

WEEK 31, 2020

THE EPOCH TIMES

# MIND & BODY

SAMIRA BOUJOU/THE EPOCH TIMES

Lorem Ipsum

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### CHINESE WISDOM FOR SEASONAL LIVING

## Chinese Medicine Advises Not to Drink Iced Beverages or Chilled Food

Solar Term: ‘Major Heat’



### MOREEN LIAO

A solar term is a period of about two weeks and is based on the sun's position in the zodiac. Solar terms form the traditional Chinese calendar system, which follows the ancient belief that living in accordance with nature will enable one to live a harmonious life. This series explores each of the year's 24 solar terms, offering guidance on how to best navigate the season.

Solar Term: ‘Major Heat’

2020 Date: July 22 to Aug 6

**Characteristics and Meaning:** “Major Heat” is the last solar term of summer, often accompanied by heavy rain, floods, and thunder.

The ancient Chinese saw summer as the peak of one's life, but it precipitates the decline in the same way that summer soon cools into autumn with winter following, so as it is in life with middle age and so on. Knowing the solar terms allows one to live in harmony with the ways of nature. As all things have a season and a rhythm, living in harmony with this basic truth of the world is also beneficial for our health.

**Impact on People:** There is an old Chinese saying, “The best time to fix winter diseases is summer, and the best time to treat summer diseases is winter.” Winter diseases are like extremely cold ice present inside our bodies; if we want to melt them away, we need to find a time when both the environment and our bodies are hot. Major Heat is such a time.

The top Chinese doctors work with nature to treat diseases, and so can we, as individuals. We can help our bodies to recover from our old problems and prepare to transition into a safe winter if we take care of our bodies well.

**Living in Harmony With the Season:** Although it might be hard starting out, or a major change for some people, our bodies will appreciate it in the long-run if we can avoid eat-

ing cold foods. Cold for this purpose means colder than our bodies' temperature. Especially food colder than room temperature should be avoided.

Our digestive system is a fire of sorts. This is why we used to burn food to see how much it could heat water to calculate the energy our body would derive from eating it. This process of determining the calories contained in a given food was refined as food regulators required that manufacturers provide more specific nutritional information, but the essential practice holds.

This is one reason not to eat cold foods. It can affect the digestive process and unsettle the balance of cold and heat in the body.

It is also good to avoid being caught out in or soaked by the rain. And it's good to have your belly covered if you find yourself in an air-conditioned room. For those feeling hot, you may massage the back of your neck to reduce the feeling of heat. Anyone (even those not feeling hot) can massage the zusanli acupoint, as shown in the accompanying image. The famous Tang Dynasty doctor, Sun Si Miao, lived to be more than 140 years old. He said that the zusanli acupoint helps to strengthen one's health and avoid disease. It is one of the foremost acupoints for longevity and helps to improve digestion, activate blood circulation, and repel humidity inside one's body, according to ancient Chinese medicinal theory.

**Foods to Eat:** Eel, pineapple, pumpkin, mango, lamb, potato, yam, sweet potato, cumin, and pepper.

Those who have excess body heat can eat tomato, eggplant, peach, and green beans.

Epoch Times contributor Moreen Liao is a descendant of four generations of traditional Chinese medicine doctors. She is also a certified aromatherapist, the former dean of the New Directions Institute of Natural Therapies in Sydney, and the founder of Ausganica, a certified organic cosmetic brand. Visit [Ausganica.com](http://Ausganica.com)



Our body reacts to the season, and eating accordingly can help with our well-being. Mango is a great treat during the period known as “Major Heat.”



A small increase in the number of fruits or vegetables you get in your diet can significantly reduce your risk of developing Type 2 diabetes.

## Eating a Diet Rich in Fruit and Vegetables Daily Lowers Diabetes Risk

A large study has found that even small improvement in diet can significantly lower diabetes risk

NITA FOROUI, JU-SHENG ZHENG  
& NICK WAREHAM

Eating about five servings of fruit and vegetables a day is widely promoted as a key part of a healthy diet. This is because consuming fruit and vegetables is linked to lower risk of health problems such as coronary heart disease, stroke, and some types of cancer.

But there's still confusion about the role that fruit and vegetables have in preventing Type 2 diabetes. Evidence from research has been inconsistent, partly because most studies have relied on participants remembering what they ate—which can be inaccurate. But our latest research found that people who regularly ate more fruit and vegetables in their diet had half the risk of developing Type 2 diabetes compared to those who ate less.

Since research shows that Type 2 diabetes can be prevented through a healthy diet, we wanted to know just how important eating fruit and vegetables is as part of that. We conducted the world's largest study that measured blood levels of vitamins linked

to fruit and vegetable consumption in a population. This method of using objective nutritional biomarkers—indicators of dietary intake, metabolism, or nutritional status that are present in our blood—cuts out the errors and inaccuracies that affected previous studies. We also asked people to report what specific foods they ate to compare with the biomarker data.

We followed a group of 340,234 people from eight European countries. We specifically studied biomarkers in 10,000 people who developed Type 2 diabetes during follow-up and compared them with 13,500 people who didn't. The biomarkers we measured were levels of vitamin C and six different carotenoids or plant pigments in the blood. These biomarkers tell us about the fruit and vegetables a person gets in their diet. We then calculated the total sum of these seven nutrient biomarkers as a composite score, then split scores into five categories ranging from lowest consumption to highest.

We found that the higher the biomarker score level, the lower the risk of future Type 2

diabetes. People whose biomarker score was in the top 20 percent of the population had a 50 percent lower risk of developing Type 2 diabetes compared to those with lower scores. We also found that eating around 66 grams of fruit and vegetables daily could potentially cut the risk of Type 2 diabetes by a quarter.

**People who regularly ate more fruit and vegetables had half the risk of developing Type 2 diabetes.**

Our findings build upon the results of a smaller study of 21,831 people living in England, 735 of whom developed Type 2 diabetes. This study showed a strong link between higher blood vitamin C levels and lower risk of diabetes. But the link was weaker when

examining fruit and vegetable intake as reported by the participants. By repeating this work on a larger scale and in several countries, our results further strengthen the evidence that these results are likely to be repeated in other populations, too.

### 5 a Day

Since United Kingdom dietary guidelines consider each portion of fruit or vegetable to be 80 grams, our study shows eating even one portion per day could have health benefits. For instance, seven cherry tomatoes, two broccoli spears, or one banana would all roughly equal one portion.

Although “five a day” has been around for decades, fruit and vegetable consumption remains low. Only 1 in 7 people over 15 eat at least 5 portions every day—and 1 in 3 people don't eat any daily. Encouragingly, our results show there are large potential benefits from making small changes to our diets.

Our research highlights that reduced risk isn't just because of certain nutrients or vitamins. Rather, the benefits we observed are because of the combination of multiple beneficial components found in fruits and vegetables. Alongside vitamin C and carotenoids, other components including fiber, potassium, and polyphenols, which have beneficial effects on weight, body inflammation, blood sugar levels, and keep gut bacteria healthy. And a diverse variety of fruit and vegetables has the greatest health benefits, as you consume more of these beneficial components.

We also took into account how several factors—including age, gender, body mass index, education level, occupation, smoking, alcohol intake, physical activity, and use of vitamin supplements—all affected the risk of Type 2 diabetes. We found that the biomarker results linked to fruit and vegetables were independent of these other factors—so regardless of whether a person smoked or was physically active, eating a diet rich in more fruit and vegetables is relevant for lowering the risk of developing Type 2 diabetes.

Our research doesn't establish cause and effect, because we did not intervene with dietary change—rather we observed what happened over time to participants with different blood biomarker levels. But, by using these objective measures, and large sample size in different countries with varying diets, our confidence in these findings is increased. We still don't yet know whether our findings would be different among different ethnic groups, which should be a focus of future research.

It's well known that fruit and vegetables are an important part of maintaining good health throughout life, but we also know that in reality, the majority of people do not eat enough of them. Our study shows that even just a small increase in the number of fruits or vegetables you get in your diet can significantly reduce your risk of developing Type 2 diabetes.

Nita Forouhi is a program leader at the MRC Epidemiology Unit at the University of Cambridge in the U.K. Ju-Sheng Zheng is the principal investigator of human Nutrition and epidemiology at Westlake University in China. Nick Wareham is the director of the MRC Epidemiology Unit at the University of Cambridge. This article was first published on *The Conversation*.

## Working Off the ‘COVID-15’

Weight gain brought about by pandemic conditions brings other health risks

### DEVON ANDRE

The COVID-19 pandemic isn't going anywhere, and it's probably already changed your life more than you expected. Outside of the threat of catching the coronavirus, the pandemic has led to mental health issues and more.

Another one of its side effects is weight gain. There's no denying that the pandemic has changed how we do virtually everything. Eating habits and how our days are spent have undergone massive overhauls. Unfortunately, these changes might have put health on the back burner.

Being called the “COVID-15,” weight gain resulting from quarantine has the potential to cause further health problems. Weight gain caused by overeating and inactivity can lead to high blood pressure, heart disease, high blood sugar, and low-grade inflammation.

Getting a handle on it before it turns into the COVID-20, -30, or more is the best way to protect

yourself against added health risks.

One great way to use this strange time to your advantage is learning to cook—even if you already know how. Expanding your knowledge of healthier recipes that incorporate a larger variety of ingredients, spices, and foods can help improve health.

Home-cooked meals can also help you keep track of exactly what you're eating, too.

Shopping can be a challenge during the pandemic, but shopping healthy is actually quite a bit easier than buying prepared or packaged foods. Fresh produce, meat, and dairy are generally around the perimeter of grocery stores and don't require any meandering through aisles.

Further, produce stands are usually outdoors, making it a less-risky environment to contract COVID-19 (but keep your mask on).

Increasing physical activity also is a way to combat weight gain. It can improve metabolism, reduce blood pressure and blood sugar

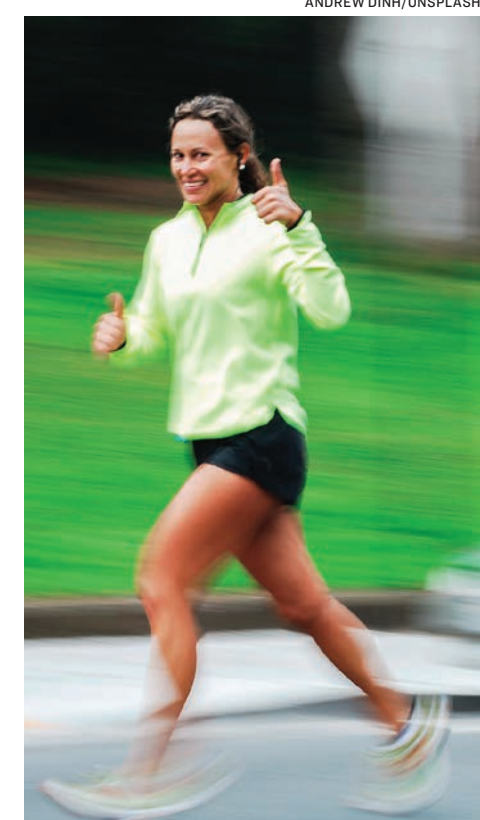
levels, and ultimately fight back against disease risk.

A couple of other things to keep in mind are starting small and avoiding fad diets. If it took you three months to put on 15 pounds, expect it to take roughly the same amount of time to lose it. Making small, incremental changes is a more effective strategy than trying to lose it all at once.

When it comes to shedding pounds for good, a slow and steady approach always wins the race.

Under these conditions, it's essential to take control of the aspects of life you still can. What you eat and how you spend your time are two choices you always have, so think about how you can make them work for the best.

Devon Andre holds a bachelor's degree in forensic science from the University of Windsor in Canada and a Juris Doctor degree from the University of Pittsburgh. Andre is a journalist for *Bel Marra Health*, which first published this article.



Learning to cook and increasing physical activity can help you keep off extra weight brought about by living under pandemic restrictions.



# Keys to Kidney Health

Understand and appreciate your kidneys

NANCY BERKOFF

**O**ur kidneys are hard workers and we should treat them nicely. These fist-sized organs shaped like a kidney bean (got their name?) are real powerhouses. Kidneys help the body process and retain necessary nutrients, maintain fluid levels, and eliminate unnecessary substances.

Without well-running kidneys, your body lacks the mechanism to handle products from digestion, keep fluid levels where they should be, or maintain the right amount of potassium, sodium, and other important minerals.

## Kidney Disease and Infections

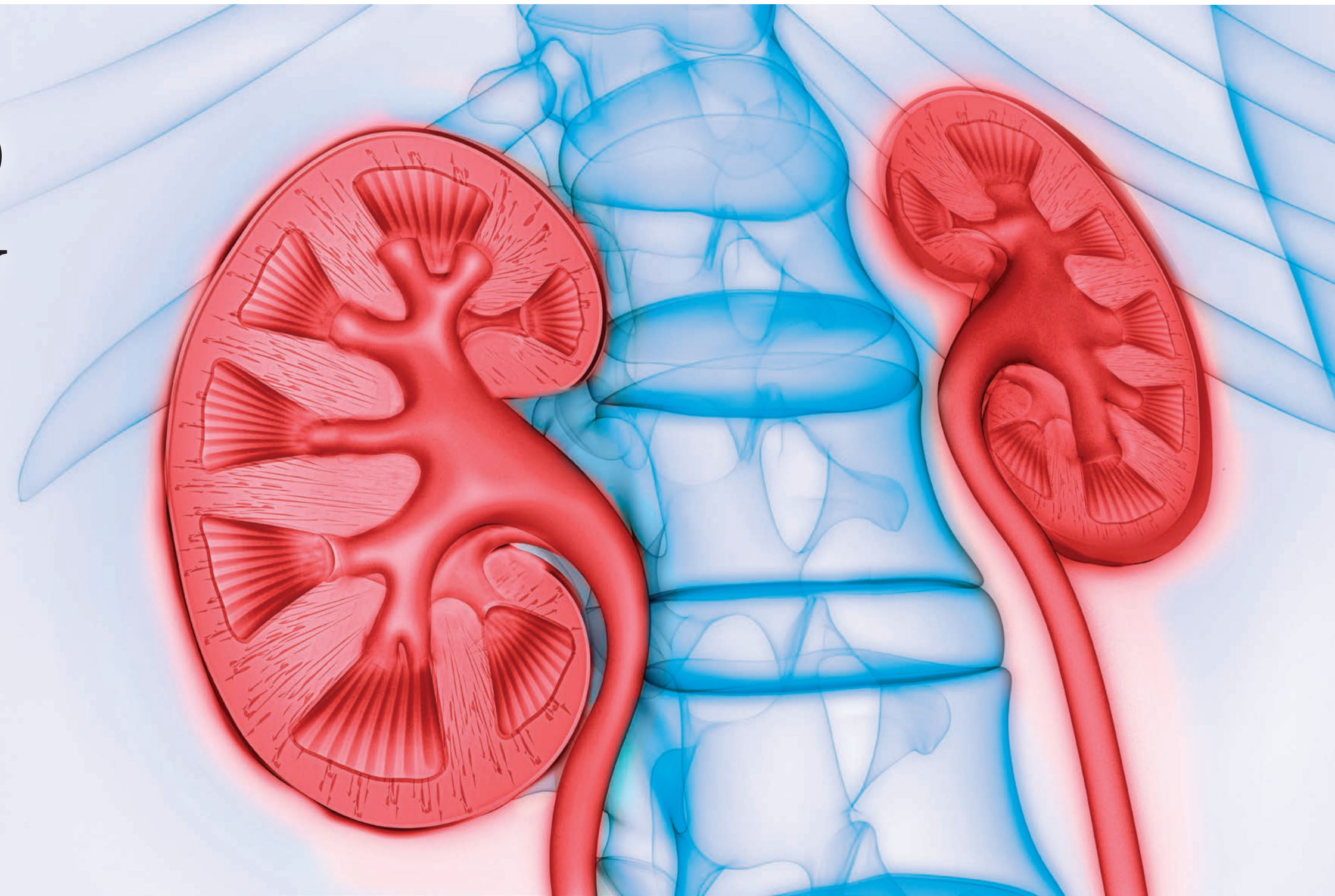
Kidneys perform three functions: filtration, reabsorption, and secretion. When there is damage to the kidneys, these functions decrease in efficiency. As kidney disease progresses, kidneys are unable to properly handle the body's protein, fluid, or mineral needs.

Urinary tract infections can cause kidney problems, but these can usually be resolved with medical care, and plenty of rest and fluids. Physical injury can also impair kidney function, so wear your seatbelt in the car and protective equipment when playing sports or working.

Since the 19th century, the medical community has noted a link between tobacco use and kidney disease. Even smokers without diagnosed kidney disease were seen to have reduced kidney function. The good news is that several studies have shown that tobacco-related kidney damage may be reversed when tobacco use is stopped.

Diabetes and high blood pressure are two of the biggest culprits related to kidney disease.

High blood pressure affects the way blood circulates through your body. Since the kidneys rely on adequate circulation to remove



Our kidneys are two bean-shaped organs that filter our blood and control the body's fluid balance.

waste products from the body, high blood pressure can cause damage to the kidneys and the circulatory system. In an otherwise healthy person, blood pressure control is helped by maintaining proper weight, avoiding tobacco, keeping fat and salt intake moderate and, of course, minimizing stress—easier said than done.

Diabetes also affects the circulatory system, sometimes damaging the blood vessels. When blood vessels are damaged, the kidneys cannot effectively eliminate fluid, potassium, and sodium from the body. This may result in fluid and mineral retention, with symptoms including weight gain (from fluid), swollen ankles, and wrists. Diabetic renal disease is a very critical disease, and must be treated on an everyday basis.

According to the Greater Kidney Foundation of Cincinnati, early signs of kidney disease for people with diabetes may be high blood pressure, ankle and leg swelling, leg cramps, weakness, paleness and anemia, excessive itching (not caused by medication or dry skin), frequent nocturnal urination, and protein in the urine. People with diabetes must be particularly vigilant about these symptoms.

## The health of your gut, brain, eyes, muscles, and even skin can be improved or worsened through your diet and lifestyle choices.

### What Hurts or Helps

So, what about people without diabetes or high blood pressure? Should we think about kidney disease? Well, worry leads to stress, and stress can lead to high blood pressure, so let's forget about the worrying. Being conscientious about your health is a better way to keep kidneys working at the peak of perfection.

Most healthy people don't give their kidneys a lot of thought. Possibly an occasional urinary tract infection may remind them that they are there. Bacteria grow quickly in the bladder. With a fast-paced life, we may walk around with a full bladder more often than we like. The longer the bladder is full, the more time the bacteria have to grow, possibly

resulting in infection. Some of these bacteria may infect the kidneys; a full bladder can put a lot of pressure on the kidneys, causing some damage.

The moral to this story is to avoid having a full bladder for a prolonged amount of time and to drink plenty of fluids, assisting the bladder and kidneys to rinse themselves out.

E. coli bacteria are responsible for the majority of urinary tract infections (UTIs), with an estimated 8 million to 10 million UTIs per year. A few studies have found cranberries have the potential to combat UTIs and prevent this bacteria from taking hold. Available as juice and cranberry extract pills, dried fruit, and even health bars, cranberry has become a popular ingredient for its purported health properties and for the color and tang it adds to foods. Cranberry juice is also high in Vitamin C, a proven antioxidant.

Just about any kind of fluid will make your kidneys smile—except those with excessive sugar, salt, or caffeine. Sugar can encourage the growth of bacteria in the bladder. Salt must be filtered by the kidneys, so excessive amounts of salt can tax the kidneys and possibly interfere with their efficiency. Caffeine, in moderation, is thought to be okay for healthy adults, but may have a diuretic, or fluid-releasing effect, providing an "error" message to the kidneys in terms of fluid balance.

So, go easy on the coffee, tea, soft drinks, and "sports drinks" and focus on drinking fresh, refreshing fruit and water combinations. Some delicious and healthy beverages are blueberry ginger lemonade; iced passion fruit herbal tea; sparkling water with some frozen berries or a slice of cucumber; water with a twist of lemon, lime, orange or tangerine; lemonade or fruit nectars blended with fresh watermelon; or herbal and decaffeinated teas with a twist of ginger, lemon, and mint, or mixed with clove and nutmeg.

### Mother Nature's Plan B

Fortunately, kidneys were designed to have a lot of reserve. Many people can function well with just one healthy kidney. Some people are born with only one functioning kidney, some lose a kidney to disease or injury and some people choose to donate a kidney to help someone in need. People with one kidney, of course, will want to pay attention to their kidney health.

Some forms of kidney disease can be controlled with a carefully planned diet. This is a diet with defined amounts of protein, sodium, potassium, and fluids, substances processed by the kidneys. Limiting selected nutrients and fluid amounts decrease the work for the diseased kidney.

Healthy people do not benefit from limiting these nutrients, so don't consider this as a "preventative." Watch your health, have regular check-ups, get lots of rest and exercise, don't smoke, stay well-hydrated, and help your kidneys to be good to you.

*Dr. Nancy Berkoff is a registered dietitian, food technologist, and culinary professional. She divides her time between health care and culinary consulting, food writing, and healthy living.*

# Amid Surge, Hospitals Hesitate to Cancel Nonemergency Surgeries

Hospitals say they are better prepared to deal with COVID patients, the risk of infection

SAMANTHA YOUNG

Three months ago, the nation watched as COVID-19 patients overwhelmed New York City's intensive care units, forcing some of its hospitals to convert cafeterias into wards and pitch tents in parking lots.

Hospitals elsewhere prepped for a similar surge: They cleared beds, stockpiled scarce protective equipment, and—voluntarily or under government orders—temporarily canceled non-emergency surgeries to save space and supplies for coronavirus patients.

In most places, that surge in patients never materialized.

Now, coronavirus cases are skyrocketing nationally and hospitalizations are climbing at an alarming rate. But the response from hospitals is markedly different.

Most hospitals around the country aren't canceling elective surgeries—nor are government officials asking them to.

Instead, hospitals say they are more prepared to handle the crush of patients because they have enough protective gear for their workers and know-how to better treat coronavirus patients. They say they will halt nonessential procedures at hospitals based on local assessments of risk, but not across whole systems or states.

Some hospitals have already done so, including facilities in South Florida, Phoenix, and California's Central Valley. And in a few cases, such as in Texas and Mississippi, government officials have ordered hospitals to suspend elective surgeries.

Hospitals' decisions to keep operating rooms open are being guided partly by financial considerations. Elective surgeries account for a significant portion of hospital revenue, and the American Hospital Association estimates that the country's hospitals and health care systems lost \$202.6 billion between March 1 and June 30.

## The question is whether hospitals have systems in place to meet a surge in COVID-19 patients.

"What we now realize is that shutting down the entire health care system in anticipation of a surge is not the best option," said Carmela Coyle, president of the California Hospital Association. "It will bankrupt the health care delivery system."

The association projects that California hospitals will lose \$14.6 billion this year, of which \$4.6 billion has so far been reimbursed by the federal government.

But some health care workers fear that continuing elective surgeries amid a surge puts them and their patients at risk. For instance, some nurses are still being asked to reuse protective equipment like N95 masks and gowns, even though hospitals say they have enough gear to perform elective surgeries, said Zenei Cortez, president of the National Nurses United union.

"They continue to put us at risk," Cortez said. "They continue to look at us as if we are disposable material."

Elective surgeries, generally speaking, are procedures that can be delayed without harming patients, such as knee replacements and cataract surgery.

At least 33 states and the District of Columbia temporarily barred elective surgeries this spring, and most hospitals in states that didn't ban them, such as Georgia and California, voluntarily suspended them to make sure they had the beds to accommodate a surge of COVID-19 patients. The U.S. sur-



Hospitals are more confident they can maintain services despite rising COVID-19 infection rates.

geon general, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, and the American College of Surgeons also recommended health care facilities suspend non-emergency surgeries.

The suspension was always intended to be temporary, said Dr. David Hoyt, executive director of the American College of Surgeons.

"When this all started, it was simply a matter of overwhelming the system," he said.

Today, case counts are soaring after many states loosened stay-at-home orders and Americans flocked to restaurants, bars, and backyards and met up with friends and family for graduation parties and Memorial Day celebrations.

Nationally, confirmed cases of COVID-19 have topped 3 million. In California, cases are spiking, with a 52 percent jump in the average number of daily cases over the past 14 days, compared with the two previous weeks. Hospitalizations have gone up 44 percent.

Governors, county supervisors, and city councils have responded by requiring people to wear masks, shutting down bars and restaurants—again—and closing beaches on the July Fourth holiday weekend.

But by and large, government leaders are not calling on hospitals to proactively scale back elective surgeries in preparation for a surge.

"Our hospitals are telling us they feel very strongly... they can manage their resources," said Holly Ward, director of marketing and communications at the Arizona Hospital and Healthcare Association. If they feel the situation warrants it, "they on their own will delay surgeries."

In some states, such as Colorado, public health orders that allowed hospitals to resume non-emergency surgeries in the spring required hospitals to have a stockpile of protective equipment and extra beds that could be used to treat an influx of COVID-19 patients.

States also set up overflow sites, should hospitals run out of room. In Maryland, for example, the state is using the Baltimore Convention Center as a field hospital. The state of California last week reactivated four "alternative care sites"—including a hospital that was on the verge of closure in the San Francisco Bay Area—to take COVID-19 patients should hospitals fill up.

But the decision to reduce elective surgeries in California won't come from the state. It will be made by counties in consultation with hospitals, said Rodger Butler, a spokesperson for the California Health and Human Services Agency.

The question is whether hospitals have systems in place to meet a surge in COVID-19 patients when it occurs, said Glenn Melnick, a professor of health economics at the University of Southern California.

"To some extent, elective care is good care," Melnick said. "They're providing needed services. They are keeping the system going. They are providing employment and income."

In Los Angeles County, more than 2,000 COVID patients are currently hospitalized, according to county data. While that

number is projected to go up by a couple of hundred people over the next few weeks, hospitals believe they can accommodate them, county Health Services Director Christina Ghaly says. In the meantime, hospitals are preparing to bring on additional staff members if needed and informing patients who have scheduled surgeries that they could be delayed.

"There are more patients with COVID in the hospitals than there has been at any point previously in Los Angeles County during the pandemic," Ghaly said. "Hospitals are more prepared now for handling that volume of patients than they were previously."

While hospitals have not stopped elective surgeries, many have not ramped up to the full schedule they had before COVID-19. And they say they are picking and choosing surgeries based on what's happening in their area.

"We were all things COVID when it was just starting," said Joshua Adler, executive vice president for physician services at UCSF Health. "We didn't know what we were facing."

But after a couple of months of treating patients, hospitals have learned how to resupply units, how to transfer patients, how to simultaneously care for other patients, and how to improve testing, Adler said.

At Scripps Health in San Diego, which has taken more than 230 patients from hard-hit Imperial County to the east, its hospitals have scaled back how many transfers they will accept as confirmed COVID-19 cases rise in their own community, said Chris Van Gorder, president, and CEO of Scripps Health.

A command center set up by the hospital system reviews patient counts and medical supplies and coordinates with county health officials to study how the virus is spreading. Only patients who need urgent surgeries are being scheduled, Van Gorder said.

"We're only allowing our doctors to schedule cases two weeks out," Van Gorder said. "If we see a sudden spike, we have to delay."

In California's Central Valley and in Phoenix, where cases and hospitalizations are surging, Mercy hospitals have suspended elective surgeries to focus resources on COVID-19 patients.

But the other hospitals in the CommonSpirit Health system, which has 137 hospitals in 21 states, aren't ending elective surgeries—as they did in the spring—and are treating patients with needs other than COVID, said Marvin O'Quinn, the system's president and chief operating officer.

"In many cases, their health deteriorated because they didn't get the care that they needed," said O'Quinn, whose hospitals lost close to \$1 billion in two months. "It's not only a disservice to the hospital to not do those cases; it's a disservice to the community."

*Samantha Young is the California politics correspondent for California Healthline. This KHN story was first published on California Healthline, a service of the California Health Care Foundation.*

# Beta-Blockers for Hypertension Linked to Higher Risk of Heart Failure Among Women

MAT LECOMPTÉ

New research has found that women who take beta-blockers for hypertension are at a higher risk for heart failure.

The study, published in the American Heart Association journal *Hypertension*, showed that women who were taking beta-blockers and had no prior history of cardiovascular disease (CVD) have a nearly

## Women who were taking the beta-blockers had a 4.6 percent higher rate of heart failure than men.

5 percent higher risk for heart failure than men when admitted to hospital with the acute coronary syndrome.

Beta-blockers are commonly prescribed to adults with hypertension, a leading cause of CVD. This study set out to find the effects of beta-blockers on men and women with hypertension and no history of CVD. Past studies have primarily focused on

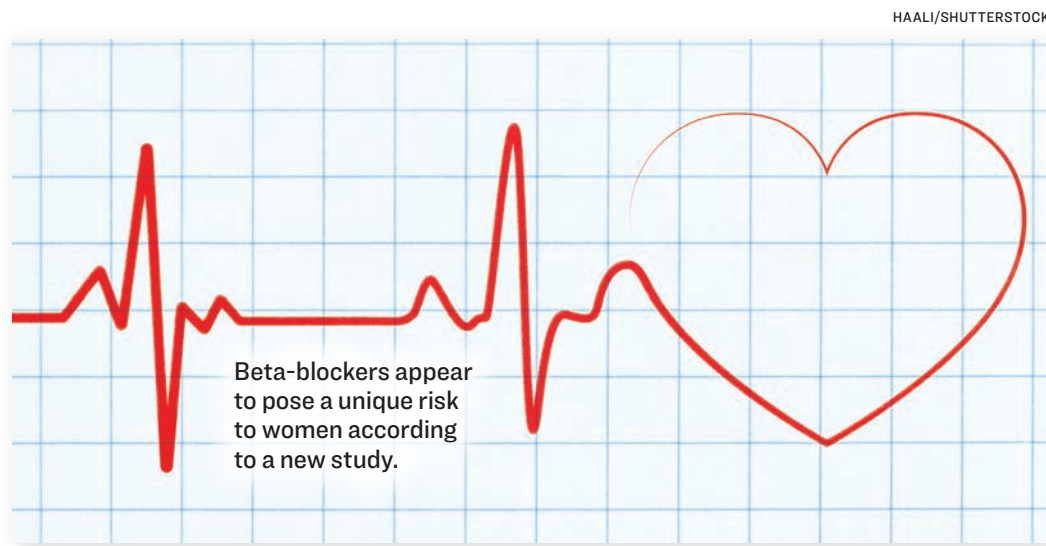
the effects of beta-blockers on men. Therefore, for this study, researchers set out to examine how gender plays a role in patient outcomes.

Men have much higher levels of hypertension.

Raffaele Bugiardini, M.D., professor of cardiology at the University of Bologna and lead author of the study, said, "Women are historically underrepresented in most clinical studies on hypertension. It's important to include an equal split of male and female patients in future research, which could shed light on disparities and actionable treatments."

For the study, researchers analyzed information from the International Survey of Acute Coronary Syndromes (ISACS) Archives, the ISACS-TC, and the EMMA3X clinical registries from October 2010 to July 2018. Data were included from 13,764 adults in 12 European countries who had high blood pressure and no prior history of cardiovascular disease. All participants were separated into two groups, those taking beta-blockers and those who were not. They were also identified by gender.

### Higher Rates of Heart Failure in



### Women

The study concluded that women who were taking the beta-blockers had a 4.6 percent higher rate of heart failure than men when admitted to hospital with acute coronary syndrome. The mortality rate of both men and women with heart failure was approximately seven times that of patients with acute myocardial infarction (heart attack) and no heart failure complications.

It was also found that women who had ST-segment elevation myocardial infarction (STEMI) were 6.1 percent more likely to have heart failure than men with STEMI. This is a serious form of heart attack where a large part of the heart muscle is unable to receive blood. With this condition, men and women not taking beta-blockers had approximately the same rate of heart failure.

"What we found presents a solid case for re-examination of the use of beta-blocker

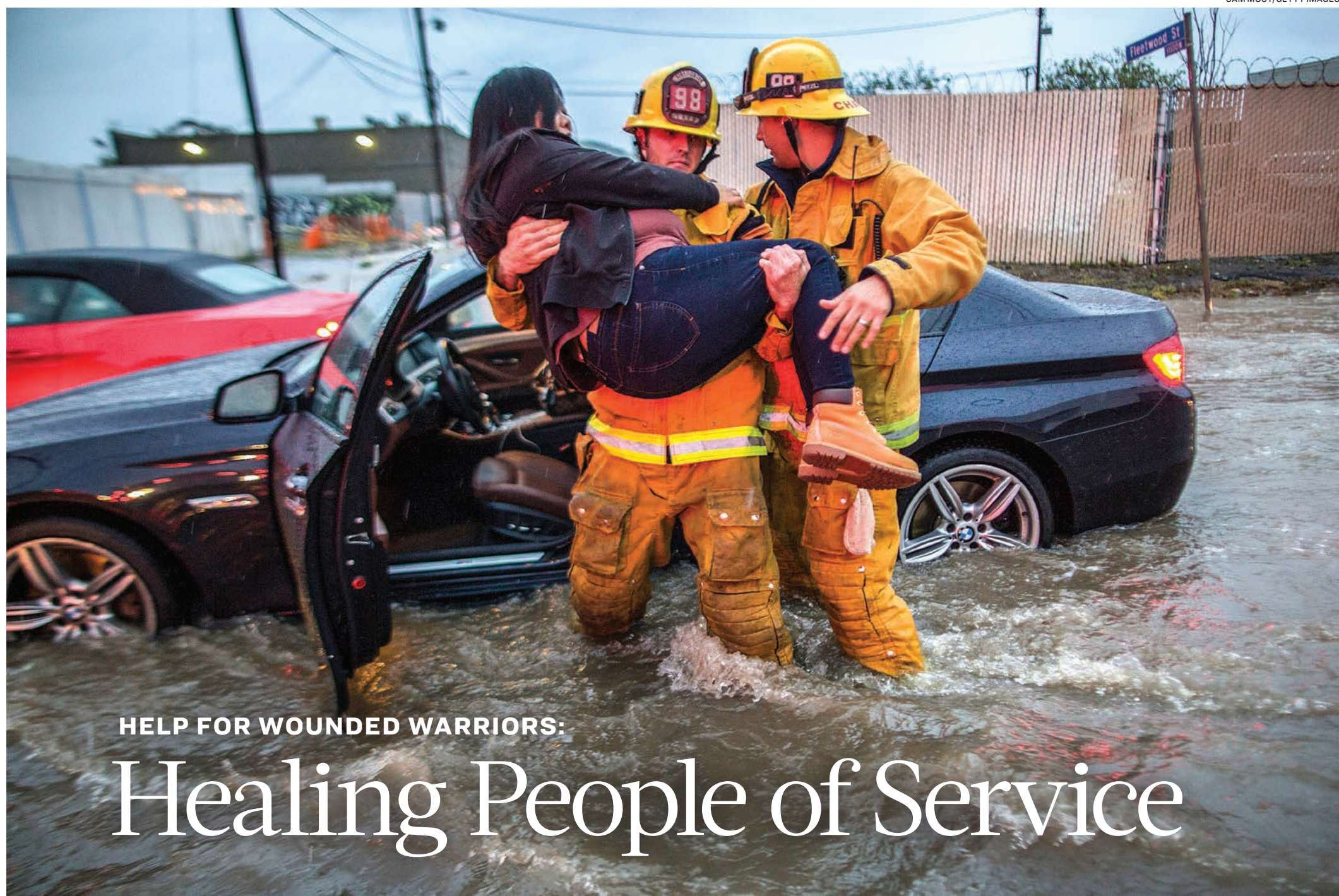
therapy for women with hypertension. For women who have no history of cardiovascular disease and only hypertension, we think it is incredibly important for them to regulate their blood pressure through diet and exercise," Bugiardini said.

"It's possible that the increased risk of heart failure for women is due to an interaction between hormone replacement therapy and beta-blockers, though this information was not collected or tested in our study. This and other potential factors need to be investigated in more depth."

Researchers do warn that this study has some limitations. Since the study was observational, the results could show some variance and additional data is needed to confirm data.

*Mat Lecompte is a freelance health and wellness journalist. This article was first published on Bel Marra Health.*





HELP FOR WOUNDED WARRIORS:

## Healing People of Service

When disaster comes, we rely on first responders to help us through it. But too often, these heroes go through their own traumas alone.

CONAN MILNER

Whatever the crisis and wherever it may strike, first responders will have to deal with it. These are the people that put out the fires, tend to the wounded, and clean up the mess left behind.

These jobs can be physically—and psychologically—dangerous. Stories of trauma and recovery among these individuals are found in a new book, “The Connected Servant.”

Author and holistic health coach Sean McCarthy has worked with trauma victims from all over the world for more than 20 years, but when he talked to doctors, nurses, police officers, soldiers, social workers, and other people of service, he saw a consistent pattern. These were individuals who had committed their lives to helping others, and yet their jobs brought them suffering.

“The people who serve the world aren’t being taken care of. They are the wounded warriors out there,” McCarthy says.

McCarthy first noticed this pattern at an event last year in Vienna, titled “Evolving Beyond Trauma.” He was part of a panel of experts who had come to share insights about overcoming traumatic experiences.

Talking to the other speakers, McCarthy found that they were all haunted by the very trauma they were working to ease.

“You’re the epicenter of this topic in your country, and you don’t have a mechanism to support you and to take care of you and to make sure that you’re OK? I found that really odd,” McCarthy said. “That’s why I wrote the book.”

Several obstacles, from the personal to the systemic, block the help these helpers need. Many of them fear being vulnerable and have overly high expectations of themselves. Soldiers and first responders are routinely hailed as heroes for their bravery, dedication, and ability to perform under tremendous pressure. However, maintaining this tough exterior while hiding pain or weakness comes at a high price.

“People who are providing care don’t want to appear weak. When I spoke to firemen, they really didn’t want to have this conversation,” McCarthy said. “I worked with a highly dedicated Marine who served three tours in Iraq. He’s supposed to be a tough guy. He’s not supposed to have an issue.”

“It took the CEO of his company to come to me and ask if I could help him.”

Another trend McCarthy sees is that people who carry unresolved trauma can unconsciously seek out more trauma, because it matches how they feel inside. This is why someone who grows up in a home filled with drama and violence might find themselves gravitating toward a similar environment as an adult.

“I was working with two military guys who both said that one of the reasons they went into the military is because they had a death wish so they could stop the noise from their childhood trauma,” McCarthy said.

Some people are motivated simply by the

**What makes it traumatic is our inability to handle it.**

Psychological traumas can linger for decades.

Some jobs are full of tragedy after tragedy. It’s psychologically taxing and finding help can be difficult.

desire to serve, but they may give too much. Pilar Jennings, a psychoanalyst and Buddhist meditation teacher in New York City, says that the admirable qualities inherent in health care providers, in particular, can lead them to become overwhelmed.

“These people will give more than they have, and this can be tricky in a crisis because the need is endless. But if they cannot recognize that they need help, it can become dangerous,” Jennings said. “Marriages can break apart. Parents can unwittingly overstimulate or harm their children just because they’re giving too much, and they’re not getting the help they need.”

**What Is Trauma?**

There is more sensitivity and awareness surrounding trauma than ever before. We acknowledge that physical wounds can heal in weeks or months, while psychological traumas can linger for much longer. This lasting impact explains why many suffer their whole lives as a result of early traumatic experiences. One theory, called epigenetics, suggests that our ancestors even pass on a genetic imprint of the traumas they suffered.

Trauma has a way of stretching beyond the initial event, resulting in nightmares, flashbacks, and suspicion that can last for decades. This can cloud our decisions, and warp our relationships. It can cause us to react out of fear rather than respond out of reason. Over time, it can result in patterns of addiction and abuse.

As a result, people often feel ashamed or defective due to trauma-induced reactions. But Jennings says these patterns are extremely common. She defines trauma simply as stress that overwhelms our coping mechanisms. It could come from an accident, or a developmental experience early in life. What makes it traumatic is our inability to handle it.

Jennings points to situations that are exceedingly terrifying or enraging. In these instances, our body floods itself with stress hormones and overwhelms the mind.

“When we don’t have the ability to use our cognitive function, then we’re in a trauma-

tized state,” Jennings said.

Two common symptoms often accompany a trauma that make it hard to identify and let go. One is disassociation—where our minds try to block out the experience. The other is a search for soothing.

“This is where addiction and compulsive behaviors tend to amplify,” Jennings said.

**Finding Help**

Soldiers, health care workers, and first responders need to be tough as part of what they do. But Jennings says even the toughest individuals are vulnerable to overload. While it’s natural to want to self-soothe after a hectic day, this coping mechanism can quickly turn into self-harm, or harm of others.

“The two beers a night turns into a six-pack or a few bottles of wine a night. The nervous stomach becomes unable to get enough food,” Jennings said. “The feeling of irritation with their wife or child turns into an uncontrolled rage reaction. These are signs that they are carrying too much and they need support.”

Those brave enough to ask for help can have a hard time finding it. McCarthy mentions one police officer who was rattled after tending to a motorcyclist who had been severely injured in a traffic accident. The officer secured a section of the highway and kept the victim company until the ambulance arrived. But due to the narrow scope of care the police force provided, the officer received no support for the pain he had experienced.

“Because a gun was not fired, no counseling was given to him,” McCarthy said.

When help is available, it may not be the right help. Prescriptions and talk therapy are often the only treatment options that insurance networks provide or cover. But Jennings says there is a mind-body connection with trauma that conventional treatment doesn’t address.

“Mind and body are intimately bound; there is no way to separate them out. This is true for every aspect of our life, but it becomes really pronounced with trauma. People can develop a lot of insight into how and why they were traumatized, but

their bodies are still re-experiencing the trauma,” Jennings said. “And a lot of people end up organizing their whole lives to avoid re-traumatization.”

Sometimes the mind tricks the body. Memories or triggers of memories can lead to that same flood of hormones, the same feelings of overwhelm.

Over the past few decades, clinicians and researchers have discovered that trauma not only affects the mind, but also the nervous system. As a result, the body can get stuck in a fight or flight response—even when the mind understands that the reaction is irrational. Jennings mentions several therapies that have emerged to address this aspect, such as polyvagal theory, somatic experiencing, and sensory-motor psychotherapy.

“I found over time that as a psychoanalyst that it wasn’t enough to just work with the psyche. I also had to help people’s bodies recover, and this is without any touch. It’s understanding how trauma affects the body,” Jennings said.

The treatment techniques used by McCarthy also address the nervous system. He believes this new understanding of treatment is actually a rediscovery of ancient knowledge.

“It’s about looking at human beings holistically, and having people partake in things that move the trauma and emotion out of the body,” McCarthy said.

**Building Resilience**

Trauma can stem from unexpected hardships of life, such as divorce, the death of a loved one, or a violent encounter. But McCarthy says a big part of healing is confronting the collective influences of tiny traumas that are part of our modern lifestyle. He says the more we can keep these little things under control, the better we can manage the big stuff.

“People don’t want to talk about this, but all of these things are accumulating in the DNA and the organs. If your body is inundated with high levels of toxins, exposure to Wi-Fi, a bad diet, and other things that are constantly applying pressure at the DNA level, it’s a silent trauma,” McCarthy said.

McCarthy tailors his treatments to suit each individual, but he says there are basic things we can all do every day to lessen our own burden of these hidden traumas. Doing so allows us to better handle any event we may encounter.

Similar to how a body that is malnourished is more vulnerable to illness, a mind that is never calm is more affected by trauma.

He recommends that people concentrate on breathing: specifically doing it in and out of your nose, rather than your mouth. This will lead to slower, deeper breaths. He says this small adjustment can calm your vagus nerve, and help deactivate the fight or flight response.

Another unexpected stress-busting factor is diet. McCarthy explains that the digestive tract is integrated with the vagus nerve, which means our digestion may have more to do with how we respond to life than we realize.

“If your digestive tract is off, your brain is off,” he said. “Avoid chemicals and preservatives, and you will have a foundation for dealing with something.”

Jennings recommends that people regularly seek activities that can help them slow down—like meditation, yoga, or listening to some soothing music. Activities that allow us to find a slower pace can help us become more aware of what we feel and what we need.

“Find opportunities for quiet reflection,” she said.

Both Jennings and McCarthy recommend a connection with nature.

A growing body of research shows that a simple walk in the woods has numerous benefits for our mind and body, including boosting our immunity and enhancing our creativity. And you don’t need much to make a difference. A study from Cornell University published in the January issue of *Frontiers in Psychology* found that as little as 10 minutes in a natural setting can help people feel happier and lessen the effects of both physical and mental stress.

“There’s no form of stress that being in nature doesn’t help. It touches everything,” McCarthy said.

Another tip toward lessening your traumatic burden is to find someone to talk to when you start to get overwhelmed—a trusted friend, spouse, or coworker.

“It is human to sometimes feel overwhelmed. And it’s equally human to sometimes need another human being to step in and help when that is so,” Jennings said.

Jennings adds that it’s important that we extend this humanity to people of service.

“I think it’s helpful for people to be mindful of the narrative of the hero. We can be grateful for people who go above and beyond, but also recognize their humanness. We need to recognize when they are being impacted by a difficult situation,” she said.

## Online Meditation Classes Keep People Stress-Free Amid Pandemic

‘Falun Dafa meditation practice is truly an antidote to deal with stress and anxiety,’ says one learner

JOCELYN NEO

Cooled up at home amid the CCP virus pandemic, people are embracing various measures to maintain their overall health and keep anxiety under check. One of them is the meditation practice of Falun Dafa.

Volunteer hosting sites for this spiritual practice call it “an antidote to deal with stress” and have been offering free online workshops for the last couple of months.

Falun Dafa, or Falun Gong, is a spiritual discipline that consists of five exercises, including meditation, and moral teachings based on the principles of truthfulness, compassion, and forbearance. Introduced to the public in 1992, the practice attracted more than 70 million people, in China alone, by the late 1990s, owing to its much-acclaimed health benefits, both spiritual and physical.

Today, Falun Dafa is practiced all over the world by more than 100 million people from all walks of life.

**Making Use of Online Platforms**

Since 2017, Anne Yang and a group of volunteers in the United States have been running Falun Dafa meditation workshops for free at local public spaces such as community centers and public libraries. However, with the outbreak of the CCP (Chinese Communist Party) virus, commonly known as the novel coronavirus, these sessions have been disrupted, with the classes continuing online.

Yang, who’s from Virginia, told *The Epoch Times* via email that she has been posting information on the weekly or monthly workshops on Eventbrite, a U.S.-based event-management website. With the CCP virus spreading worldwide, every part of the globe has been affected by the lockdown and stringent restrictions put in place to curb the spread of the epidemic. While this has disrupted regular in-person practice sites at parks and community centers, it hasn’t stopped people from learning Falun Dafa. With the workshops running online, Yang found that there haven’t just been local attendees participating but even international ones.

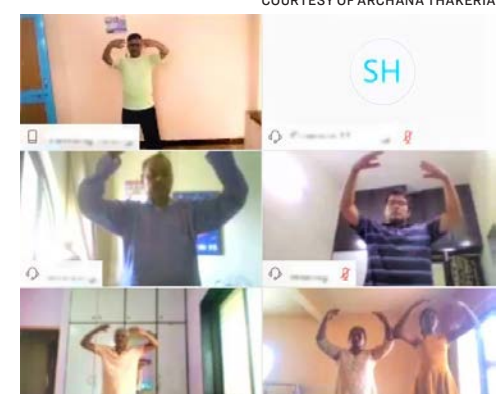
“After we moved online, there were also people attending from other countries, like Spain,” Yang said.

Meanwhile, in Australia, a 29-year-old entrepreneur who has been practicing Falun Dafa since 2009 decided to run an online class via a Facebook Live session. Amy Duncan, who used to suffer from anxiety until she started learning the practice, said that because of COVID-19, she couldn’t conduct the in-person sessions, so she opted for the online classes.

“I want to give people who might be interested in learning Falun Dafa the op-



A child learning the second set of Falun Dafa exercises via a video-conferencing app.



A screenshot of attendees learning the second set of Falun Dafa exercises via a video-conferencing app.



Sumaya Hazarika practicing the fifth exercise of Falun Gong.

portunity to benefit from the practice as I have,” Duncan said.

In India, Falun Dafa adherents have held live online sessions of the workshop through video conferencing apps since the country went under lockdown in late March.

“I found video conference apps a convenient way to connect with people who are interested in learning the practice,” Archana Thakeria, coordinator of the workshops in India, said.



Falun Dafa practitioners meditating in New York's Central Park on May 10, 2014.

**Falun Dafa is practiced all over the world by more than 100 million people from all walks of life.**

Though the lockdown has prevented people from meeting in person, Thakeria discovered that it was also a blessing in disguise as the whole situation “opened new ways of meeting through online platforms and learning new things.” She said the use of technology has also allowed her and other Falun Dafa practitioners to collaborate effectively, “irrespective of the distance.”

**The Meditation Classes**

Duncan, who runs an online health, wellness, and mindset-coaching business, “Mindset for Health,” has conducted the workshops single-handedly by holding five sessions over five consecutive days. She promoted the sessions on her personal Facebook page and also on a Facebook group called “Meditating Together During Quarantine,” which was created around the time when the virus outbreak began.

Hosting any live training sessions requires keeping track of the queries raised by the learners. Thakeria, who was responsible for organizing the practice session, enlisted the help of Sumaya Hazarika, a young fashion model and Falun Dafa adherent.

Given her outgoing professional lifestyle, Hazarika said she understands very well how difficult the current period of isolation can be for people stuck at home for an extended period of time. The fashion model, who has appeared in editorial shoots for fashion magazines such as Harper’s Bazaar and Vogue, was quick to jump in to help and later found that it benefited her, too.

“Falun Dafa meditation practice is truly an antidote to deal with stress and anxiety,” Hazarika said. “Many people were curious about [Falun Dafa’s] origins, as no one had ever heard of it. There was also a lot of them who were curious about the postures and the reason behind them.”

In India, a special workshop was organized for teenagers and young children; the classes for youngsters were customized keeping their interests in mind.

“We did a few interesting things such as teaching paper lotus origami and narrating Lotus fairy tales to kids to teach them the importance of moral values,” Thakeria said, adding that the kids loved the workshop and some even asked their parents to join.

Shreya, a 12-year-old girl from Karnataka, a state in southwest India, decided to join the workshop after hearing about it from her uncle who had benefited from learning the practice. Since learning the exercises, Shreya has been doing them regularly and has found it “very beneficial.”

“My mind was calm and peaceful,” Shreya said.

A vice principal of a Montessori School in Kathmandu, Nepal, had a similar experience. Kalpana Lohani, 32, who chanced upon a post related to Falun Dafa on her Facebook timeline one day, was curious about the practice and decided to sign up for the workshop immediately.

“I feel great and fortunate that I came to know about this,” said Lohani. “Now, I do all five exercises every morning. I feel good, calm, and at peace. I sleep better.”

Meanwhile, Duncan’s live sessions had an average attendance of about 25 people each time, consisting mainly of beginners or those who had never heard of Falun Dafa; she said the attendees felt the difference.

“They felt the energy from practicing the Falun Dafa exercises, and another lady mentioned she felt relief from her arthritis,” Duncan said.

Though the online sessions were mainly focused on teaching the exercises, volunteers have also provided additional information and resources for participants that they can continue to learn at home. Meanwhile, others have also been following up with the attendees after the workshops.

“After attending online workshops, a few participants wanted to learn the Falun Dafa exercises on a regular basis. For them we thought of organizing online exercise practice daily,” said Yuvraj Telang, a volunteer who was enlisted by Thakeria to help with followups.

**An Inner Moral Compass**

As more countries begin to lift restrictions, Yang and many Falun Dafa practitioners are gradually returning to parks to continue practicing the exercises and teach those who are interested to learn it in person. While Duncan might plan to hold more online sessions in the future depending on the pandemic conditions, Thakeria and her team of volunteers are not stopping the online weekend workshops any time soon.

Regardless of whether the workshops will be conducted in person or online, these volunteers hope that those who learn the practice will be able to benefit from it during these uncertain times.

“I gained insight into the meaning of existence, and now better understand how to best navigate my life,” Duncan said, adding that she has once wanted to “fix the world,” but later realized that she had been going down the wrong path.

“I realized that before I could fix the world, I needed to fix myself, and that is the only thing I am truly responsible for and in control of is myself,” Duncan said.

“The most important thing for me to do is to focus on my own conduct and character and be a positive influence for those around me,” she added.

*Epoch Times staff member Dakshita Devnani contributed to this report.*





Remember: Fear is contagious but so is leadership.

CONNECT TO LEAD

# Attunement to Change

As situations develop, so must our approach

SCOTT MANN

In January 2010, we were losing the war in Afghanistan. We needed a new strategy. The entire coalition, including Special Forces, had been working to project power out into the most rural areas, but we needed an approach that would put our Green Berets back into the villages, living and working among the local populations. It was a major pivot, almost a decade into the war, but it was a pivot that had to be made. We noticed the change in our arena, took stock of it, and pivoted into a strategy called "Village Stability Operations."

It was an inflection point in a long journey, but it was our attunement to change that allowed us to make that critical pivot. There's nothing unique about what I just described. Yes, we were in combat, but having the mindset of noticing what's happening in your arena and making adjustments based on that change is a universal singular. That's something that all leaders from all walks of life have to do. In special operations, we have imperatives. These are the guidelines that move us through complexity, crisis, and ambiguity; the same things that you're facing now in thick of this pandemic.

The No. 1 imperative that we live by is understanding our operational environment. In other words, it's the mindset of paying attention to your arena, and continually asking yourself, "What has changed?" Once re-attuned to our arena, we have to continue to navigate the human terrain toward our goals. Whether it's rural Afghanistan or Main Street America, you have to understand that the way we get through rough times is through human connection. Humans are meaning-seeking, emotional, social creatures. The organizations that stay connected in these tough times are

the ones that will come out more relevant on the other side. They're the ones that will make the right pivots and redefine themselves organizationally, to not just survive, but thrive in spite of change. Human connection makes you the most relevant, but how do you maintain that mindset that values re-attunement and human connection in spite of this new environment? Start by asking yourself some questions. What is the new time horizon that you're in right now? It's not the same as it was when this pandemic first began. There was a 10-week period of pure crisis management; it was chaos. The arena is different. With that in mind, what happened over the last nine weeks? We went through crisis, anxiety, people got sick, and human beings, as a whole, went through a lot. Your employees changed, your clients changed, and you changed. Everyone has gone through a testing period, and we've come out different, changed. We have to ask ourselves, how has the human terrain changed? How has this changed you and the relevant people in your life? How has it changed your clients? How has it changed your associates? What's happening right now? Take stock of it, write it down, get it on the whiteboard with your team, and sort out the facts that are known, and the assumptions that you need to make. That will allow you to continue planning and moving forward. Then, what are the opportunities and pitfalls? What are the opportunities based on where we've been and what is happening right now? What are the pitfalls that can trip you up and block those opportunities? Go back and review your goals. What is the vision? Is it still relevant like it was 10 weeks ago? Get clear on that vision and ask, "What can I control and what can I not control?" We have to continually re-attune when our

environment changes. Where is your organization going? Include your team on this. What's your purpose? Where do you want to be right now through Labor Day and beyond? It's important that we define those questions, because as Simon Sinek says, people buy why you do it, not what you do—especially during times of crisis. **The organizations that stay connected in these tough times are the ones that will come out more relevant on the other side.** There's a whole host of new challenges that we're facing, both locally and globally, and we must adopt the right mindset and start asking these questions. This will be the baseline of what you build, going into this new time horizon of human connections, in spite of the new normal. Most of your competitors won't do this. They'll keep reacting to their arena in real-time and not re-attuning. This is a serious competitive advantage for you. It's the mindset of human connection, not social distancing, that is going to get us through this new arena, and it's you that's going to lead us out of it. Remember: fear is contagious, but so is leadership. *Scott Mann is a former Green Beret who specialized in unconventional, high-impact missions and relationship building. He's 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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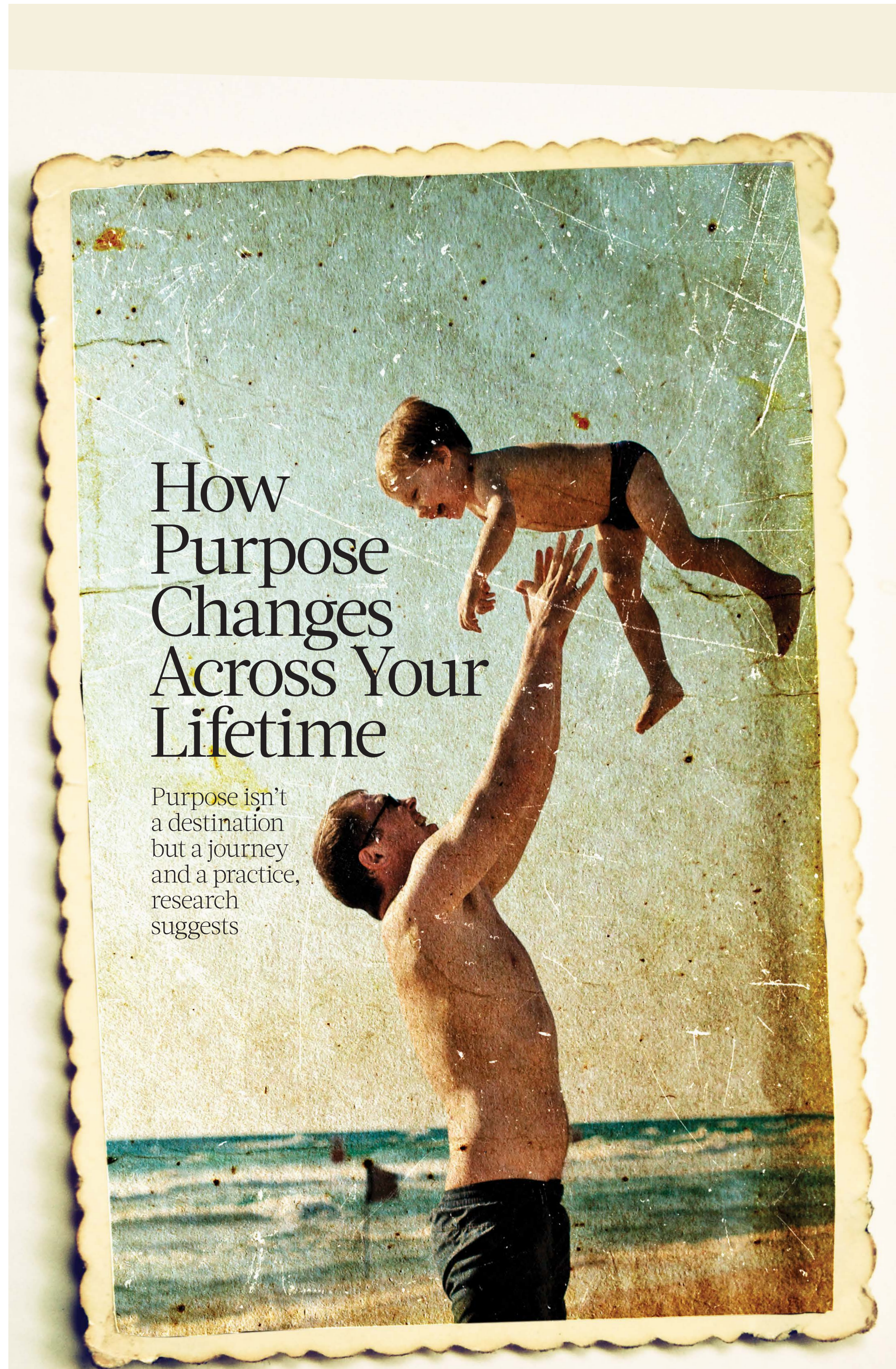
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# How Purpose Changes Across Your Lifetime

Purpose isn't a destination but a journey and a practice, research suggests

KIRA M. NEWMAN

Purpose is the stuff of inspirational posters and motivational speeches. When we find our purpose, they say, we'll know what we are meant to do in life. The path will be laid out before us, and our job will be to keep following that vision with unwavering commitment. But is this really what purpose looks like? Alongside the self-help hype is a

body of research on purpose across the lifespan, reaching back more than 30 years. Following people as they grapple with their identity as teens, settle into the responsibilities of adulthood, and make the shift to retirement, this research paints a more complicated picture of purpose—but a hopeful one, too. Here's the upshot: We don't have to worry about finding our one true purpose; we can find purpose in different areas of life.

Our sense of purpose evolves as we age and our circumstances change.

In fact, purpose isn't something we find at all. It's something we can cultivate through deliberate action and reflection, and it will naturally wax and wane throughout our lives. Like happiness, purpose isn't a destination, but a journey and a practice. That means it's accessible at any age, if we're willing to explore what matters to us and what kind of person we want to be—and act to become that person.

Continued on Page 10



## ECONOMIC WARFARE CORPORATE CYBER ATTACKS INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY THEFT

“

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# How Purpose Changes Across Your Lifetime

Purpose isn't a destination but a journey and a practice, research suggests

Continued from Page 9

This “is a project that endures across the lifespan,” as purpose expert Kendall Bronk and her colleagues wrote in a 2009 paper. This research suggests that if we're able to revisit and renew our sense of purpose as we navigate milestones and transitions, we can look forward to more satisfying, meaningful lives.

### Teens: Seeking Purpose

A purpose in life isn't just any big goal that we pursue. According to researchers, purpose is a long-term aim that is meaningful to the self—but goes beyond the self, aiming to make a difference to the broader world. We might find purpose in fighting poverty, creating art, or making people's lives better through technology.

That process begins when we're teens, as we explore who we are, what we value, and what we want out of life, says Bronk, an associate professor at Claremont Graduate University. As they try different interests and activities, such as music or volunteering, some teens start to discover paths they want to pursue. Other teens have challenging life experiences, such as a parent being diagnosed with cancer or a shooting in their hometown, that spur them to work on particular causes. Others are inspired by role models who are leading purposeful lives,

from parents to coaches.

Knowing your skills and your interests—and in a larger sense, your identity—seems to be key to pursuing purpose. In a 2011 study, high school and college students answered surveys about their sense of purpose, as well as their sense of identity—how clear they were on the kinds of jobs, values, friendships, politics, religion, and sex roles they would have in life. Researchers found that the more solid their sense of identity, the more purposeful they were. In turn, they were also happier and more hopeful for the future.

A 2012 study by the same researchers had a similar finding, but in the opposite direction—with young people who felt purposeful building a more solid sense of identity over time. “Identity and purpose development are intertwined processes,” wrote Patrick Hill of the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign and Anthony Burrow of Cornell University.

At this age, though, only about 20 percent of teens have a strong sense of purpose in life, according to the work of William Damon, author of “The Path to Purpose” and a professor at Stanford. Damon has spent nearly 20 years studying how people develop purpose in work, family, and civic life.

Other teens have pie-in-the-sky dreams, or fun hobbies, or they're just trying to get through high school. More often, childhood and adoles-

Strong relationships and a positive attitude toward aging help us find purpose in the golden years.



### BECOMING MINIMALIST

## Finding Substance in Nothing

When we clear out space in homes, lives, and minds, we open ourselves to contentment

### CHERYL SMITH

I stood in our son Zach's room, staring at his cleaned-out, nearly empty closet. “The only thing that will be on the floor will be my laundry basket, Mama!” His words were spoken with such pride and excitement, and at that moment, it hit me how grateful I am not only for our minimizing journey but for the timing of it.

I am so thankful we did this while Zach is still living at home with us and that he has learned these hard life lessons alongside us and early in life. He recognizes the worth of uncluttered, unencumbered living, and he understands the enormous value to be found in the coveted realm of something called white space.

Who could have even imagined, just a few years ago, that Zach's closet would be so empty?

If you could have seen the piles of toys in his previous closet, you would have seen that they literally spanned the full



JEFFREY LIN/UNSPASH

Our teenage years are a time to try different interests and discover paths we want to pursue.

cence seem to be the time when the building blocks of purpose are established, but we're still exploring what we want out of life.

### Adults: Busy With Purpose

According to Damon, most people who find purpose do so in their 20s and 30s. That's when we tend to start building a career and a family—both of which are major sources of purpose during adulthood, along with religion and volunteering.

In the family realm, we may find a deep sense of purpose from raising children, as well as taking care of aging parents. At work, we might feel fulfilled in supporting our coworkers, making a difference in the organization, or contributing to society, Damon writes. When education professional Paul LeBuffe found out that he was raising a special-needs child, it was a turning point for his family and his career—and his sense of purpose. Since then, he has been working to promote resilience in children and adults, and within his own family. Working in that field means he's always learning things he can apply to his own life, which helps give him a sense of balance.

While finding purpose can feel like an exciting adventure for young people, who might take gap years or try interesting electives in college, purpose becomes more urgent for adults.

In a 2009 study, Bronk and her colleagues surveyed people of different age groups, including nearly 400 young people (in their teens and early 20s) and more than 400 adults (around age 35). When they were searching for purpose, young people were more satisfied with life—but this wasn't true of adults. In fact, the more they were still actively seeking purpose, the less satisfied they were. The researchers surmise that this comes down to cultural norms and the expectations adults have for themselves.

“In our culture we expect young people to explore what matters most to them, but by midlife, we expect them to have sorted this out,” Bronk and her colleagues write.

At some age, lacking in purpose becomes unpleasant—but Bronk points out that having purpose isn't always a picnic, either. Going after a big, long-term goal can be stressful and discouraging; as anyone who has raised a child knows, things that bring us meaning don't always bring us day-to-day fun and good cheer.

While there may be struggles, though, people who have that sense of direction and purpose do ultimately

tend to have more satisfying, healthier, and even longer lives.

### A Changing Purpose

While purpose tends to be highest in adulthood, old age can come with a diminishing sense of purpose and direction. In one survey of people ages 50–92, only 30 percent reported feeling purposeful.

The causes aren't too surprising. Two of the biggest sources of purpose for adults, work and family, take a major hit when we retire and when kids leave home. Suddenly, we wake up to days that aren't structured by meetings and deadlines, by soccer games and home-work help. It can feel like the things that defined us—our very identity—are slipping away. On top of all that, nagging health problems can make it physically harder to stay involved with activities and people that might keep us feeling engaged.

## Knowing your skills and your interests— and in a larger sense, your identity—seems to be key to pursuing purpose.

Gerontologist and AgeWave founder Ken Dychtwald sees a pattern in which society doesn't recognize the value and wisdom of older people, writing them off as feeble or irrelevant, and elders don't always put in the work to learn new technology and connect with younger people. While society might be telling them to relax and enjoy their golden years, he says, many older adults just feel adrift.

Not everyone has this experience, of course. People who have strong relationships and a positive attitude toward aging tend to fare better. In one study, researchers interviewed those who were able to maintain or increase their sense of purpose over the decade. These individuals often turned their efforts inward to become better human beings, learn new skills, or tackle long-held emotional struggles. As Damon explains, the pause of retirement and an empty nest can be an invitation to introspection, in ways that weren't possible in our chaotic midlives, and a reconnection with the things that truly matter.

John Leland, a New York Times re-

porter, had the opportunity to follow six New Yorkers over 85 for a year and get an intimate glimpse into their lives. They became his friends, he says, and their stories were featured in his book about happiness. He observes that the older adults who held on to a sense of purpose thrived because of their flexibility. They rolled with the punches as their lives changed and evolved, and they remained open to new experiences.

“Those who are able to understand their roles as constantly changing, constantly evolving—it's a story that they're still writing—are able to deal with the ups and downs that we all confront better than people who see themselves as fixed in one point,” he said.

In many ways, the pursuit of purpose as an older adult looks a lot like it does for teens. Marc Freedman, the founder of the generation-connecting organization Encore.org, sees this parallel, too: Instead of internships, Encore.org offers fellowships in which older people spend up to a year working in nonprofits, foundations, and other social-sector organizations. The experience is designed to help them find an “encore career,” a purposeful activity that serves the greater good and contributes to the world they'll leave behind.

Gary Maxworthy, who won Encore.org's Purpose Prize in 2007, was 56 when his wife died from cancer. After more than three decades in food distribution, he wanted to give back. He started volunteering at a food bank, where he quickly noticed a big problem and a big opportunity: Growers were having to send lots of “imperfect” produce to landfills, because they couldn't sell it, and accepting fresh produce was too difficult for food banks. He created Farm to Family to solve that problem and ensure that fresh fruit and vegetables make it to families in need.

Other Encore.org fellows include retired doctors caring for underserved patients and retired tech company executives helping to improve online government services. Meanwhile, organizations such as Stanford's Advanced Leadership Institute and the Modern Elder Academy offer college-like experiences for older adults looking for a fresh start.

In Freedman's experience, very few of us will wake up one day with a totally new purpose in life. Instead, he observes people draw on the skills, knowledge, and values they've cultivated over a lifetime to start a new chapter.

That's good news, because it means

the building blocks of purpose are already within us when we reach maturity.

### The Practice of Purpose

Years ago, Bronk interviewed young people about their sense of purpose, hoping to gain some insight into how it developed. Afterward, she was surprised to hear how much the participants enjoyed the conversation. In fact, she and her team discovered that talking with young people about the things that mattered to them actually increased their sense of purpose in life—an outcome the researchers hadn't even been looking for.

That's partly why Bronk believes, deep down, that everyone has a purpose, even if they don't realize it or know what it is yet.

“We all have things that we care about, we all have special talents that we can apply to make a meaningful difference in the world around us,” she said. Other researchers agree that you can have a sense of purpose even if you can't write it down in a simple sentence: “My purpose is ...”

As we've seen, we can have multiple purposes that rise and fall in importance over our lifetime, as schedules are juggled and priorities shift. When we face transitions, whether it's changing careers, going through divorce or illness, or hitting a milestone birthday, we may be prompted to slow down, reflect, and reprioritize.

In other words, purpose is a constant practice—which is something Leland took away from his time with New York's “oldest old.”

“They believed that purpose was something you created, not something you sought, and it would be something that you have to keep creating,” Leland reflected. “I think they would say that happiness would be the same thing. It's something that you have within you, and you have to tap it and recognize it and cultivate it rather than waiting for it to come your way.”

*This article is part of a GGSC initiative on “Finding Purpose Across the Lifespan,” supported by the John Templeton Foundation. In a series of articles, podcast episodes, and other resources, we'll be exploring why and how to deepen your sense of purpose at different stages of life.*

*Kira M. Newman is the managing editor at the Greater Good Science Center. This article was originally published on the Greater Good online magazine.*

length from floor to ceiling. His stuffed animals' crate was so packed, some of those animals had not seen the light of day in a very long time.

The majority of those toys have now made their way into the hands of countless children over the past few years, and Zach's joy over having a near-empty closet is clear demonstration of how far we've come.

Looking back, I realize that he has always been a person with few wants, and having too many choices has been distressing to him. Though our intentions were good in “blessing” him with more than he needed, it turns out that we weren't doing him any favors.

He seems greatly relieved to be rid of the excess, and he showed that sparsely filled closet off to me like a medal of honor.

Seeing Zach's reaction to his near-empty closet and thinking about how our minimizing journey has trans-



Having days left open, with nothing scheduled, allows for reflection or a spontaneous adventure.

formed our family's perspective made me realize that there is a great substance to be found in nothing.

At first, it sounds like a contradiction, but carving out blocks of nothingness in every part of our lives has relieved enormous amounts of stress, decision fatigue, and overwhelm. This kind of reward is filled with immeasurable substance.

### Finding Substance in Nothing

Here are some of the ways we have found substance in the space left behind.

#### 1. Physical Possessions

There was a time before our minimizing journey that we felt every empty space should be occupied in our home. If the space was there, why not fill it up? It felt incomplete to “waste” space.

Now, we stand back with a sense of deep fulfillment to see space that is occupied with nothing. Closet shelves with

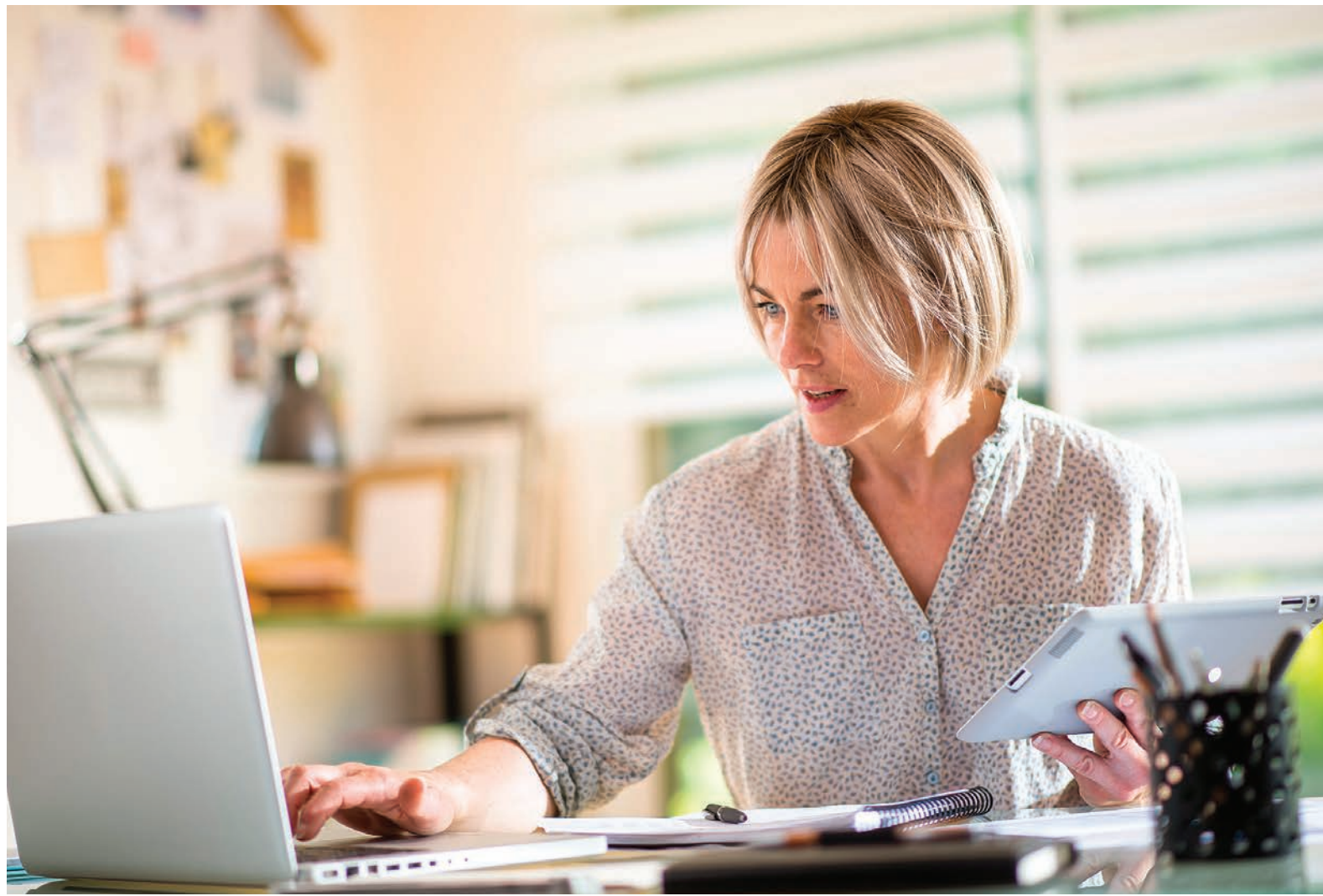
nothing that resembles clutter, drawers filled with nothing except what is used and needed, walls with spans of nothing except photos and things we love, kitchen cupboards with nothing except what we reach for and use, cleared-off countertops and tabletops with nothing weighing them down, entire sections of rooms with nothing but empty space—each time I spot one of these cleared spaces in our home, I feel a sense of peace that we had let go of so much and replaced it with nothing.

#### 2. Time

Before we sold our home, paid off all our debt, and released so much of what we “owned,” my husband had to work overtime every week just to keep us afloat. He felt guilty over how fast Zach was growing up—and how much of it he missed—due to our indebtedness.

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JACK FROG/SHUTTERSTOCK

## WISE HABITS

# Essential, Meaningful Productivity

Do what you truly need to do—and with the energy the task deserves

## LEO BABAUTA

Being productive should be about more than checking off a task list, it should be about doing meaningful, essential work.

I don't care about being efficient and productive just to be a better person, to get more done, or to be more awesome. Cranking out more stuff for productivity's sake doesn't interest me the way it used to.

Today, I care about productivity only as it affects my mission.

I'm on a mission to change the world, and if I can be more focused, effective, and powerful as I do that—then it serves the mission.

What doesn't serve the mission is burning myself out. I'm in this for the long haul, and rest and self-care are incredibly important.

I also don't want to just have my nose to the grindstone. I care about the experience I'm having as I'm on my mission—it needs to be powerful, joyful, meaningful. I'm not just cranking widgets.

With that context in mind, let's look at what is essential to this kind of productivity—what I think of as essential, meaningful productivity.

**Essential**

You focus on what's essential, not just busywork, not what feels urgent, not on what other people are asking you for,

though what's essential might be some of all three of those. This should be essential for your mission or something incredibly important to you, like your health, loved ones, etc. Work on what matters. This means getting clear every day on what's essential to you.

**Meaningful**

This should not just feel like the next thing on your task list—it should feel like the most meaningful thing on your task list. You might even open yourself up to feeling like this is your purpose, your joy. This is serving someone out of love, with devotion. It's like when I made dinner for my wife and kids last night—this was an act of nourishing them, of taking care of them, of loving them. Writing this post feels like that for me. In fact, we can bring that kind of meaning to most tasks, if we practice this kind of devotion.

**Productive**

In this mode of work, I'm focused. I don't turn away from difficulty, discomfort, or uncertainty. I don't run to distractions or easier tasks. It's important, it's meaningful, it's an act of love—and the people I'm serving are worth this discomfort. I clear away distractions, and go into full-screen mode, giving this my entire focus.

As you can see, these three parts overlap quite a bit. Each word is really describing a different aspect of the same thing, but each is useful.

So how do you do this? Let's look at the keys to making this happen.

**The Keys to Essential Meaningful Productivity**

You can actually do this in an infinite number of ways, but here are some elements I've found to be important in my own exploration:

**Work on what matters.** Do you know your most important tasks for today? For the week? For the month? For your mission or life? This is something to get clear on.

We don't always have to be perfect, but the idea is to know what's essential and to focus on that more of the time.

**Structure sessions.** Most of us just go through the day doing random things at random times, with no structure. Some people structure their days so rigidly that there's no room for spontaneity or rest. The middle way, I've found, is to create structured sessions: 30 minutes for working on an essential task, for example. Or perhaps it is 90 minutes for writing, or 15 minutes to process your inbox or messages.

Here are two ideas to structure your sessions. Do your most important task for 60 to 90 minutes at the start of every day. First thing. Second, do focused Pomodoro sessions (named after a Pomodoro kitchen timer) in which you do 25 minutes of focus on one task six times throughout the day, every day.

**Pour yourself into it.** Put meaning and joy into each session. OK, you're starting a session. Make this a meaningful session—first, by reminding yourself why this is meaningful to you. Second, by pouring yourself into it fully, as if this were the most important thing in the universe. The only thing in the universe.

**Let yourself play.** Find joy in what you do. Strive to tune in and feel alive as you complete your work sessions.

**Turn toward instead of away.** You will feel uncertainty, fear, or discomfort around some of your most important tasks. That's what I call "groundlessness"—the uncertainty of not having solid ground under your feet. Instead of turning away, turn toward this task. Stay with the groundlessness, mindfully. Be present with the fear and uncertainty, but don't let it force you to exit. Let it be an act of love and devotion to stay in the middle of the groundlessness as you do the task.

**Put smaller things into focused sessions.** It might be true that few individual emails or messages or errands are going to be essential—so under the guidelines above, you might think you should never answer those emails or messages, never do the errands. But doing errands, paying bills, answering emails—these are all important at some level. The juggernaut of your mission will grind to a halt if you never maintain the engine. So the answer is to batch less important (but still necessary) tasks into focused sessions. Spend 15 to 20 minutes processing email, for example. These batch sessions become essential.

There are other ways to work with these ideas. For example, you might spend half a day, or an entire week, focused entirely on something really essential. You might structure your day so that you are doing certain tasks at certain times—meditate and write in the morning, messages, and meetings and workouts in the afternoons, for example. But none of that is essential to the approach.

The main idea is to have structured sessions for essential tasks, turn toward the groundlessness, and pour yourself into it with meaning and joy. It's that simple.

*Leo Babauta is the author of six books, the writer of "Zen Habits," a blog with more than 2 million subscribers, and the creator of several online programs to help you master your habits. Visit ZenHabits.net*

## BECOMING MINIMALIST

# Finding Substance in Nothing

When we clear out space in homes, lives, and minds, we open ourselves to contentment

Continued from Page 11

Now that we don't owe a cent, our income needs have been drastically reduced, and my husband doesn't have to work so much. Nothing owed equals less work and more substance-filled time together.

It's OK to fill your calendar days with nothing. "Nothing" allows for a spontaneous adventure. "Nothing" paves the way for the seizing of golden opportunities. "Nothing" grants permission to take the day off guilt-free and indulge in family walks and heart-to-heart talks. There is a wonderful freedom to be found in not filling every calendar block with busyness and intentionally filling them with nothing.

*Cheryl Smith blogs at Biblical Minimalism.com. Her family sold their home, released 90 percent of their physical possessions, got out of debt, and now share their story and their Christian faith on their blog. Her new book, "Biblical Minimalism," is now available. In it, she approaches minimalism from a biblical perspective. This article was republished from BecomingMinimalist.com*

**3. Noise**

When is the last time you walked outside at night and listened to the sounds of nothing? These days, I do that often. I make a cup of something warm, open our kitchen door, walk out on to our balcony, and I stand there in the silence.

In that silence, I begin to hear the sound of my own thoughts. I touch base with who I am, contemplating the day that just passed, and make up my mind to be still.

All-day long, the noise and chaos of our modern world invades our minds and erodes our sense of calm. It is easy to lose ourselves in this bombardment and succumb to the mindset that we have no choice but to participate in the madness. Shutting off the noise enables us to regroup and re-align our perspective and priorities. Silence is healing. Mental clarity and tranquility can come when we remove the clamoring noise and substitute it with nothing.

**4. Contentment**

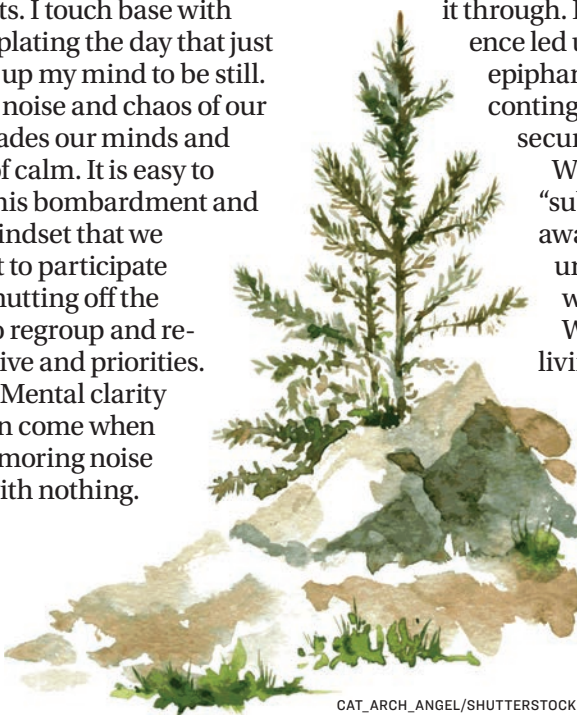
Following the outsourcing of my husband's job, our fam-

ily walked through a 21-month stretch of health issues and unemployment. After depleting our resources and every other back-up plan just to survive, we faced a whole new definition of "nothing."

The fear and struggle were real. In those lean moments of severe testing, we wondered how we would make it through. But this experience led us to an invaluable epiphany: Contentment is not contingent upon money, job security, or things.

When everything else of "substance" was stripped away, standing in that uncertain, scary place, we still had each other. We were alive, and living this beautiful life together. This is a priceless gift.

Whether we prosper or have nothing, we have much to be grateful for, and we have everything we need. In this, true substance lies.



CAT\_ARCH\_ANGEL/SHUTTERSTOCK

# States Allow Nursing Home Visits as Residents Suffer in Severe Isolation

## JUDITH GRAHAM

States across the country are beginning to roll back heart-wrenching policies instituted when the COVID-19 pandemic began and will allow in-person visits at nursing homes and assisted living centers, offering relief to frustrated families.

For the most part, visitors are required to stay outside and meet relatives in gardens or on patios where they stay at least six feet apart, supervised by a staff member. Appointments are scheduled in advance and masks are mandated, and only one or two visitors are permitted at a time.

“It's time to open things up some more: We've all been operating under a sense of being under house arrest.”

*James Gonzalez, CEO of Broadway House*

Before these get-togethers, visitors get temperature checks and answer screening questions to assess their health. Hugs or other physical contact aren't allowed. If residents or staff at a facility develop new cases of COVID-19, visitation isn't permitted.

As of July 7, 26 states and the District of Columbia had given the go-ahead to nursing home visits under these circumstances, according to LeadingAge, an association of long-term care providers. Two weeks earlier, the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services clarified federal guidance on reopening nursing homes to visitors.

Eighteen states and the District of Columbia were similarly planning to allow visits at assisted living centers.

Visitation policies may change, however, if state officials become concerned about a rise in COVID-19 cases. And individual facilities aren't obligated to open up to families—even when a state says they can do so.

Relaxing restrictions is not without risks. Frail older adults in long-term care are exceptionally vulnerable to COVID-19. According to various estimates, 40 percent to 45 percent of COVID-related deaths have occurred in these facilities.

But anguished families say loved ones are suffering too much, mentally and physically, after nearly four months in isolation. Since nursing homes and assisted living centers closed to visitors in mid-March, under guidance from federal health authorities, older adults have been mostly confined to their rooms, with minimal human interaction.

The goal was to protect residents from COVID-19 as the pandemic began to escalate. But the virus entered facilities nonetheless as staffers came and went. And now, families argue, the harms of isolation exceed potential benefits.

"My mother stopped eating around the middle of April—now she just picks at her food," said Marlisa Mills of Asheville, North

Carolina. "Every week, she becomes more delusional." Mills's mother, 95, has dementia and lives in a nearby nursing home that remains closed to visitors.

Residents "are dying of broken hearts and neglect," said Lelia Sizemore, whose 84-year-old father's health deteriorated precipitously after her mother stopped her daily visits to his Dayton, Ohio, nursing home in early March.

Diagnosed with severe dementia, blind and unable to feed himself, Sizemore's father lost more than 10 pounds in two months and succumbed to respiratory failure on May 24. Even at the end, the nursing home refused her mother's requests to see him in person. "I didn't even get to say goodbye," sobbed Sizemore, who lives in Oregon and last saw her father in July 2019.

Ohio began allowing visitors at assisted living centers on June 8 and will permit outdoor get-togethers at nursing homes as of July 20.

New Jersey has the second-highest number of COVID deaths in the country. On June 19, the state's health commissioner announced that all long-term care facilities could accept visitors outdoors—just in time for Father's Day.

Broadway House for Continuing Care, a Newark facility, quickly notified families and arranged to pitch a tent with chairs and tables underneath in a garden area.

"It's time to open things up some more: We've all been operating under a sense of being under house arrest," said James Gonzalez, chief executive officer of Broadway House and chairman of the board of the Health Care Association of New Jersey.

With weekly tests, 10 residents and 26 staffers at Broadway House have learned they had COVID-19. One resident has died since the outbreak began.

"Are we worried about visitors bringing the virus? Yes, but I think we can manage that," Gonzalez said. "We're going to have to take this day by day."

On Father's Day, Raul Lugo arrived at Broadway House to visit his grandmother, Rosa Perez, 89, who raised him after his mother died when he was an infant. He hadn't seen Perez, who had contracted COVID-19 and spent two months in the hospital, since the end of March. Because Perez is frail and it was extremely hot, they met in the facility's vestibule.

"She told me she missed me and that she loves me. I told her I love her back," said Lugo, a truck driver. "It was 1,000 times better seeing her in person than talking to her on the phone. You can't compare it. It was awesome."

Complete Care Management, which operates 16 nursing homes in New Jersey, opened all its facilities to visitors within a week of the announcement of the state's new policy.

Complete Care asks visitors to sign consent forms indicating they understand the risks and will let staffers know if they become ill. No one is allowed to bring food or enter the buildings, even to use the restrooms. For the time being, get-togethers are short—no more than 15 minutes and no more than two visitors at a time.

"Really, the only burdensome part of it is having staff available to bring residents outside, wait with them and bring them back

in," said Efraim Siegfried, Complete Care's chief executive officer. "If we do everything right, I don't see a negative outcome. And to see how excited people are, how happy they are, it's a beautiful thing."

Before the pandemic, Patricia Tietjen, 72, visited her husband of 52 years, Robert, who has dementia, every day at Complete Care at Green Acres in Toms River, New Jersey. Though staffers tried to arrange FaceTime visits when the home closed to visitors, "it was hard because he started never awake—he started sleeping all the time—and he can't speak anymore," Tietjen said.

Robert became ill with COVID-19 in April. Although he survived that, he recently entered hospice care and Tietjen has twice been let into the facility because he is near the end of his life. "It was extremely emotional," she said, breaking into tears.

Although federal guidance says visitors should be permitted inside long-term care facilities at the end of life, this isn't happening as often as it should, said Lori Smetanka, executive director of the National Consumer Voice for Quality Long-Term Care, an advocacy group.

She wants family visitation policies to be mandatory, not optional. As it stands, facility administrators retain considerable discretion over when and whether to offer visits because states are issuing recommendations only.

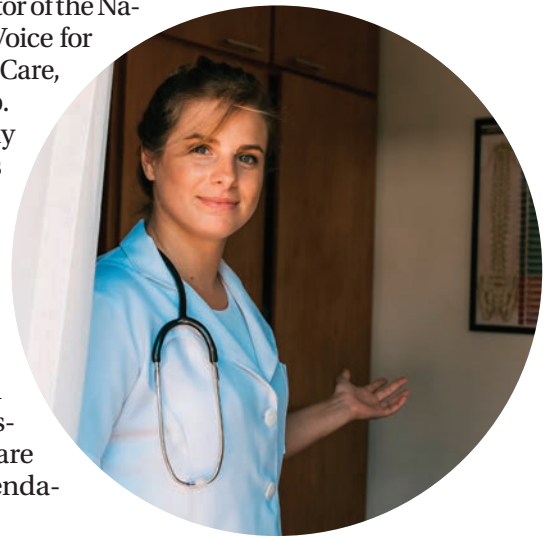
Smetanka's organization has also begun a campaign, Visitation Saves Lives, calling for one "essential support person" to be named for every nursing home or assisted living resident, not just those who are dying. This person should have the right to go into the facility as long as he or she wears personal protective equipment, follows infection control protocols, and interacts only with his or her loved one.

Not doing so is "inhumane and cruel" punishment for more than 2 million people—most of them older adults—living in "solitary confinement conditions," said Tony Chicotel, a staff attorney at California Advocates for Nursing Home Reform, a campaign partner.

*Judith Graham is a contributing columnist for Kaiser Health News, which originally published this article. KHN's coverage of these topics is supported by The John A. Hartford Foundation, Gordon and Betty Moore Foundation, and The SCAN Foundation.*



▼ Social isolation is especially severe for elderly people in nursing homes who have been kept in virtual solitary confinement.



▼ Nursing home staff have tried to facilitate video visits but these can be difficult to facilitate.

ALL PHOTOS BY SHUTTERSTOCK



Families have seen loved ones quickly decline as lockdown conditions drag on.



# Everything You (Actually) Need to Know About Oils

Learn the different properties, flavors, and nutritional benefits of oils to use them fully

LISA ROTH COLLINS

The oils aisle at the grocery store can be a bit overwhelming. With smoke points, refined, and unrefined, it can be hard to decide between olive, avocado, and coconut—just to name a few. Each oil has unique health benefits, flavors, and uses. Understanding these will help you decide which oil works best for your diet and purposes.

## What Is the Smoke Point?

The smoke point is the highest temperature oil can reach before it starts to burn. Once it burns, it denatures the oil and causes it to lose enzymes and other nutrients. Ingesting burnt oil creates free radicals in our body which can result in inflammation and signs of aging. It's important to select the right oil for the job, based on its smoke point and how you want to use it.

## Refined Versus Unrefined Oils

The refining process can drastically change the oil. Canola oil, for example, comes refined and unrefined. Refined canola oil has a smoke point of 400 F, but chemicals such as bleach or hexane are used to extract the oil. Most canola grown in North America is genetically modified. Organic, unrefined canola oil has a smoke point of 200 F, and steam is used to extract the oil. It's also free of GMOs.

## Types of Oils and How to Use Them

### Avocado Oil

Avocado oil is made from the fleshy part of

Oils with lower temperature smoke points are better for dressings since they can denature with heat.

**Olive oil has a compound called oleocanthal that mimics ibuprofen at reducing inflammation and pain.**



avocados and is now being used in products from mayonnaise to potato chips. It's one of the few oils we can eat that doesn't come from a seed.

**Smoke point:** 500 F (one of the highest smoke points for cooking oils)

**How to use:** You can use this versatile oil for everything. You can fry an egg, bake cookies, and stir-fry with it. It's also delicious on salads.

**Health benefits:** We need fat in our diets, and it's important to choose the right oils.

We want "good fat" as opposed to bad fats like trans fats. Avocado oil is high in oleic acid, a monounsaturated fat. Avocado oil promotes healthy blood lipid profiles and enhances the bioavailability of fat-soluble vitamins and phytochemicals from the avocado itself and other fruits and vegetables. It's also good for cardiovascular health, is a great source of vitamin E, and it helps our body absorb nutrients like carotenoids that need fat to help with absorption.

### Camelina Oil

This oil comes from the camelina sativa seed, an ancient oilseed grown in Saskatch-

ewan, Canada. The seed is part of the brassica family—the same family as broccoli, cauliflower, and kale.

**Smoke point:** 475 F

**How to use:** You can use it to roast vegetables, in soups, and drizzled on pizza. Its high smoke point means it's also good for searing fish and topping pasta. It's also cold-pressed, which means the oil isn't heated when it's produced.

**Health benefits:** Camelina oil is high in omega-3s and vitamin E. It contains a unique type of vitamin E called "gamma-tocopherol" that allows the oil to stay stable while cooking.

### Canola Oil

Canola is a popular vegetable oil made from the rapeseed plant. It's used in many packaged products as well as restaurants.

**Smoke point:** 400 F refined, 225 F unrefined

**How to use:** Canola is good to cook and bake with, but as we mentioned above, it's important to purchase organic, unrefined canola oil to avoid chemicals and GMOs.

**Health benefits:** Canola contains omega 3's and oleic acid and is mostly made up of monounsaturated fats.

### Coconut Oil

We love coconut oil and all its many health benefits and uses! Look for oils that are labeled cold-pressed and virgin. If you don't love the smell or taste, you can even get flavorless coconut oil.

**Smoke point:** 350–375 F

**How to use:** Eat it straight from the container with a spoon, put in your shakes, morning coffee or golden milk, or use in baking. It's also delicious on popcorn.

**Health benefits:** Coconut oil is a good type of saturated fat that contains medium-chain triglycerides (MCTs). It is being studied for heart and brain health, it increases our metabolism, and can lower bad cholesterol.

### Olive Oil

Olive oil, also referred to as "liquid gold," is made from olives and comes from different parts of the world such as Greece, Morocco,

Tunisia, Spain, and Portugal. Italy is the largest exporter.

There are many different types of olive oil available at the grocery store: Extra virgin, virgin light, and pure. Stay away from olive oil that says "pure" on the label. It is the lowest quality and could even be mixed with other oils.

Extra virgin is the gold standard. It means there are no defects in the olives used to produce the oil. It is the least processed and contains the most nutrients (antioxidants, polyphenols, tocopherols, etc.). Make sure the oil is cold-pressed, which means it's the least processed. If the oil smells rancid or like crayons, it has gone bad.

**Smoke point:** 350–420°F

**How to use:** Use expensive olive oil for dipping bread, dressings, dips, and cold dishes. Use less expensive olive oil for cooking things like kale chips, but still, make sure it is extra virgin or virgin.

**Health benefits:** It contains antioxidants that help to reduce oxidative stress that can come from those pesky free radicals. It has a compound called oleocanthal that mimics ibuprofen at reducing inflammation and pain, so it's great for people who suffer from painful conditions such as arthritis.

### Sunflower Oil

Sunflower oil is made from sunflower seeds and should be used as a finishing oil since it has one of the lowest smoke points. Sunflower oil can be high in linoleic acid (a polyunsaturated fat) or oleic acid (monounsaturated fat). Polyunsaturated fats can cause inflammation, so look for sunflower oil that's high oleic like this one from Dr. Mercola that contains higher amounts of monounsaturated fats.

**Smoke point:** 220°F

**How to use:** This oil is great in dips, topping your cold pasta, or on a bean salad.

**Health benefits:** As long as you get an oil that's high in oleic, the monounsaturated fats make it similar to olive oil—good for your heart, anti-inflammatory, and high in vitamin E.

Lisa Roth Collins is a registered holistic nutritionist and the marketing manager at NaturallySavvy.com, which first published this article.



Hesperidin, a bioflavonoid found in citrus fruits, can help protect against neurodegenerative disease.

## FOOD AS MEDICINE

# Hesperidin: The Citrus Bioflavonoid Powerhouse

You probably haven't heard of this phytonutrient but it's a good idea to eat more of it

Hesperidin, a type of bioflavonoid found in citrus fruits, belongs to the polyphenol family and has long been studied for its anti-inflammatory and vasculoprotective properties. While you might not have heard of it, this powerful flavonoid has many well-researched benefits for a variety of common ailments and diseases.

### Neuroprotective Properties

Preserving neural tissue is important to prevent neurodegenerative diseases such as Parkinson's, Alzheimer's, Huntington's, and multiple sclerosis. Researchers have found that hesperidin has anti-inflammatory and antioxidant properties that improve neural growth, cerebral blood flow, memory, and cognitive function. Furthermore, hesperidin can traverse the blood-brain barrier, a property that makes it an ideal natural therapy in the treatment of neurological diseases.

### 2. Hesperidin Improves Cardiovascular Health

Hesperidin is best known for its protective effects against cardiovascular disease (CVD). Hesperidin improves inflammation, increases endothelial function, protects against cell injury, and may reduce

**Preliminary research suggests that flavonoid-based treatments such as hesperidin are a safe and effective way to reduce the risk of hemorrhoid bleeding by 67 percent and relapse of hemorrhoids by 47 percent.**

obesity, all of which contribute to reducing CVD risk.

Furthermore, hesperidin has been shown to improve platelet function, which plays an important role in wound and cell healing, and modulates lipid metabolism, which may help prevent arterial diseases like atherosclerosis.

### Improved Insulin Resistance

In a study involving diet-induced obesity, researchers demonstrated that hesperidin can improve insulin resistance by down-regulating inflammatory responses.

Inflammation is one of the main hallmarks of insulin resistance and the development of diabetes. Researchers believe that hesperidin's strong anti-inflammatory effects may make it a natural preventative and therapeutic measure in the treatments of these diseases.

### Hypoglycemic Effects

Hesperidin has also been studied for its hypoglycemic effects and guards against high blood sugar by increasing hepatic glycolysis concentration and lowering hepatic gluconeogenesis, making it a potential alternative treatment in the prevention of diabetes and diabetes-induced conditions such as osteoporosis.

### Varicose Veins Treatment

Chronic venous insufficiency (CVI), which often results in varicose veins, is a common condition in which the walls and/or valves of leg veins don't work properly. CVI causes small blood vessels to burst, leaves unsightly marks on the skin and may lead

to blood pooling, leg swelling, tissue damage, and even ulcers. Because CVI is on the rise and risk increases with age, researchers are eager to find non-surgical therapeutic treatments.

Chronic inflammation is the principal cause of varicose veins, and given hesperidin's strong anti-inflammatory effects, it's no surprise that several studies found that oral consumption of this polyphenol or supplements containing hesperidin

or supplements containing hesperidin and diosmin (a synthesized form of hesperidin) could drastically improve varicose vein status and prevent future occurrence.

Furthermore, hesperidin has a strong safety profile, making it an ideal alternative therapy.

**Hesperidin is best known for its protective effects against cardiovascular disease.**

### Reduced Obesity

Obesity is a metabolic disease that has reached epidemic proportions, and researchers are eager to find natural solutions to prevent further onset of obesity-related disorders like diabetes, high blood pressure, and stroke.

Hesperidin's anti-obesity properties have been widely studied, and researchers believe that taking hesperidin can significantly reduce the risk of obesity and obesity-related complications by stimulating the release of appetite-suppressing hormones, reducing cholesterol and triglyceride levels, and improving fatty acid and lipid metabolism.

In one study, hesperidin combined with caffeine decreased abdominal fat when compared to placebo, but researchers believe more studies are needed to determine the exact dosages and bioavailability of this polyphenol before it can be officially released as an anti-obesity supplement.

### Treatment of Hemorrhoids

Hemorrhoids are swollen veins that occur in the anus or rectum and cause pain or bleeding. In a study involving 1,952 patients, supplements containing hesperidin and diosmin drastically reduced hemorrhoid-related symptoms including bleeding, pain, and swelling.

Preliminary research suggests that flavonoid-based treatments such as hesperidin are a safe and effective way to reduce the risk of hemorrhoid bleeding by 67 percent and relapse of hemorrhoids by 47 percent.

### Safety and Efficacy

In addition to its many benefits, researchers have demonstrated that hesperidin is a safe and effective treatment with limited adverse effects. In multiple studies, hesperidin-treated patients experienced no side effects, and in one study, no mutagenic, toxic, or carcinogenic effects were experienced after even 13 weeks of administration.

Furthermore, hesperidin-based therapies are non-accumulative in nature and don't affect liver, renal, or metabolic function even after high or prolonged dosages.

Hesperidin's therapeutic potential is vast, and this review only scratches the surface of what this potent flavonoid can accomplish. To learn more about which common ailments and diseases hesperidin can improve, visit the GreenMedInfo.com's hesperidin research database at <https://GreenMedInfo.com/Substance/Hesperidin>

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# Brains Direct Neurons Like Air Traffic Controllers Direct Planes

Movements of billions of neuron signals require incredible control to make the mind, body function

JEREMIE LEFEBVRE

Air traffic controllers monitor the movements of thousands of flights, taking into account the types of aircraft used and the cargo carried. In order to properly coordinate arrivals and departures, aircraft speeds must be constantly adjusted. Without these navigation directions, chaos could threaten lives in the airspace.

My research in neurophysiology and neuroscience has shown me how the brain faces the same situation as an air traffic controller, but on a completely different scale: It has to manage the incessant traffic of signals that pass between billions of neurons and coordinate their pace constantly.

**Research published in recent years has shown that white matter doesn't only change during development but also later, for example, during learning.**

How does the brain do this? Most of the volume of our brain is occupied by wires called axons, which form a complex network called white matter. Like a maze of airways linking cities around the world, white matter manages communication and coordination between the various areas where populations of neurons process information. These areas are located in different parts of the brain, sometimes close to each other, sometimes far away: this is the principle of distributed computing.

### The Faster, the Better

The control of traffic in the brain is crucial—the faster the information travels through the brain, the more efficiently the different areas of the brain cooperate to allow the proper functioning of memory and other aspects of cognition.

To manage this incessant traffic, specialized cells called oligodendrocytes act as controllers by enveloping the axons with a substance called myelin. This myelin is a lipid (or fat) insulator with a characteristic pale color, hence the name "white matter." It allows the electrical signals of neurons to travel long distances without slowing down or losing intensity. However, myelin also offers an advantage to information passing through white matter: It allows signals to arrive on time, neither too early nor too late.

Today we know that because of its plasticity, the geography of the brain is constantly changing. Research published in recent years has shown that white matter doesn't only change during development but also later, for example, during learning.

### The Rules of Neural Traffic

This type of plasticity had been observed mainly in the synapses of grey matter, which contain numerous cell bodies and relatively few myelinated axons. It has now been shown that the structure of white matter constantly adapts and reorganizes itself. Through this form of plasticity, called adaptive myelination, the structure and properties of white matter are optimized. As

a result, communication between neurons is maintained even when the brain's size, activity, and connections change. In fact, oligodendrocytes can adjust the amount of myelin to speed up or slow down the propagation of signals and maintain stable neuronal trafficking.

But how do white matter and its glial cells adapt to stabilize neuronal traffic and accomplish this incredible coordination challenge?

This question, like many concerning glial cells, is difficult to answer with traditional neuroimaging methods, but it's of primary importance to a better understanding of signals that pass between billions of neurons and coordinate their pace constantly. One example is multiple sclerosis, which causes myelin thinning and leads to systemic disorganization of the flow of information in the brain, causing profound cognitive and motor disorders.

### Coordinated Neuronal Activity

A recent interdisciplinary study provides a better understanding of the rules governing the control of neuronal traffic in white matter. It's important to note that neuron activity—a series of Morse code-like impulses—is not random. Rather, neurons tend to activate in groups and synchronize, generating waves or oscillations called brain rhythms. Researchers believe that in order to communicate with each other, different areas of the brain must be able to align and coordinate these rhythms.

New results obtained from human brain imaging data, combined with mathematical models, show that white matter reorganizes itself to optimize the alignment of these rhythms. To do this, it controls the speed at which these waves propagate through white matter by adjusting the amount of myelin present. Oligodendrocytes, therefore, adapt the conductivity of axons to enable them to respond effectively to changing neuronal traffic demands and orchestrate the alignment between the oscillations present in different parts of the brain. They're real cellular air traffic controllers!

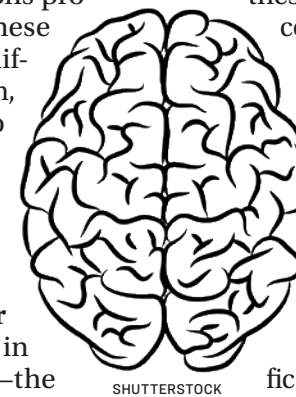
### Even the Sick Brain Manages

Another surprising result is that the plastic properties of white matter also seem to allow the brain to adapt despite the presence of disease or injury. Indeed, it has been shown that white matter can reorganize in the presence of damage to preserve communication and synchronization between neurons, even if connections become either absent or damaged, for example in the presence of cancer.

Some experiments in animals have shown that preventing glial cells from adapting in the presence of injury limits recovery and causes many cognitive and behavioral problems.

The plasticity of white matter appears to be a key element of brain resilience and could, therefore, represent an interesting option for developing new therapeutic approaches, particularly in stroke victims. These new results highlight the importance of glial cells and white matter plasticity in the functioning and flexibility of cognitive processes.

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# High Fat Diet and Antibiotics May Raise Pre-IBD Risk

Rebalancing microbes in the gut a promising treatment for inflammatory bowel disease

NADINE YEHYA

**C**ombining a Western-style high-fat diet with antibiotic use significantly increases the risk of developing pre-inflammatory bowel disease (pre-IBD), according to new research.

The study in *Cell Host and Microbe* suggests that this combination shuts down the energy factories (mitochondria) in cells of the colon lining, leading to gut inflammation.

**Researchers found that all participants who consumed high-fat diet and used antibiotics were at 8.6 times higher risk for having pre-IBD.**

Irritable bowel syndrome (IBS) affects approximately 11 percent of people worldwide. It is characterized by recurring episodes of abdominal pain, bloating, and changes in bowel habits. IBS patients with mucosal inflammation and changes in the gut's microbial composition are considered pre-IBD.

The study included 43 healthy adults and 49 adult patients diagnosed with IBS. The researchers measured the fecal calprotectin, a biomarker for intestinal inflammation, of participants. Elevated levels of fecal calprotectin indicated a pre-IBD condition. The study identified 19 patients with IBS as pre-IBD.

The researchers found that all participants who consumed high-fat diet and used antibiotics were at 8.6 times higher risk for having pre-IBD than those on low-fat diet and no recent history of antibiotic use.

Participants with the highest fat consumption were about 2.8 times more likely to have pre-IBD than those with the lowest fat intake. A history of recent antibiotic usage alone was associated with 3.9 times higher likelihood of having pre-IBD.

"Our study found that a history of antibiotics in individuals consuming a high-fat diet was associated with the greatest risk for pre-IBD," said lead author Andreas Bäuml, professor of medical microbiology and immunology at the University of California-Davis. "Until now, we didn't appreciate how different environmental risk factors can synergize to drive the disease."

Using mouse models, the study also tested the effect of high-fat diet and antibiotics use on the cells in the intestinal lining. It found that high-fat diet and antibiotics cooperate to disrupt the work of the cell's mitochondria, shutting its ability to burn oxygen. This disruption causes reduction in cell's oxygen consumption and leads to oxygen leakage into the gut.

The body's beneficial bacteria thrive in environments lacking oxygen such as the large intestine. Higher oxygen levels in the gut promote bacterial imbalances and inflammation. With the disruption in the gut environment, a vicious cycle of replacing the good bacteria with potentially harmful pro-inflammatory microbes that are more



Standard Western takeout food is often very high fat.

ALL PHOTOS BY SHUTTERSTOCK



Antibiotics must be used appropriately or there is a risk of health problems.

oxygen tolerant begins. This in turn leads to mucosal inflammation linked to pre-IBD conditions.

The study also identified 5-aminosalicylate (mesalazine), a drug that restarts the energy factories in the intestinal lining, as a potential treatment for pre-IBD.

"The best approach to a healthy gut is to get rid of the preferred sustenance of harmful microbes," Lee said. "Our study emphasized the importance of avoiding high-fat food and abuse of antibiotics to avoid gut inflammation."

The National Research Foundation of Korea, USDA/NIFA, and the Public Health Service supported the research.

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