an adjunct to other treatments for disease. As one group of researchers put it in the *American Journal of Lifestyle Medicine*, "The synergistic effect of physical activity and time spent in nature make hiking an ideal activity to increase overall health and wellness."

Here is what science is saying about the benefits of hiking.

1 Hiking Keeps Your Mind Sharp Being a professional writer, I sometimes have trouble justifying taking the time to hike in the middle of my workday. But research suggests that hiking doesn't just feel good, it might also keep my brain in top shape.

All exercise is good for us. Whether it's using an elliptical trainer, riding a stationary bike, or walking on a treadmill, getting your heart rate up and working your lungs can keep you feeling younger and stronger. Exercise also helps your brain thanks to the extra oxygen that exercise delivers to it.

But hiking involves something many other forms of exercise don't: trails. That means it requires navigating in a world that's not totally predictable. Slippery dirt, uneven terrain, overhanging branches, trail markers, and wild animals crossing your path—all of the

things you might encounter on a trail require micro- and macro-adjustments to your route, which is good for your brain.

As Daniel Levitin explains in his book, *Successful Aging*, hiking exercises your brain in ways that help you navigate life, like the retrosplenial cortex and the hippocampus, which aid in memory.

2 Hiking Can Keep You Calm and Happy

Exercise, in general, can be a great stress-buster. But what sets hiking apart from other forms of exercise is that it's done outdoors in a natural setting. While other physical activities also rely on nature—for example, river rafting or backpacking—those often require more time and commitment than a simple hike and are therefore less accessible to many people. Hiking can happen almost anywhere—from a city park or public garden to a mountain trail—and give you that dose of nature you need to stay happy.

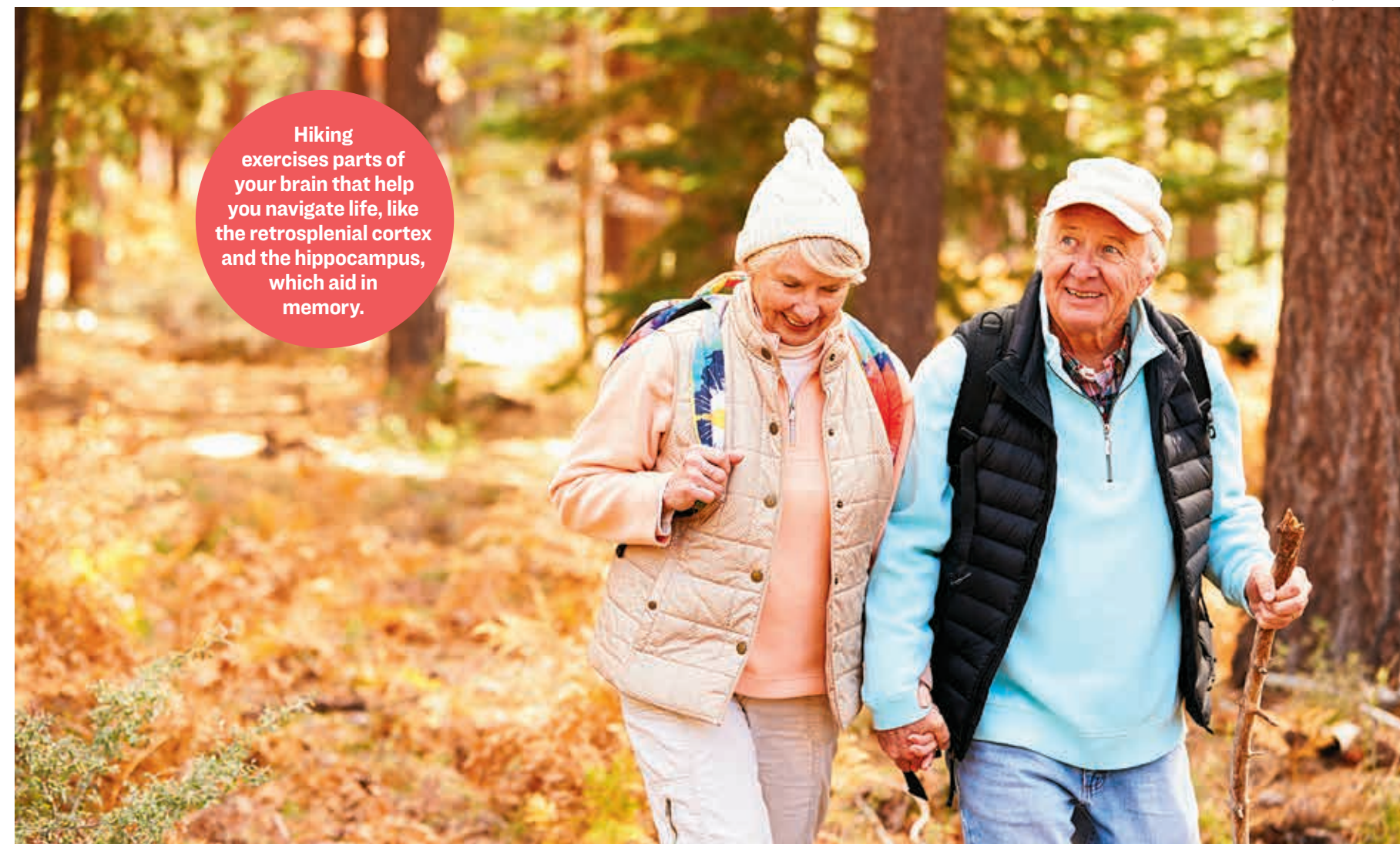
Research is quite clear on the benefits of being in nature while exercising. Studies have found that, compared to walking in a cityscape or along a road, walking in green spaces helps us recover from "attention overload"—the mental fatigue that comes from living and working in a world where computers and cell phones are a constant distraction.

Being in nature is calming, too, and studies have found that people who spend time walking in nature are less anxious and suffer less rumination (thinking about the same worries or regrets over and over again), which should help protect against depression.

While it's not totally clear why nature provides these psychological perks, researcher Craig Anderson and others have found that being in nature encourages feelings of awe—a state of wonder coupled with a sense of being small in the presence of something bigger than yourself. Awe is a powerful emotion that has many benefits, including improving your mood and making you feel more generous.

3 Hiking Helps Your Relationships

It may be obvious that hiking is good for our physical and emotional health. But there is mounting evidence that it helps our relationships, too.



Hiking exercises parts of your brain that help you navigate life, like the retrosplenial cortex and the hippocampus, which aid in memory.

Exposure to nature can help our relationships by making us more empathic, helpful, and generous.

One reason is that many of us hike with other people, and exercising together can produce special feelings of closeness—and a sense of safety. I'm sure when a friend of mine recently fell on a trail and severely fractured her ankle, she was glad to have company to help her hobble down the mountain. But, even in less dire circumstances, having a friend along can be a lovely way to connect with another person in a setting free of other distractions.

In one study, mothers and daughters spent 20 minutes walking in an arboretum (a botanical garden consisting of trees) and 20 minutes walking in a mall. The study showed that compared to the mall walk, after the nature walk the pair had better attention during a cognitive task, and improved interactions with each other, based on various tests and comments. Specifically, the pair demonstrated more connection and positive emotions and fewer negative emotions after walking in the natural setting. Other research suggests that exposure to nature can help our relationships by making us more empathic, helpful, and generous.

What about hiking alone? Personally, I've often found that hiking alone helps me in my relationships, likely for all of the reasons above—it helps me reduce my stress, refreshes my depleted attention, and produces awe. And, when I'm feeling good, those effects spill over into my interactions with others once I return from the hike.

For anyone who spends a lot of time caregiving for other people, it can be rejuvenating to let go of that responsibility for a bit and take a trail. After

all, it can't help but refresh you when you give yourself a break, making you more emotionally available to others afterward.

4 Hiking Can Increase Our Creativity

I'm sure I'm not alone in finding that walks in nature let my mind wander freely in creative directions. In fact, I've written many songs while hiking on a trail, lyric ideas bubbling up from some unconscious place when I'm not deliberately thinking.

Though we often read about philosophers or artists who've found creative inspiration in natural spaces, science is just beginning to document the connections between being in nature and creativity. David Strayer and his colleagues tested young adults in an Outward Bound program before and after they spent three days hiking in the wilderness. The participants showed increased creative thinking and problem-solving after the experience. Other studies have found connections between creative thinking and nature experiences, too, although they weren't focused on hiking specifically.

Some scholars believe that these benefits for creativity have to do with how natural settings allow our attention to soften and our minds to wander in ways that can help us connect disparate ideas. Others suggest that the spaciousness and unpredictability of natural scenery somehow enhances creativity. Whatever the case, if being in nature increases creativity—which is tied to well-being—it might behoove creative types to spend a little more time on a trail.

Hiking in nature is so powerful for our health and well-being that some doctors have begun prescribing it as an adjunct to other treatments for disease.

5 Hiking Builds Positive Relationships With Nature

Besides being good for us, hiking may also help the world around us. After all, if we have the stamina to walk places and cover longer distances, we could use cars less and reduce our carbon footprint.

Beyond that, hiking benefits our planet indirectly, because it increases our connection to nature. Developing a positive relationship with the natural world can help us to care about its fate, making us more committed to conservation efforts. At least one study has suggested that when we have a personal connection to nature, we are more likely to want to protect it. That means experiences in nature—like hiking—can be mutually beneficial, helping people and the earth.

Conclusion

This all goes to show that hiking may be one of the best ways to move your body. These points have helped me recommit to hiking regularly. Instead of spending all day every day in front of a computer, I'm taking time to walk outside—even if it's just for 15 minutes. And I'm definitely noticing improvements in my mood, creativity, and relationships, as well as a growing sense of spiritual connection to the natural world.

So, grab a water bottle, a backpack, and, if you want, a friend, and head out on the trail. You will be glad you did.

Jill Suttie, Psy.D., is Greater Good's book review editor and a frequent contributor to the magazine. This article was first published by Greater Good magazine online.

The Smelly Truth About Romantic Relationships and Health

Our partner's scent has therapeutic effects we may not even realize, 2 studies suggest

MARLISE HOFER & FRANCES CHEN

Having trouble sleeping? Nervous about an important interview? Smelling your partner's worn clothing may help improve your sleep and calm your nerves.

While it may sound strange to smell your partner's clothing, these behaviors are surprisingly common. In one study, researchers asked participants if they had ever slept with or smelled their partners' worn clothing during periods of separation. Over 80 percent of women and 50 percent of men reported they had intentionally smelled an absent partner's clothing. Most of them said they did so because it made them feel relaxed or secure.

Social Scents and Health

Along with our colleagues at the University of British Columbia, we decided to take a closer look at whether exposure to the scent of our romantic partner might have benefits for our psychological and physical health.

Specifically, we conducted two experiments. The first tested whether a partner's scent improved sleep. The results of that research have been accepted for publication in the journal *Psychological Science*. The second study, which tested whether these scents reduced stress, was published in the *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*.

In both studies, we wanted to capture the natural body scent. So we asked participants to wear a plain white T-shirt as an undershirt for 24 hours and to

avoid activities known to affect natural body odor, like smoking, eating spicy food or wearing scented body products. We also provided them with unscented shampoo and soap to use before wearing the shirt. When participants returned their shirts to us, we immediately stored them in a freezer to preserve the scent.

Sleep Quality and Scent

In one study, we tested whether sleep quality would be improved by a partner's scent. We gave each of our 155 participants two identical-looking shirts: one control shirt and one that had been worn by their partner.

Each participant was asked to sleep with his or her partner's shirt as a pillow cover for two nights, and with the other shirt as a pillow cover for another two nights—without knowing which

was which. Each morning, participants reported the quality of their sleep the previous night.

We also asked participants to wear a sleep watch that monitored their movement through the night. After the study was over, we asked participants to guess whether each of the shirts had been worn by their partner.

People reported that their sleep was better on nights when they thought they were smelling their partner's scent. However, data from the sleep watches revealed that people's sleep efficiency was higher—in other words, they experienced less tossing and turning—on nights they were actually sleeping with their partner's shirt. This increase in sleep efficiency occurred regardless of whether participants guessed that the shirt was their partner's. This suggests that the effects of exposure to a partner's scent can occur outside of our conscious awareness.

Participants in our study experienced an average of more than nine additional minutes of sleep per night when exposed to the scent of their partner, equating to more than one hour of additional sleep per week. This increase

was achieved without participants spending any more time in bed. The average improvement in sleep efficiency from sleeping with a partner's scent was similar in magnitude to improvements documented for melatonin supplements, which are often used as a sleep aid.

Scent and Stress

In another study, we examined whether stress would be reduced by a partner's scent. We asked 96 women to come into our lab and smell a shirt, either a control shirt or one worn by their romantic partner. They smelled this shirt before, during and after a stressful mock job interview.

Women smelling their partner's shirt reported lower stress both when thinking about the upcoming interview and when recovering from the interview. Those who correctly reported that they were smelling their partner's scent had lower cortisol reactivity to the stressor. Cortisol is a natural hormone released by the body during stress.

These findings suggest that the protective benefits of a partner's scent may be strongest when people are aware they are

smelling their partner.

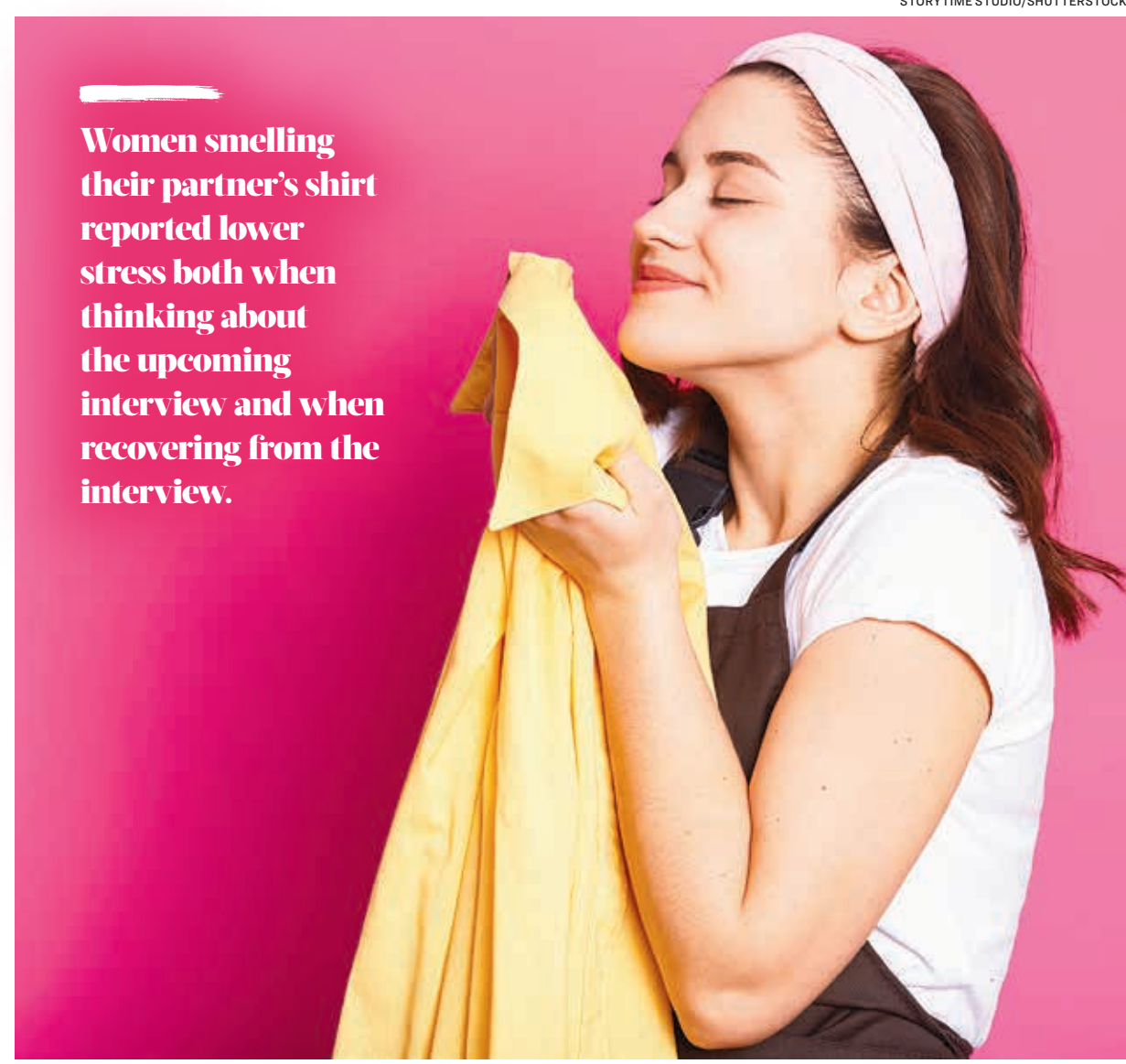
Future Research

In our upcoming research, we plan to investigate other questions about social scents, such as whether people who are happier in their relationships derive greater health benefits from the scent of their partner, and whether the health benefits might extend to other types of close relationships, like parent-child relationships.

By understanding how social scents affect health, future studies can examine the efficacy of simple methods to bolster well-being, such as taking a partner's scarf or shirt along when traveling. The current studies reveal that, often outside of our awareness, another world of communication is happening right under our noses.

Marlise Hofer is a doctoral student in the department of psychology at the University of British Columbia in Canada, and Frances Chen is an associate professor in the department of psychology at the University of British Columbia. This article was first published on The Conversation.

STORYTIME STUDIO/SHUTTERSTOCK



Women smelling their partner's shirt reported lower stress both when thinking about the upcoming interview and when recovering from the interview.

FIZES/SHUTTERSTOCK



We can all fall victim to the feeling we are unqualified but we can't let that hold us back.

CONNECT TO LEAD

How to Flip Imposter Syndrome

Self doubt can make a leader relatable—as long as it doesn't stop their mission

The men and women who stand to make the biggest change in the world are the ones most susceptible to imposter syndrome.

SCOTT MANN

A couple of years ago I was in Los Angeles and I had just finished a project that I had been working on since before I retired from the military. It was a book about the Village Stability program that helped Afghan villagers stand up on their own against the Taliban. I wanted to share our experiences, both good and bad, and everything that we learned, with the next generation of war fighters. I wanted to be able to give this project the continuity I felt it deserved.

The book took two years to write. 5,000 interviews with village elders, special operators, diplomats, and communications experts went into this book. It was an exhausting process.

One of the greatest authors on the planet, in my opinion, Steven Pressfield, had agreed to review the manuscript. We had a common interest in stabilizing the tribes of Afghanistan and he loved our approach.

I was leaving my hotel to meet

Steve for breakfast with the manuscript in my hand and everything changed. The imposter syndrome kicked in, and it kicked in hard. I decided I couldn't do it. It wasn't ready, it wasn't worth his time yet. I needed to do some more work. I'd never written a book before. I'm not an author. What were my peers in Special Forces going to think? I'll be found out!

I was walking around the hotel frantically, trying to talk myself into going to see Steve. As I paced around the motel room, my foot caught the corner of the bed and I fell. Hard. When I tripped this manuscript that was held together by a single butterfly clip went into the air. I watched it explode, paper after paper floating down, like a cruel snow storm, all around me.

The papers lay scattered everywhere on the floor. I looked at my watch. I had 20 minutes before my meeting with Steve. So, that was it. I took it as a sign to call off the meeting.

Defeated, I gave my Dad, Rex, a call and I let him know what happened. I gave him every excuse I had. This was not the time. The manuscript wasn't ready. My Dad kept pushing back with reasons to still give him the manuscript. Finally, when I realized he just didn't get it, I exploded, "Dad, who am I to be writing a book like this and taking Steve Pressfield's time?"

A pause, and then my Dad's level voice, "Who are you not to, son? What happens if you don't write this book? What will those future special operators, including your son, lose from you not sharing the lessons you learned? Who are you not to do this? That's the question you should be asking. You are right where you belong."

The imposter syndrome is a common mindset for authentic, relatable leaders. We are going to question ourselves. We are going to ask ourselves, "Who am I to be standing in front of the boss asking for this resource? Who am I to be standing in front of this seasoned prospect trying to make them

a client with my inexperienced background? Who am I to propose this nonprofit when I don't know anything about this kind of work? Who am I to go in there and do this presentation to the board, when I'm the most junior associate?"

Rather than asking yourself, "Who am I to do this?", ask yourself, "Who am I not to do this?" Because you are depriving us of the gifts that you were given and the world needs those gifts. We're hungry for authentic, relatable leaders who can overcome the imposter syndrome mindset and make a deep impact in this world. The men and women who stand to make the biggest change in the world are the ones most susceptible to imposter syndrome.

What if I had listened to my imposter syndrome and let that mindset win? Then my book never would have been published. It's now a number one international bestseller that is required reading for thousands of special operators deploying all over the world. It's being used by law enforcement in Philadelphia and California for community policing. And thousands of civilians have benefited from a more clear understanding of what violent extremism and human connection really mean in their lives.

These lessons have become valuable tools. But, if I'd listened to that "imposter" narrative, that could have changed.

We have to lean into what scares us. We have to be willing to do what others won't.

The next time you feel the imposter syndrome taking hold, all it takes to flip that mindset is asking yourself one powerful question: "Who am I not to do this?"

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

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What Neuroscience Can Teach Us About Aging Better

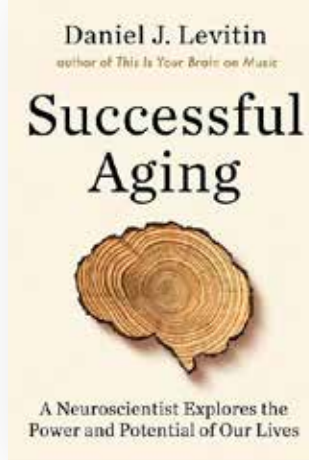
A neuroscientist explains how our brains age and provides tips to gain vitality and happiness

JILL SUTTIE

About 13 years ago, I watched my very vital mother die a slow death from Levy-Body dementia. For me, it was a wakeup call. If there was anything I could do to stay healthy myself—to avoid the slow decline of an aging brain—I wanted to do it. But what really helps us stay sharp longer? And how can we separate fad ideas from solid, evidence-based advice around aging?

Enter Daniel Levitin's new book, "Successful Aging: A Neuroscientist Explores the Power and Potential of Our Lives."

Levitin is a neuroscientist, psychologist, professor emeritus at McGill University in Montreal,



and faculty fellow at UC Berkeley. His highly researched book provides fascinating insights into how our early childhood experiences, personalities, social relationships, and lifestyles all drive our brain's development, dispelling stubborn myths around the inevitability of cognitive decline. Arguing against ageism and highlighting the unique gifts of older people, Levitin shows us what we can all do to become sharper, happier, and wiser as we age.

I spoke with Levitin recently about his book and what we can learn from it. Here is an edited version of our conversation.

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What Are Viruses, and Why Do They Make Us Sick?

A virus expert explains these tiny parasites as fears of coronavirus continue



We live with many viruses inside us already. Most viruses only cause problems when our immune system overreacts to their presence.

MARILYN J. ROOSSINCK

Editor's Note: Some viruses cause the common cold, and some are crucial to human survival. As world health leaders try to determine how to respond to the new coronavirus, virus expert Marilyn J. Roossinck answers a few questions.

1. What Is a Virus?
Defining a virus has been a challenge, because every time we come up with a good definition, someone discovers a virus that breaks the rules. Viruses are entities that infect cellular life. They are very diverse. The simplest just have a couple of genes made of RNA or DNA wrapped up in a protein coat. Others have hundreds of genes, more than some bacteria. All viruses are ultimately parasites. They require a host for replication. They cannot generate their own energy like cells can.

2. Why Does a Virus Make People Sick?
When a new human virus disease appears, it is most often because the virus has jumped from a different species into humans. The worst viruses are often the ones that have very recently jumped species. After jumping species, the virus goes through a process of adjustment to its new host. The real challenge, however, is to the host. As it tries to figure out how to adjust to an invasion from something completely new, the immune system overreacts. This is what makes the host sick. It usually isn't an advantage for the virus to make people sick; it is an accident of the hosts' immune system overreacting to something it doesn't recognize. Viruses that have been in a host for a long time are less likely

to cause disease. For example, HIV jumped into humans from wild primates, in whose bodies it wasn't causing any disease.

Viruses don't respond to antibiotics, and in some cases taking antibiotics can make things worse, because antibiotics can hurt normal bacteria in the gut that are an important part of the immune response.

Every virus-host relationship is different. In most cases, viruses do not cause any disease, and many are beneficial. For example, in mice, a herpes virus prevents infection from the plague bacteria.

3. Why Is It So Important to Know the Original Source?
If the virus comes from an animal, knowing what that animal is can help break the chain of infection. Knowing the source also helps scientists understand mutations that might have occurred in the virus' genome. That's because host-jumping affects the variation in a virus genome. When a virus has been in its host for a long time, the genome is fine-tuned to that host, and mutations are not tolerated.

4. SARS Was a Formidable Foe and Then Seemed to Disappear. Why?
Measures to contain SARS started early, and they were very successful. The key is to stop the chain of transmission by isolating infected individuals. SARS had a short incubation

period; people generally showed symptoms in two to seven days. There were no documented cases of anyone being a source of SARS without showing symptoms. Stopping the chain of transmission is much more difficult when the incubation time is much longer, or when some people don't get symptoms at all. This may be the case with the virus causing CoVID-19, so stopping it may take more time.

5. What Is the Best Way to Treat Viruses?
Viruses don't respond to antibiotics, and in some cases taking antibiotics can make things worse, because antibiotics can hurt normal bacteria in the gut that are an important part of the immune response. Antiviral drugs can work with some viruses, but the mutation rate of most viruses means that they become resistant to antivirals very quickly.

The best treatment is to give the patient the best tools to allow their own body to fight off the infection. This usually means rest and keeping hydrated. Virus infection can suppress the immune system, so patients should be monitored for secondary infections that might require other treatments. Prevention is important. Sick people need to be isolated, and healthy people need to take precautions. Most respiratory viruses are not transmitted just by breathing them in from sick people, but by getting them on your hands from tiny droplets that sick people distribute by coughing or sneezing, and then touching your face. Good hand-washing is important.

Marilyn J. Roossinck is a professor of plant pathology and environmental microbiology at Pennsylvania State University. This article was originally published on The Conversation.

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