

WEEK 36, 2020

THE EPOCH TIMES

# MIND & BODY

Socializing is more than just a way to spend our leisure time or have a little fun—it's important for our health.

## Why Human Connection Is Good for Your Health

Our social lives are deeply entwined with our overall well-being and healthy longevity **3**

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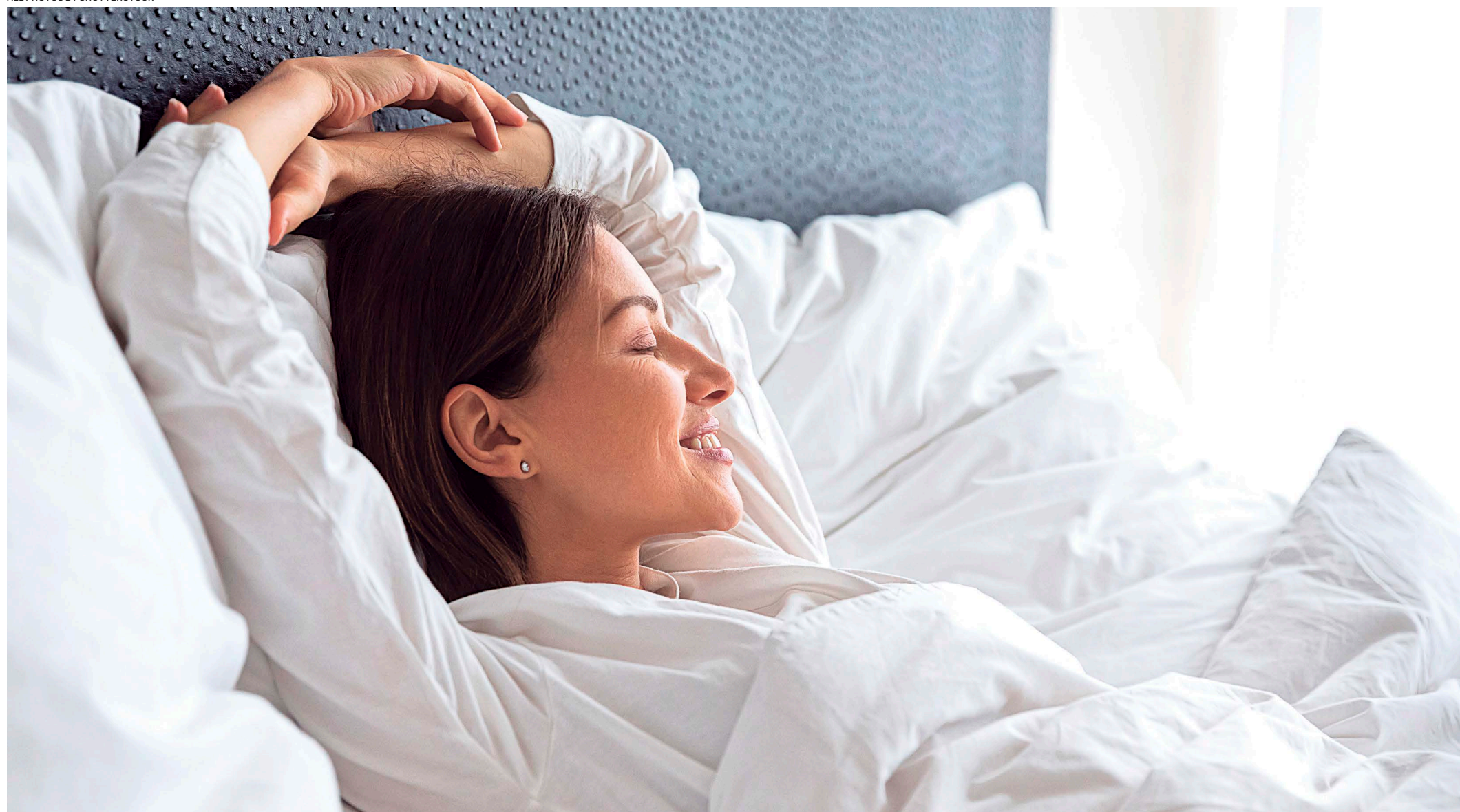
Seeds to Improve Your Health

PAGE 7





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# Stress, Sleep, and Natural Strategies That Work

### A lack of sleep can feed vicious cycle that leaves you anxious, stressed, feeling terrible

LISA ROTH COLLINS

**M**any people have experienced a rise in stress in the past few months. Sleep problems arising from that stress have some people seeking natural ways to reduce stress and enjoy the restorative sleep we all need.

Self-quarantine, social isolation, closed schools, lost jobs, fears of infection, and not knowing what lies around the corner are all weighing heavily on our minds. Even the vacations that would help us unwind have been put on hold indefinitely.

Of course, for some people, the slowdown resulting from the pandemic has been a chance to unwind. But for others, it has brought on entirely new problems.

For people facing unexpected and unwelcome upheaval, stress and anxiety can take a significant toll on the body, mind, and spirit, contributing to health concerns.

Sleep deprivation, one of those problems, feeds a vicious cycle: You are stressed and anxious during the day and can't sleep, and due to lack of sleep, you are more stressed and anxious as you try to get through the day.



Relaxation and sleep are essential for mental clarity and physical health.

#### Strategies to Reduce Stress

It's been said that knowing other people share your suffering can help you better cope. However, the best strategy is to take action. Here are a few ways to reduce stress naturally.

**Self-care:** Practice some self-love routines. A massage, bubble bath, home facial, dry brushing, and self-maneuver can be a way to tend to yourself. Self-care can also mean taking the time to do something you really enjoy and makes you feel good about yourself.

**Deep breathing exercises:** Try this simple stress reducer several times throughout the day: Breathe in slowly through your nose to the count of eight, hold it for four to five seconds, then release through your mouth to the count of seven. Repeat three to five times each session.

**Practice yoga.** You don't need to put yourself into a pretzel pose. Watch a beginner's yoga lesson on video or TV and practice a few simple poses every day. The combination of controlled breathing with poses and meditation can do wonders for reducing stress.

Be mindful. Mindfulness is the practice of paying attention to the moment-by-moment passage of your feelings, thoughts, and environment. Allow yourself to put the past and future aside, and focus on what is before you—and inside you.

**Nourish yourself.** Treat your body, mind, and spirit to nutritious, whole foods, and minimize or eliminate processed foods as much as possible. This approach will help keep you in balance.

**Enjoy exercise.** Physical activity releases the feel-good hormones known as endorphins. It also improves the health of your heart and nervous system, and enhances mood. Make it a point to do activities that you enjoy every day, such as walking, biking, jazzercise, tai chi, swimming, or gardening.

#### Strategies to Improve Sleep

To really make sure you unwind and get the best sleep possible, it's a good idea to combine your favorite strategies to reduce stress with ways to improve the quality of your sleep.

**Tune out.** You may love your electronic devices, but they aren't sleep-friendly. Tune out or turn them off at least one hour before retiring. Their blue light interferes with the sleep hormone melatonin.

**Keep a schedule.** Go to bed and get up at the same time every day, even the weekends. Resist taking a nap in the afternoon (unless it's truly needed) and avoid staying up late and then sleeping in. These habits can play havoc with your circadian rhythm.

**Chill out.** Before bedtime, enjoy a relaxing activity, such as listening to soothing music, taking a warm bath, or drinking a cup of chamomile tea. Meditation is a great way to deeply unwind. An essential oil diffuser with lavender, rose, or peppermint oils can help provide a calming atmosphere.

**Use a natural supplement.** A wide variety of natural supplements can help calm the mind and relax the body—both essential to the goal of getting a restful night's sleep. Let's look at some of those possibilities.

#### Supplements for Stress and Sleep

The above strategies can go a long way toward relieving stress and aiding restful sleep. However, sometimes a natural supplement can also help.

**D-Stress:** The key ingredient in this supplement is steam-distilled lavender oil, known for its ability to help relieve stress and restlessness. Lavender has several constituents, including linalool and linalyl acetate, which work in the body to promote relaxation.

**Chill Pills:** This supplement contains

herbs and vitamins that may reduce irritability by promoting relaxation. Ingredients include ashwagandha, L-theanine, holy basil, and vitamins B1 and B5.

**Sleep 8:** This supplement includes some of the most effective natural sleep aids available, such as chamomile, hops, passionflower, melatonin, skullcap, catnip, and magnesium.

### Allow yourself to put the past and future aside, and focus on what is before you—and inside you.

**Merry Mind Omega 3:** This contains the healthy essential fat known as EPA (eicosapentaenoic acid) It's called essential because the body doesn't produce EPA, so it's important to keep providing it in the form of foods, such as certain fatty fish, or supplements.

**Joyful.** This supplement contains 11 botanical extracts, vitamins, and amino acids that can benefit mood and cognition, and also restore calm to the nervous system. Those ingredients include 5-HTP, tryptophan, vitamin D3, methylfolate, methylcobalamin (B12), vitamin B6, L-theanine, gamma-aminobutyric acid (GABA), san qi, phellodendron, and magnolia.

**GABA.** Gamma-aminobutyric acid is an amino acid that plays a critical role in calming the nervous system. Once you take GABA, it interferes with GABA receptors, which, in turn, ultimately reduces the excitability of neurons and promotes stress reduction.

**L-Theanine.** Green tea is the source of this amino acid, which has the ability to cross the blood-brain barrier. This allows it to boost alpha brain-wave frequency, which in turn reduces stress. But green tea also contains caffeine, so if you are getting your L-theanine there, don't drink it close to bedtime.

#### Bottom Line

The unprecedented levels of stress that many people face today take their toll. Sleep problems are important to address because sleep is when our body restores itself: Heart rate decreases, tissues are repaired, growth hormones are secreted, immune system cells are produced, cellular waste is cleared out, and stress hormones are turned off.

A combination of lifestyle changes is the most crucial way to ensure good sleep but high-quality supplements designed to address these concerns can also help.

Lisa Roth Collins is a registered holistic nutritionist and the marketing manager at [NaturallySavvy.com](http://NaturallySavvy.com), which first published this article.

# Seeds Of Good Health

### These 5 nutritional powerhouses feed your health and help fight off disease

syndrome.[v],[vi],[vii],[viii] There are at least 150 abstracts found on the GreenMedInfo flax-seed database online.

**Nigella Sativa (Black Seed)**  
Nigella sativa (N. sativa), or black seed, has a long history of dietary and medicinal uses. It hails from the Ranunculaceae family and is found in Southern Europe and North Africa. Due to its important attributes, it has a rich historical and religious background.[ix]

#### Seeds played a major role in pre-agricultural diets due to their high energy content and nutrient density.

N. sativa and its oil have been widely used for centuries to treat various ailments. Among Muslims, it is deemed a great miracle for healing that can remedy many illnesses, thus earning a revered place in tibb-e-nabawi, or prophetic medicine. As a remedy, N. sativa's flexible benefits have been found helpful for a variety of conditions:

**Type 2 diabetes:** Two grams of black seed a day led to decreased fasting glucose, reduced insulin resistance, increased beta-cell function, and decreased glycosylated hemoglobin (HbA1c) in a study with human subjects.[x]

**Epilepsy:** A 2007 study with epileptic children, whose condition was resistant to conventional drug therapy, found that a water extract of black cumin significantly slashed seizure activity. Black seed is traditionally known to have anti-convulsive action.[xi]

**High blood pressure:** Using 100 milligrams (mg) to 200 mg of black seed extract twice every day for two months led to a blood pressure-lowering effect in mildly hypertensive individuals.[xii]

**MRSA:** Black seed has strong antibacterial properties against clinical isolates of methicillin-resistant *Staphylococcus aureus* (MRSA).[xiii]

#### Hemp Seed

Hemp seeds offer a creamy, nutty taste and have versatile uses in the kitchen. They are a nutritious

addition to cereals and granola, salad dressings, and desserts, and more. But they are also a rich source of easily digestible proteins, along with an ideal balance of omega-3 and omega-6 fats. Hemp seeds have essential amino acids, antioxidants, and other nutrients that help us achieve optimal health.

The nutrients of hemp seeds have several health benefits. They can nourish hair, skin, and nails, fight dryness and inflammatory conditions such as eczema, and exhibit anti-rheumatoid arthritis properties. They also provide an abundance of fiber, and brain-nourishing omega-3s and minerals such as iron, phosphorus, magnesium, and zinc.[xiv],[xv]

Hemp seed can be added to your smoothies, sprinkled on your morning bowl of granola, or added to bread or muffins.

#### Sesame Seed

Sesame seeds are interesting in their variety of colors, from black to white to yellow or red. They come from the tropical plant *Sesamum indicum*, believed to have hailed from Africa. They are commercially cultivated today in countries like India, China, and Mexico.

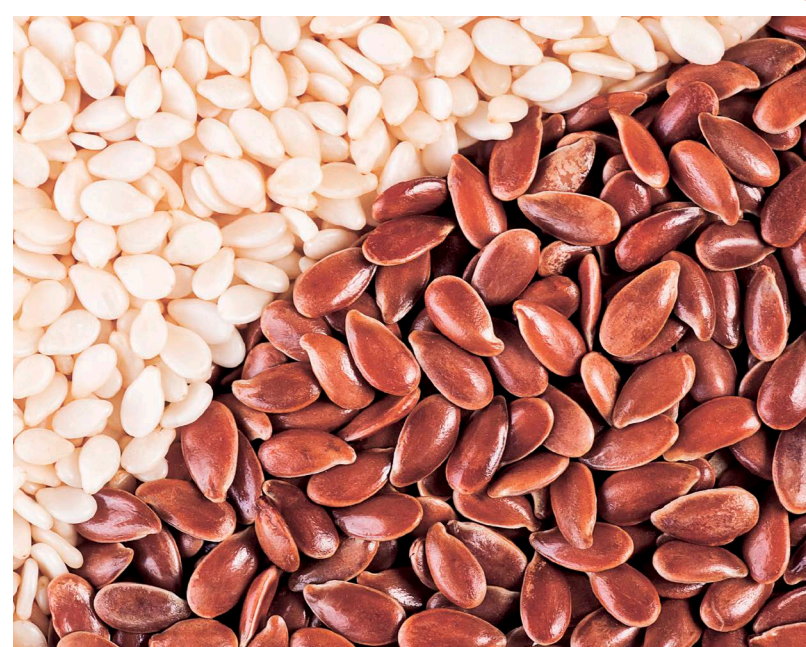
The magic phrase "open sesame" from "Arabian Nights" likely rings a bell for many, and it may be interesting to know that this is based on the seeds growing pods bursting open once ripe. It's just as curious to know that sesame seeds are packed with nutritious components, from vitamin B1 to minerals such as calcium, magnesium, manganese, phosphorus, and zinc.

As a therapeutic agent, sesame seeds are widely recognized for their healthful effects against cardiovascular disease and diabetes. They are thought to exert a beneficial effect on endothelial function in hypertensive males.[xvi] as well as lead to a synergistic effect with an anti-diabetic medication in Type 2 diabetes patients.[xvii]

You can see more primary research on the GreenMedInfo.com database.

#### Chia Seed

We're wrapping up this list with a superfood that's popular and has found its way to virtually everything from water and juices to salads and stir-fry to pancakes.



Flax and sesame seeds.

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Nigella sativa seeds.



Chia seeds.



Hemp seeds.

Chia, or *Salvia hispanica* L., originated in Mexico and Guatemala, and has served as an integral part of people's diet for the past 5,500 years.[xviii] It was traditionally used by Aztecs and Mayans in preparing folk medicine as well as for food and canvases.

This seed is a reliable source of the polyunsaturated fatty acids omega-3 and omega-6 as well as soluble dietary fiber. It also has notable amounts of protein and phytochemicals.[xix] This nutritional profile is why chia is used to treat several diseases, including high blood pressure, cardiovascular disease, and diabetes.

A 2010 study probed the effects of chia on postprandial glycemia and prolonging satiety. It concluded that these favorable effects potentially explain improvements in blood pressure, coagulation, and inflammatory markers previously observed after 12-week chia supplementation in Type 2 diabetic subjects.[xx]

For links to the research studies referenced in this article, please find it online at [TheEpochTimes.com/author-greenmedinfo](http://TheEpochTimes.com/author-greenmedinfo).

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# Walking—Especially After Dinner—Helps Control Blood Sugar

### Researchers have discovered it isn't just how long you walk, but when, that makes the difference

MOHAN GARIKIPARITHI

It's really easy to make a beeline for the sofa after dinner. You've had a long day and a satisfying meal, so a little "me time" is in order. Some television time or some screen scrolling is tempting.

But before retiring to this kind of relaxation, you might want to strap on your shoes and go for a short walk.

You might have heard that exercise can help keep blood sugar under control. And it's true; exercise has been repeatedly shown to lower blood sugar. But guess what? You can get even more out of it if it's appropriately timed.

Walking for about 15 minutes after you eat, particularly after dinner, can help prevent harmful



PIKSELSTOCK / SHUTTERSTOCK

Walking is one of the most healthful habits you can teach in your children—and a great way to prevent blood sugar spikes.

blood sugar spikes that lead to metabolic conditions such as Type 2 diabetes.

One study from 2013 found that when people at risk for Type 2 diabetes went for a 15-minute post-meal walk, they had significantly smaller blood sugar spikes in the hours afterward. They even found the results were better than in people who went for 45-minute walks in the mid-morning or late afternoon.

Your body draws on glucose—sugar—from food to supply its fuel. When you walk and your muscles contract, stored glucose (glycogen) is being used. Those stores need to be refilled with blood glucose, which is shuttled to your cells by a hormone called insulin.

People with diabetes, prediabetes, or metabolic syndrome have impaired insulin activity, causing too much glucose to remain in the bloodstream. This can lead to several chronic health conditions.

Other studies have shown just 10 minutes of post-dinner walking is effective in bringing down blood sugar.

Walking post-dinner is likely most effective in bringing down blood sugar because it's typically the time when glucose metabolism is at its slowest. Then, as you sleep and aren't moving, glucose can sit in the bloodstream. Going for a walk in the evening can help keep glucose metabolism at a higher level throughout the night.

If you're exercising to keep

blood sugar under control, pay attention to timing. You could get significantly more benefit by walking after meals, particularly in the evening. Spending 10 to 15 minutes before settling down can pay big dividends.

*Mohan Garikiparithi holds a degree in medicine from Osmania University (University of Health Sciences). He practiced clinical medicine for over a decade. During a three-year communications program in Germany, he developed an interest in German medicine (homeopathy) and other alternative systems of medicine. This article was originally published on Bel Marra Health.*

# COVID Masks

## An Environmental Menace That Can Last Generations

Discarded masks also risk spreading coronavirus to waste collectors, litter pickers, and people who come across them

KEIRON PHILIP ROBERTS,  
CRESSIDA BOWYER, SIMON  
KOLSTOE & STEVE FLETCHER

Face coverings are now a legal requirement in many public spaces around the world. But even before they became compulsory, masks were causing litter problems on land and at sea.

One February beach clean in Hong Kong found 70 masks along 100 meters of shoreline, with 30 more appearing a week later. In the Mediterranean, masks have reportedly been seen floating like jellyfish.

**The majority of masks are manufactured from long-lasting plastic materials, and if discarded can persist in the environment for decades to hundreds of years.**

Despite millions of people being told to use face masks, little guidance has been given on how to dispose of or recycle them safely. And as countries begin to lift lock-

down restrictions, billions of masks will be needed each month globally. Without better disposal practices, an environmental menace is looming.

The majority of masks are manufactured from long-lasting plastic materials, and if discarded can persist in the environment for decades to hundreds of years. This means they can have a number of impacts on the environment and people.

### Hazardous to People and Animals

Initially, discarded masks may risk spreading coronavirus to waste collectors, litter pickers, or members of the public who first come across the litter. We know that in certain conditions, the virus can survive on a plastic surgical mask for seven days.

Over the medium to long term, animals and plants are also affected. Through its sheer mass, plastic waste can smother environments and break up ecosystems. Some animals also cannot tell the difference between plastic items and their prey, subsequently choking on pieces of litter.

Even if they don't choke, animals can become malnourished as the materials fill up their stomachs but provide no nutrients. Smaller animals may also become entangled in the elastic within the masks or within gloves as they begin to break apart.

Plastics break down into smaller pieces over time, and the longer litter is in the environment, the more it will decompose. Plastics first break down into microplastics and eventually into even smaller nano-

plastics. These tiny particles and fibers are often long-lived polymers that can accumulate in food chains. Just one mask can produce millions of particles, each with the potential to also carry chemicals and bacteria up the food chain—all the way back to humans.

Littered areas also tend to encourage further littering, making the problem worse.

### What You Should Do

In March, the World Health Organization estimated that 89 million additional disposable masks were needed globally per month in medical settings to combat COVID-19. In addition, a recent working paper by the Plastic Waste Innovation Hub at University College London has put the current domestic demand for the United Kingdom alone at 24.7 billion masks a year. However, the demand for domestic face masks in the UK drops dramatically—to around 136 million a year—if only reusable masks are used.

But even with reusable masks, their specific design and how you choose to clean them makes a difference. The University College London team examined the manufacture, use, and disposal of masks that were disposable, reusable, and reusable with disposable filters, to calculate their overall environmental impact. They found machine washing reusable masks with no filters had the lowest impact over a year.

Hand washing masks increased the environmental impact as—while machine

washing uses electricity—manual washing uses more water and detergent for each mask. Disposable filters also increase the environmental impact because the small filters are often made from plastic similar to the disposable masks, with a filter discarded after every use.

Perhaps surprisingly, the working paper estimates that hand washing reusable masks with disposable filters had the highest environmental impact overall—higher even than using fully disposable masks.

With all of this in mind, we should take these steps to reduce the impact of wearing a face mask:

1. Use reusable masks without disposable filters. Machine wash them regularly following the instructions for the fabric.
2. Try to carry a spare so if something goes wrong with the one you're wearing you don't need to use or buy a disposable mask.
3. If you do need to use a disposable mask, take it home (maybe in a bag if you have to take it off) and then put it straight into a bin with a lid. If this isn't possible, place it in a proper public bin.
4. Don't put disposable masks in the recycling. They can get caught in specialist recycling equipment and be a potential biohazard to waste workers.
5. Whatever you do, don't litter your mask.

*Keiron Philip Roberts is a research fellow in clean carbon technologies and resource management at the University of Portsmouth in the U.K. Cressida Bowyer is a senior research fellow in the faculty of creative and cultural industries at the University of Portsmouth. Simon Kolstoe is a senior lecturer in evidence-based healthcare and university ethics adviser at the University of Portsmouth. Steve Fletcher is a professor of ocean policy and economy at the University of Portsmouth. This article was first published on The Conversation.*



Discarded face masks may be mistaken as prey by sea creatures and eaten.

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# The Essentials of Breathing

Big bellies, bad posture, and grief can rob our cells of air and leave us weak and emotional

Every cell needs oxygen, but brain cells need the most.



CONAN MILNER

**Y**ou can only survive a few weeks without food and just a few days without water. But without air, you'd be lucky to last a few minutes.

The link between life and breath has always been clear, but it took modern science to reveal the mechanics at the cellular level. Our cells are nourished by food and water but they need oxygen to break them down. Cells also excrete another gas, carbon dioxide, as waste. The body's circulation of

these gases is called respiration. If respiration is compromised, cells get weak, sluggish, and die prematurely.

Lungs are the organs best associated with respiration, but the process is crucial for all our cells. The better our cells can breathe, the healthier our entire body.

### Our Lungs and Disease

Our lungs drive respiration in two ways. First, they act like bellows, mechanically pumping air in and out of the body. Second, they transfer this air into and out of our blood with microscopic sacs called alveoli.

With each breath, alveoli deposit oxygen into the blood and pull carbon dioxide out of it. We have hundreds of millions of alveoli facilitating this gas exchange. If one took all the alveoli from an adult pair of lungs and spread them out, it would equal about the size of a tennis court.

According to Dr. David Beuther, a pulmonologist at National Jewish Health, lung diseases typically target one of these two functions. Asthma, for example, is a bellows problem: Airways become tight and inflamed, making it harder to inhale or exhale. In contrast, emphysema, a condi-

tion marked by scar tissue in the lungs, destroys alveoli.

"You actually get destruction of the air sacs, so your tennis court gets smaller and smaller in size," Beuther said.

Chronic obstructive pulmonary disease, pneumonia, and other lung-related issues all impair our breathing in different ways. Various heart conditions can also leave us short of breath. But Beuther says you can have a perfectly healthy heart and lungs and still be gasping for air.

*Continued on Page 10*









## POSITIVE AGING

# Why Social Interaction Is Essential

MARILYN MURRAY WILLISON

For years, researchers have known that everyone benefits from socialization—regardless of age or gender. We've all seen the tragic videos of neglected orphans who failed to grow and develop because they were kept in isolation and deprived of interaction with others. According to functional magnetic resonance imaging studies, or fMRI studies, it's become common knowledge that adults, particularly the elderly, need the same sort of social stimulation that infants do. In fact, feeling alone can actually be worse than feeling annoyed or harassed. Why? Feeling isolated activates many of the same areas of the brain involved in physical pain.

Unfortunately, after reaching retirement age (and when others leave the household), many seniors find themselves spending way too much time alone. This is particularly true if they are no longer able to drive or have other transportation issues. But in order to maintain a sense of belonging, stay happy, and keep their minds sharp, seniors really need to find a reliable way to socialize with others on a regular basis.

When the American Academy of Neurology examined the relationship between dementia, socialization, and stress, it discovered that "people who are socially active and not easily stressed may be less likely to develop dementia." Since it is estimated that as many as 1 in 7 Americans over the age of 71 have dementia, these findings are important. And even though some researchers feel that memory problems or symptoms of depression are more likely to appear among those over the age



Whatever our age, we all need to be proactive about building and maintaining social connections.

of 70 than among younger individuals, this doesn't have to be the case.

To avoid mental isolation, seniors must commit to remaining socially active and do whatever it takes to avoid feeling lonely. The latest research indicates that an active post-retirement social life can reduce stress, lower blood pressure, boost the immune system, lower levels of depression, and minimize physiological pain symptoms—among other things. Approximately 7 million people over the age of 65 experience some level of depression. The importance of consistent human contact and interaction cannot be underestimated.

I recently experienced a very mild taste of what it feels like to be prevented from enjoying the company of others. As you know, for the past 26 years I have been wheelchair-dependent, so my transportation involves a handicap van with a ramp. As luck would have it, one night some misguided

burglars ignored the disability designation on the van's license plate and proceeded to break in and try to steal it. The good news is, their efforts to hot-wire the vehicle failed; the bad news is, they damaged both the ignition and steering column of the van. My only form of transportation was at the repair shop for two weeks, and I was unable to leave my house for physical therapy appointments, shopping, and visits with friends. Obviously, this was not a tragic situation, but everything seemed so different when I couldn't leave home and feel like I was a part of normal life. Fortunately, my van has now been fixed, and I am once again able to get out and about four days a week.

The fastest-growing age group of elders in America is those who are 85 years old and older, which leads experts to conclude that community-based services must step in when or where family members cannot.

According to a recent AARP article, "The number of Americans without any close confidants has increased dramatically in the past 20 years." This is a clear indication that whatever our age, we all need to be proactive about building and maintaining social connections.

To defeat loneliness and isolation among the elderly, programs that go beyond basic meal delivery or brief impersonal visitations are needed. Today, there are approximately 15,000 senior citizen centers scattered across the U.S. that offer programs ranging from leisure activities (journaling, singing groups, etc.) to volunteering to educational opportunities. Additionally, according to the National Adult Day Services Association, as of 2010 there were more than 4,600 adult day care centers nationwide that offer activities designed to provide social support and health services to older adults.

**There are approximately 15,000 senior citizen centers scattered across the U.S. that offer programs ranging from leisure activities to volunteering to educational opportunities.**

The bottom line is that feeling lonely or being lonely needs to be avoided at any age, but especially at this stage of our lives.

*Marilyn Murray Willison has had a varied career as a six-time nonfiction author, columnist, motivational speaker, and journalist in both the U.K. and the U.S. She is the author of "The Self-Empowered Woman" blog and the award-winning memoir "One Woman, Four Decades, Eight Wishes." She can be reached at MarilynWillison.com. To find out more about Marilyn and read her past columns, please visit the Creators Syndicate webpage at Creators.com. Copyright 2020 Creators.com*

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