

MIND & BODY

NATHAN MCBRIDE/UNSPLASH

If we are willing to stop defending our idea of ourselves, we can start to discover our true selves.

MINDSET MATTERS

WHY YOU SHOULD CHOOSE

Love Over Fear

We transform ourselves and our relationships when we stop fighting to prove we're a good person

NANCY COLIER

Reject fear, choose love. This is a popular refrain and wonderful advice. Many believe that there are only two primal emotions in the human being, love and fear, and that we can't feel both at once.

And in the same way that light removes darkness, love can remove fear. The choice to reject fear and choose love

can feel like something that only applies to moments of crisis, whether we're leaving a marriage, starting a new business, or preparing to climb Mount Everest.

But in truth, the opportunity to choose love and reject fear presents itself in the smallest moments of life, and specifically, in relationships with those closest to us.

We hurt each other in intimate relationships—intentionally and unintentionally. That's a fact.

We hurt each other in intimate relationships—intentionally and unintentionally.

Sometimes, if we're lucky, we discover that we have hurt the other person when they come to us and share their pain, express their experience, and verbalize what we said or did that upset them.

But often, we discover that we have hurt the person through a different avenue, that is, when they criticize us or tell us what they think is wrong with us.

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Investigation Finds Toxic Chemicals in Water Across the US

Persistent chemicals have entered our water supplies and current regulations and water systems are inadequate to remove them

JOSEPH MERCOLA

Drinking water safety isn't often top of mind unless it has made the news, such as the lead crisis in Flint, Michigan. However, the level of contamination in U.S. tap water is very concerning, whether your water supply is from the municipal water system or a well. Just because it looks clear and seems to taste normal doesn't mean it's safe or pure.



ADITYA CHINCHURE/UNSPLASH

Some chemical pollutants endure long after they have passed through our water treatment systems and made their way back into the environment.

Consumer Reports, in cooperation with The Guardian, conducted a recent survey analysis of water supplies across the United States and found what other studies have also found—tap water is brimming with toxic chemicals. Additional test results from the 2017 Environmental Working Group (EWG) analysis of 50,000 water utilities in 50 states also found 267 different contaminants out of 500 they tested for.

One of the problems with the water supply is an aging infrastructure that may be "nearing the end" of its useful life, according to the 2021 report card by the American Society of Civil Engineers. Water pollution from fire-fighting chemicals, agricultural chemicals, drugs, and nerve toxins produced by freshwater cyanobacteria add an additional toxic load to the water supply.

Because your body is mostly water, you require a constant supply of pure water to fuel your filtration system and ensure your body is free of toxins. Your blood, kidneys,

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Water The Forgotten Nutrient

Your body uses water for countless essential functions that break down if dehydrated

LYNN JAFFEE

Quick! What's the most important nutrient that you need to consume several times each day? If you guessed protein, vitamin C, or calcium, you'd be wrong. It's water.

Even though water isn't a vitamin or mineral, it's a nutrient that's vital to human life. If you think otherwise, consider this: You can live for weeks without food, but only for about three days without water. It's considered essential because your body needs more than it can produce on its own. That's because you lose a lot of water each day through evaporation, elimination, respiration, and sweat. Water is an incredible workhorse in so many ways.

Here are just some of the things it does to keep you healthy:

Fluid balance: Water helps you maintain the balance of fluids in your body. You're made up of about 60 percent water, and when you become oversaturated, you lose water through urination. If you're dehydrated, your brain signals you to drink more by signaling thirst.

Body temperature: Water helps to regulate your body temperature through the evaporation of sweat.

Staying hydrated helps prevent sprains and strains due to dehydrated tissues that are more prone to injury.

Calorie control: The water content in your food actually helps you to control calories. Foods that contain a lot of water, such as fruits, vegetables, and soups are more filling than foods with low water content, and eating water-heavy foods helps signal your body to stop eating.

Digestion: Water supports your digestion and keeps your bowels moving.

Joint fluid: In your joints, water in the

form of joint fluid acts as a cushion to help absorb shock and to slow wear and tear.

Blood pressure: Water is a fundamental component in controlling your blood pressure.

Brain fluid: Your brain is more watery than your body, consisting of 73 percent water. When you become dehydrated, it can affect your mood, decrease cognitive function, affect your memory, and make you more sensitive to pain.

Oxygen: Water helps boost your immunity by flushing toxins from your body and ushering oxygen to all your cells. Remember the O is for oxygen in H₂O.

Skin health: Want healthier looking skin? Drink up. Well-hydrated skin is plump and glowing, while dehydration makes your skin look dry and wrinkled. Dry skin also slows down wound healing.

Electrolyte balance: Water regulates the balance of electrolytes in your body, which include sodium, potassium, chloride, and bicarbonate. These electrolytes help regulate the function of your nerves and muscles and help you maintain the acid balance (pH) in your body.

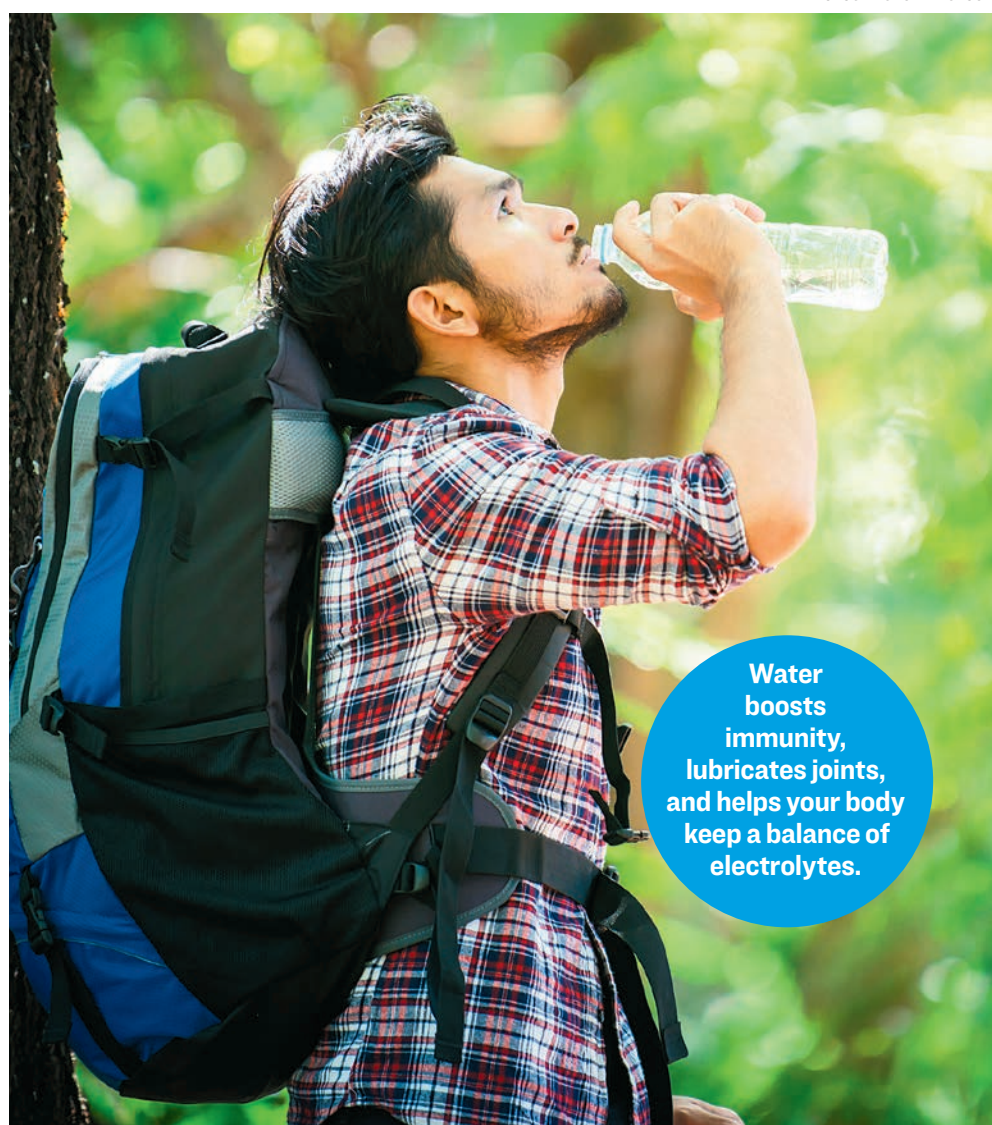
Pain avoidance: Staying hydrated prevents headaches, muscle cramping, and sprains and strains, as dehydrated tissues are more prone to injury.

How much water should you drink each day? It depends. Experts recommend somewhere between four and eight cups (8 oz. per cup) daily, depending on the medications you're taking, physical activity, age, and overall health. While your brain will ultimately tell you when you're dehydrated, don't depend on thirst as a gauge for when to drink.

Thirst signals actually decrease as you age, so as you get older, you need to make sure you're getting enough water, regardless of whether or not you're thirsty.

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

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Water boosts immunity, lubricates joints, and helps your body keep a balance of electrolytes.

The Ketogenic Diet for COVID-19

Healthy fats deprive viruses of their key food source and put the body in fat-burning mode



ASHLEY TURNER

We've long known that certain dietary interventions are helpful for virtually any viral illness, including COVID-19. This article will discuss those dietary strategies and highlight a recent study on the diet that appears most useful for combating this specific virus.

Metabolism and Viruses

The body was designed to run on two different energy sources: sugar and fat. Any time blood glucose elevates from eating, stress, or lack of sleep, the body uses sugar as its main energy source. This is known as a glycolytic state.

Conversely, when the body is in a fasted state or when we intentionally eat low-carbohydrate, high-fat meals, our metabolism shifts to a fat-burning ketogenic state due to the absence of sugars in the bloodstream. Our bodies were designed to go in and out of sugar and fat-burning states at different times of the day. We like to refer to this as metabolic flexibility. In fact, the body seems to thrive when in a fat-burning, ketogenic metabolic state.

Sugars Are the Ideal Fuel Source for Viruses

Interestingly, switching the host metabolism from a sugar-burning state to a fat-burning state has been shown to slow the replication of viruses. Viruses don't have their own energy source. When they inhabit a host, they must rely on the host's energy and metabolic function. When the host consumes a diet high in processed foods, carbohydrates, and sugars, the body is in a sugar-burning state. In this state, viruses of various kinds are able to replicate very quickly because of the widely available sugar fuel source.

Sugars Are the Ideal Camouflage for Viruses

Not only does being in a sugar-burning state provide viruses with plenty of energy to replicate quickly, but sugars can also camouflage the virus and protect it from an immune system attack. Many viruses, including the novel coronavirus (which causes COVID-19), essentially coat themselves in sugar in order to replicate. When the virus does this, it camouflages itself in a sugary coating called glycans. This process is known as viral glycosylation.

The novel coronavirus takes over the host's cellular machinery to surround itself in glycans. The surface protein on the virus that allows it to bind to and enter human cells is completely covered by these sugars. SARS-CoV-2 uses an extensively glycosylated spike protein that protrudes from the viral surface to bind to angiotensin-converting enzyme 2 (ACE2) to mediate host-cell entry. Essentially, this glycan shield camouflage allows the coronavirus to trick its way into the cell like a "wolf in sheep's clothing."

The novel coronavirus is not the only virus to use glycans for replication and disguise. Other viruses including influenza, HIV, hepatitis C, West Nile virus, SARS-CoV-1, and Ebola also go through viral glycosylation.

Many foods contain high-calorie, nutritious fats that can provide much of your daily energy needs.

Comorbidities

Unfortunately, there is a growing body of evidence that shows individuals with comorbid conditions are at much higher risk of a serious viral illness, including COVID-19. Some of these comorbidities include diabetes, metabolic syndrome, obesity, hypertension, cardiovascular disease, and asthma. Many of these conditions are rooted in the host's metabolism being in a suboptimal, immune-damaging state as it is constantly hopped up on sugar. This allows viruses and other pathogens to replicate rapidly and take a greater hold on the host who has metabolic dysfunction.

Dietary Strategies to Beat Viruses

Avoid Detrimental Fats

It is important to understand that consuming highly refined industrial seed oils not only contributes to inflammation and a weakened immune system, but also fosters an environment where the host is more susceptible to viral infection. Industrial seed oils actually make the cell more inviting to viral infections. When these oils are consumed, the balance of fatty acids that coat the cell and make up the cell membrane is changed. The presence of these detrimental fatty acids actually helps viruses to easily enter and take hold of the host's cells. Furthermore, consuming these fats contributes to insulin resistance, perpetuating blood sugar dysregulation. This also prevents the body from burning fat for energy and entering a state of ketosis.

Harmful Fats to Avoid

- Canola oil
- Corn oil
- Cottonseed oil
- Safflower oil
- Sunflower oil
- Soybean oil

Consume Health-Promoting Fats

Eating certain fats can nourish our cells and help shift the body into a ketogenic state. Medium-chain triglycerides (MCTs) are made up of fewer carbon atoms than long-chain fatty acids and are found in coconut oil, palm oil, and quality dairy products.

Unlike long-chain fatty acids, MCTs are processed quickly by the liver and are used for energy or turned directly into ketones. The presence of ketones in the blood promotes the fat-burning state of ketosis (not to be confused with diabetic ketoacidosis).

Not only do MCTs help promote ketosis, but they also increase energy and endurance, improve brain function, aid in weight loss, lower cholesterol, and balance blood sugar levels. When looking at MCTs from a viral standpoint, the lauric acid present in MCTs has been shown to repress the viral envelope formation and slow viral replication.

Oils High in Medium Chain Triglycerides

- MCT oil
- Coconut oil
- Ghee from grass-fed animals
- Butter from grass-fed animals
- Cream from grass-fed animals

While the fats listed above have MCTs in them that have antiviral properties and help the body to switch into a fat-burning state quicker, there are other beneficial fats to enjoy while abiding by a ketogenic diet. Some of these include lard and tallow from grass-fed animals, avocados, egg yolks from pasture-raised hens, quality extra virgin olive oil, and fish oils from wild-caught fish.

Switch Your Metabolism Through a Ketogenic Diet

While the body is designed to maneuver easily in and out of each of the sugar or fat-burning metabolic states mentioned earlier, some experts now believe the body does best when it's in fat-burning ketosis the majority of the time because it's a more efficient and clean fuel source.

The ketogenic diet focuses on quality dietary fats as the main fuel source for the body. Usually, the breakdown is 60 to 70 percent of your nutritional calories coming from a fat source. The rest of the calories come from proteins and carbohydrates. To foster this metabolic state on an even deeper level, decreasing carbohydrate intake and increasing the fasting window are helpful. When these ideal macronutrient ratios are in place, it forces the body into a fat-burning, ketogenic state. This metabolic state challenges the body so that it's forced to be in a healthier place. When we follow up this state of metabolic challenge with eating, rest, and sleeping, our bodies are able to recover and grow more resilient.

What Is the Ideal COVID-19 diet?

Again, when we are in a fat-burning, ketogenic state, we don't give the virus a fuel source. This will slow viral replication. One particular study that highlights this mechanism looked at individuals fasting for Ramadan. These people consumed a protein and fat-rich ketogenic breakfast that included 20 grams of MCTs. For lunch, they consumed 20 grams of MCT and continued their fast for a total of 8 to 12 hours. This increase in medium-chain triglycerides for breakfast and during their fasting window promoted ketogenic metabolic pathways and slowed viral replication. Dinner was a nutrient-dense meal that included a variety of fruits and vegetables.

The study showed that fostering a ketogenic state for part of the day, intermittent fasting, and focusing on MCTs and nutrient-dense foods offer prophylactic and adjunct treatment strategies for those combating SARS-CoV-2. Whether you hope to avoid succumbing to a viral infection, are currently suffering from COVID-19 or another acute viral illness, or are suffering from "Long Haulers Syndrome," putting some of these dietary practices in place will greatly support blood sugar regulation and immune function.

Dr. Ashley Turner is a board-certified doctor of holistic health, traditionally trained naturopath, author, homesteader, and homeschooling mother of three sweet daughters. You can reach her at Restorative Wellness Center, where she practices functional medicine.

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Investigation Finds Toxic Chemicals in Water Across the US

Continued from Page 1

and liver all require a good source of clean water to detoxify from the toxic exposure they meet every day.

But, as the recent collaborative water survey from Consumer Reports and The Guardian has demonstrated, the water supply is in desperate need of detoxification.

Toxic Chemicals Found in Drinking Water Across the US

The team from Consumer Reports and The Guardian asked readers for help investigating the nation's drinking water supply and more than 6,000 people held up their hands to be counted.

Statisticians from Consumer Reports whittled the group down to 120 households that represented a cross-section of each of the EPA's 10 jurisdictional regions. Within each region, the team chose a mix of locations in which they tested the water for multiple different contaminants.

The analysis showed that 118 of the 120 water samples collected had high levels of PFAS (per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances), arsenic, and detectable levels of lead. The group acknowledged that the study had some limitations since water quality was tested in one day, which may not demonstrate the overall quality supplied throughout the system.

According to the report from Consumer Reports, the challenges aren't technological. In other words, they believe filtration systems exist that can clean the water of contaminants and "yet they are not being used uniformly by community water systems."

Although the deputy director of public works in New Britain, Connecticut, told Consumer Reports that a single sample may not be representative of the overall toxic exposure, EPA spokesperson Andrea Drinkard said that "93 percent of the population supplied by community water systems gets water that meets all health-based standards all of the time," the Guardian reported.

Drinking water contamination is a crisis. According to an analysis published in The Guardian in February, more than 140,000 water systems in the United States are affected. The same analysis demonstrated that clean drinking water isn't distributed equally since systems that service rural counties and poor areas have a higher likelihood of violations.

EPA Balances Cost Against Health When Setting Arsenic Levels

One of the factors new homeowners don't often consider is the purity of their tap water supply. Consumer Reports learned one of the participants in the study, Sandy and Scott Phillips from Texas, had built a custom home in a new development just north of Austin. After moving in, they invested thousands in a reverse osmosis and water softening system to take care of the unusual odor in the water.

What the couple learned from a survey was their water supply was high in multiple chemicals, including arsenic. Arsenic is a heavy metal that's naturally present in groundwater and highly toxic. The greatest public health threat from arsenic comes from drinking water, food preparation, and irrigation of food crops.

Long-term exposure increases the risk of several forms of cancer, including skin, lung, and bladder cancers, summarizes a 2014 article published in the Journal of Preventive Medicine and Public Health. Other research has suggested there is an association with neurological effects, cardiovascular disease, diabetes, and reproductive disorders.

The health impact of low-level exposure to arsenic doesn't occur immediately but happens over a long period of time. Exposure to arsenic can also reduce children's IQ and increase the risk of skin discoloration and lesions. Arsenic can get into the drinking water supply from industrial processes and runoff from agricultural and mining concerns.

The general manager for the Texas couple's water supplier told Consumer Reports that it "has complied with all federal and state minimum contaminant level standards for arsenic and lead for many years." He also said the results from the Consumer Report survey conflicted with their records.

The acceptable level set by the EPA for arsenic in drinking water in 1942 had been 50 parts per billion (ppb). The level was reduced to 10 ppb in 2001, which was an amount the EPA felt would help water system operators balance the cost of filtering



the water against health challenges.

Yet, this level is still more than triple the 3-ppb level at which experts, including scientists at Consumer Reports and the National Resources Defense Council (NRDC), have long insisted it should be limited to.

Nearly every water sample tested had measurable amounts of arsenic. A 2017 Natural Resources Defense Council (NRDC) study noted that the EPA had set a maximum contaminant level for arsenic at zero since no level is safe. However, it set the enforceable level at 10 ppb, which continues to present a "substantial cancer risk."

The same report showed there were 573 water systems across the United States that were delivering water with excessive arsenic to more than 1.8 million people. One 2014 study published in Environmental Health found exposure to arsenic at 5 ppb or greater in the drinking water lowered IQ scores in children approximately 5 to 6 points in most cognitive areas, including working memory, verbal comprehension, and perceptual reasoning.

EPA: Wait Until 10 Percent of Homes Have High Lead Levels

Survey results from the Phillips' home in Texas also revealed their unfiltered water had 5.8 ppb of lead. In this instance, cost again has taken precedence over the potential health effects on consumers. Consumer Reports notes that while the EPA recognizes there is no safe exposure to lead, they don't require utility services to lower lead levels until 10 percent of the homes sampled in the area exceed 15 ppb.

In the same NRDC report that surveyed violations of the Safe Drinking Water Act, the researchers found there were 5,367 water systems that were allowing high levels of lead and copper into the water system that affected more than 18 million consumers.

It wasn't until 1986 that using lead pipes to connect the water main in the street to buildings was banned. However, many of the previous water systems are still in use, affecting up to an estimated 6 million homes and businesses across the United States, noted Consumer Reports.

Many of the health effects from lead exposure are well-known, including kidney and brain damage, anemia, weakness, neurological damage to a developing baby, lower IQ in children, and infertility in men and women, notes the CDC.

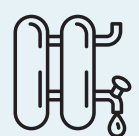
Yet, despite the overwhelming costs to the community and individuals from exposure to lead, the EPA hasn't made significant changes to the maximum acceptable exposure levels for lead and many other toxins found in the drinking water supply. "The NRDC notes, 'Weaknesses in the current Lead and Copper Rule, and numerous deficiencies in other EPA drinking water rules, require strengthening changes for the sake of public health.'"

PFAS Are Forever Chemicals Found in Drinking Water

It may sometimes look like alphabet soup when scientists begin writing about perfluorinated chemicals, historically abbreviated PFC. To reduce confusion, the EPA made the move to use "PFAS" to refer to per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances that describe the chemicals, which are sometimes referred to as "The Teflon Chemicals" or "forever chemicals."

PFASs make products water, oil, grease, and stain resistant and are also found in

Drinking water contamination is a crisis affecting more than 140,000 water systems in the United States.



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WATER SYSTEMS

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according to a 2017 Natural Resources Defense Council study.

Dr. Joseph Mercola is the founder of Mercola.com. An osteopathic physician, best-selling author, and recipient of multiple awards in the field of natural health, his primary vision is to change the modern health paradigm by providing people with a valuable resource to help them take control of their health. This article was originally published on Mercola.com

firefighting foam. PFOS and PFOA are two PFAS chemicals that were voluntarily phased out by manufacturers. However, while they are no longer manufactured in the United States the EPA reveals "phased out" doesn't mean "not being used."

The recent water survey confirmed the ubiquitous nature of PFAS in the water supply, finding 117 of the 120 water samples taken contained the chemical. Instead of enforceable legal limits, the EPA has established voluntary limits for PFOA and PFOS at 70 parts per trillion (ppt), which many experts believe is far too high.

Harvard health expert Philippe Grandjean believes research evidence suggests a lower limit of 1 ppt. The threshold is also supported by the Environmental Working Group and Consumer Reports chief scientific officer.

PFOA, commonly called C8, had been dumped from a plant in Parkersburg, West Virginia, beginning in the 1950s. The C8 Science Panel assessed the links between exposure and several health conditions, finding probable links to high cholesterol levels, ulcerative colitis, thyroid disease, several types of cancer, and pregnancy-induced high blood pressure.

The report from the NRDC didn't include PFAS chemicals as they aren't regulated under the Safe Drinking Water Act. Instead, the EPA issued a health advisory establishing unenforceable levels that "inform" officials and water utilities of a level that may be safe.

An analysis published by the EWG showed there were 2,337 sites in 49 states with known PFAS contamination. Unfortunately, while evidence continues to mount demonstrating forever chemicals are hazardous, the EPA is unwilling to protect consumer health. According to the EWG, the EPA "recently released a so-called PFAS action plan, but it is woefully inadequate. The EPA plan will not address ongoing sources of PFAS pollution, will not clean up legacy pollution and will not even require reporting of toxic PFAS releases."

Filtered Water Is a Health Priority

If you choose bottled water instead of tap water, you may only be slightly better off, depending on where you live. The purity of bottled water has been in question since at least 2009 when the EWG released a scorecard showing most water brands failed to disclose contaminants contained in their water.

Another EWG survey in 2011 revealed that 18 percent of bottled water didn't show where the water came from and 32 percent didn't disclose how the water was treated or the purity. In 2020, Consumer Reports tested 47 bottled water brands for heavy metals and 30 PFAS chemicals.

They found PFAS was detectable in most of the noncarbonated water brands and in all but one of the carbonated waters. For an objective analysis of your water quality, consider consulting the Tap Water Database created by the EWG. Unless you can verify the purity of your water, seriously consider installing a high-quality water filtration system.

Ideally, the water can be filtered at the point of entry and the point of use. This means adding a filter where the water enters the home and then again at the sink and shower. There are a variety of options that have benefits and drawbacks. You can read more about water filtration systems in "Properly Filter Your Water" on Mercola.com.

FOOD AS MEDICINE

Pomegranate: Benefits of This Antioxidant Superstar

The little red arils in this richly colored fruit offer a potent blend of phytonutrients

DIANE FULTON

Pomegranate, with its characteristic red arils, is a small but mighty superfood. It's been called an antioxidant superstar since researchers have confirmed that pomegranate has three times the antioxidant power of red wine and green tea. The antioxidant impact in pomegranate comes from compounds known as polyphenols. Pomegranate includes flavonoids (catechin and anthocyanins), condensed tannins, phenolic acids, hydrolysable tannins (punicalagin), alkaloids, and lignans. From lab studies of pomegranate compounds, scientists have verified that pomegranate has beneficial antioxidant, anti-diabetic, antiobesity, anti-hypertensive, and anti-inflammatory properties. Isn't it time to add pomegranate to your healthy routine?

6 Therapeutic Qualities of Pomegranate

1. Lowers Oxidative Stress

Oxidative stress refers to the imbalance between the production of reactive oxygen species (free radicals) and antioxidant defenses. This imbalance is caused by environmental stressors (i.e., ultraviolet light, exposure to radiation, pollutants, pesticides, industrial chemicals, smoking, ozone, and heavy metals) and internal factors (nutrition, inflammation, lifestyle, conditions like dementia, cancer, diabetes, and chronic illnesses).

Accumulation of the reactive oxygen species (ROS) and oxidative damage has been linked to multiple pathologies, including neurodegenerative diseases, metabolic disorders, atherosclerosis, cardiovascular diseases, diabetes, cancer, recovery from overexercise/injuries, skin diseases, and premature aging.

Pomegranate's antioxidant superpower decreases oxidative stress, which helps to prevent and improve these oxidative-related diseases and subsequent symptoms.

2. Prevents Lifestyle Diseases and Lowers Complications

Lifestyle diseases are ailments that are primarily based on the day-to-day habits of people (such as being sedentary, smoking, an unhealthy diet, and alcohol abuse) and include diabetes, cardiovascular diseases, chronic respiratory illnesses, stroke, and cancer. Precursors can be high blood pressure, high blood sugar levels, high levels of fat in the blood, high levels of stress, and obesity.

The antioxidant protection of pomegranate polyphenols helps prevent lifestyle-related diseases by reducing ROS and increasing antioxidant activity. A meta-analysis of eight studies regarding pomegranate juice consumption and high blood pressure showed significant reductions in both systolic and diastolic blood pressure after taking pomegranate juice. Researchers recommend including this fruit juice in your heart-healthy diet.

Pomegranate proved itself a potent antioxidant in diabetes-induced oxidative stress and fibrosis in a study of rats and partially ameliorated erectile dysfunction, a symptom caused by diabetes.

Consumption of concentrated pomegranate juice (50 grams per day) had favorable effects on two markers of inflammation (high-density lipoprotein cholesterol and IL6) and increased total antioxidant capacity by approximately 75 percent in a clinical study of 40 patients with Type 2 diabetes.

3. Reduces Cancer

Researchers found that pomegranate peel extract inhibited growth of prostate cancer cells, particularly in migration and invasion, which are two critical steps in prostate cancer metastasis. In a study of hamsters, pomegranate peel extract exhibited significant antioxidant activity in the lung fibroblasts by reduc-

ing ROS by 29 percent to 36 percent.

In human breast and colon cancer cells, pomegranate extract decreased cancer cell growth both in drug-sensitive cells by 15 percent to 30 percent and in drug-resistant (doxorubicin-resistant) cells by 5 percent to 20 percent. This indicates the potential usefulness of pomegranate extract in people exposed to oxidative stress and as a therapy for human cancers.

Compared to juice, the total phenolic content and free radical scavenging potential was significantly higher in the pomegranate extract enhanced in a lab compared to its two fractions (anthocyanins and copigments) and showed the highest radical scavenging activity against galvinoxyl and DPPH radicals, oxidative stress markers in human liver cancer.

Results indicated that anthocyanins and copigments act together synergistically in reducing oxidative stress. Pomegranate was shown to improve oxidative stress levels in a jaundice-induced animal model. Jaundice can be caused by hepatitis, gallstones, gallbladder cancer, and pancreatic tumors.

Preliminary studies show that pomegranate supplementation could prevent breast cancer by reducing two sex hormones related to breast cancer risk in a study of 64 healthy postmenopausal women who were randomly assigned to drink eight ounces of either 100 percent commercial pomegranate juice (intervention) or apple juice (control) for three weeks; the intervention group showed significant declines in both estrone and testosterone levels.

A pomegranate emulsion containing various bioactive phytochemicals was found to exert substantial chemopreventive effect against induced mammary tumors in rats via antiproliferative and proapoptotic actions, which disrupted the estrogen hormone, signaling a possible breast cancer treatment for humans.

An oral capsule containing a blend of pomegranate, green tea, broccoli, and turmeric, or an identical placebo were tested for six months in 199 men with localized prostate cancer. The supplement group had 63 percent lower prostate-specific antigen (PSA) levels, a marker of progression of prostate cancer, compared to the control group. This is credited to the polyphenol content in the supplement.

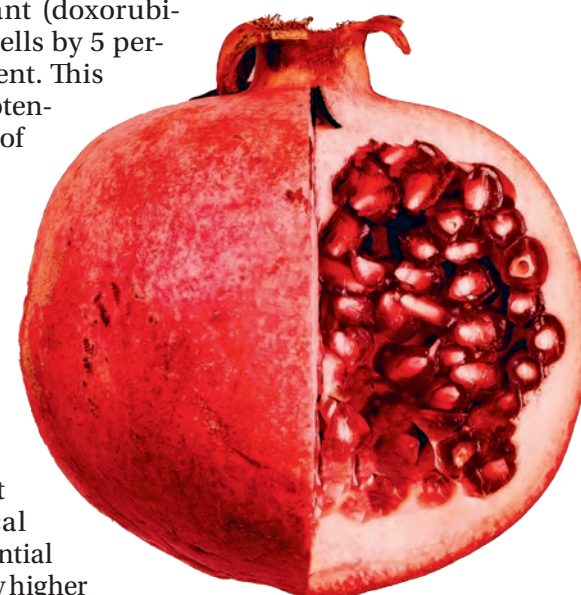
In a comprehensive review of clinical trial studies, researchers confirmed that pomegranate plays a vital role in prevention and treatment of breast, prostate, lung, colon, skin, and liver cancers.

4. Boosts Recovery of Injuries After Exercise

Consumption of pomegranate juice over three weeks improved two oxidative stress markers and thus decreased the oxidative damage caused by exercise in a study of 30 high-endurance athletes.

In a study of 19 Polish athletes, supplementation with 50 milliliters of pomegranate juice daily for two months showed a significant strengthening of plasma antioxidant potential in the supplementing group measured by the increase of total antioxidant capacity and IL-6 levels.

Watermelon juice enriched with pomegranate and citrulline showed no increase in muscle damage and a significant maintenance of force during exercise and a significant de-



Pomegranates may take a little more work to eat, but the effort pays biochemical benefits.

ZAMUROVIC BROTHERS/SHUTTERSTOCK

Researchers found that phenolic compounds in pomegranate may have a protective effect on skin exposed to high levels of air pollution.



Drinking pomegranate juice was shown to decrease oxidative damage caused by exercise.

MENTATODT/PEKELS

crease in the rating of perceived exertion and muscle soreness after exercise in 19 healthy men.

In a mice study, pomegranate red peel extract showed high antioxidant activity that significantly enhanced serum biochemical parameters and reduced oxidative stress. Scientists recommended pomegranate for a daily animal diet or as a beverage for humans to gain antioxidant protective effects and improve health.

Endurance running places substantial physiological strain on the body, which can develop into chronic inflammation and overuse injuries, but supplementation with pomegranate, curcumin, and methylsulfonylmethane (MSM) reduced systemic inflammation and oxidative stress without adverse side effects in 15 marathon runners.

5. Improves Skin and Premature Aging

In a review of current studies, researchers found that phenolic compounds in pomegranate may have a protective effect on skin exposed to high levels of air pollution. That effect includes increasing antioxidant activity by reducing harmful ROS related to oxidative stress and lowering inflammatory markers such as cytokines and chemokines in skin diseases and decreased premature skin aging caused by particles in the air.

In addition, pomegranate was shown to be beneficial for reducing harmful effects of solar UVB radiation on animal skin and ultraviolet (UVA and UVB) radiation on human skin. Daily oral pomegranate consumption (eight ounces of pomegranate juice or 1,000 milligrams of pomegranate extract) enhanced protection from UV photodamage in a study of 74 women.

6. Decreases Inflammation

In a meta-analysis of 16 randomized controlled trials involving 572 subjects, pomegranate supplementation significantly reduced inflammation biomarkers of hs-CRP, IL-6, and tumor necrosis factor alpha compared to the placebo group.

High-sensitivity C-reactive protein (hs-CRP) indicates your risk of developing coronary artery disease (narrowing of the heart's arteries) and inflammation in your body. Coronary artery disease can lead to a heart attack. Interleukin-6 (IL-6) is a protein that helps regulate immune responses and is used as a marker of immune system activation. IL-6 levels can be elevated with inflammation, infection, autoimmune disorders, cardiovascular diseases, and some cancers.

Tumor necrosis factor alpha is a protein that contributes to inflammation as well. In healthy people, it's an essential part of the immune system, helping the body mount attacks against invading bacteria and viruses and heal damaged tissues; in those having autoimmune diseases such as arthritis, excess levels of tumor necrosis factor alpha in the blood can lead to unnecessary inflammation and chronic pain.

Brain inflammation is one of the leading factors in neurological disorders such as dementia, including Alzheimer's disease. Scientists have found evidence that pomegranate peel extract provides preventive and progressive benefits in neural diseases by positively affecting spatial memory and decreasing biomarkers of oxidative stress and inflammation in a mouse model of neurodegeneration.

In a placebo-controlled study of 261 non-demented individuals from 50 to 75 years old, daily consumption of pomegranate juice (230 milliliters) stabilized the treated group's ability to learn visual information over a year.

A study of rats with aluminum chloride induced neurotoxicity showed that pomegranate peel extract could inhibit aluminum-induced oxidative stress and pathologies in the brain, possibly related to its anti-apoptotic and antioxidant abilities.

Super Abilities of Pomegranate

Scientists are increasingly interested in the therapeutic benefits of pomegranate on diabetes, stroke recovery, and clogged arteries. To learn more about pomegranate's ability to improve your health, see GreenMedInfo.com's database on pomegranate (the substance) and pomegranate peel.

Please see online version for sources.

Dr. Diane Fulton is an emeritus professor at Clayton State University. She holds Ph.D./MBA in Business (University of Tennessee-Knoxville) and a B.S. with Math/Secondary Education majors (University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee). During her 45-year career as administrator/professor teaching research and business, she authored 10 books, over 50 articles, and is now writing children's books about the body, mindfulness, and cross-cultural awareness. Her passion is to share her knowledge to integrate a healthy body, mind, and soul. This article was originally published on GreenMedInfo.com



Choosing to accept criticism gives us a broader world to explore with those we love.

MINDSET MATTERS

Why You Should Choose Love Over Fear

We transform ourselves and our relationships when we stop fighting to prove we're a good person

Continued from Page 1

In these cases, we generally feel blamed or attacked, and as a result, it can be more challenging to listen or imagine the situation through their eyes. Often, it's impossible to empathize with their pain.

We have a tendency in these situations to strike back and point the finger at them, or alternatively, defend ourselves and prove the other person wrong. It's a survival instinct and indeed, it can feel as if our very survival is at stake.

What's at stake is not our physical survival, but the survival of our version of ourselves. The person we are being characterized or experienced as by the other person is not the person we think or believe ourselves to be. And so, we try to protect the identity of the good self, the self who is innocent of what they are being accused of.

It's a healthy instinct to question accusations that feel unfair or unwarranted. It's also important to be able to set boundaries that prevent others' projections and deflections from landing on us.

If you are being assigned intentions that don't belong to you, it's important to be clear about your truth. It's also healthy and necessary to protect yourself from pain that takes the form of emotional attack. Emotional attacks and insults that are meant to harm are not OK, and need to be stopped. This isn't an article about learning to be a doormat in service of some false spiritual goal.

And yet, there is an enormous opportunity in these relational moments, when someone we care about is hurt, and when—whether we

It can feel impossible to empathize with someone's pain when they blame us for causing it.

understand it or not—we seem to be a part of their pain. There is an opportunity in these situations to choose to respond from love rather than react from fear.

When we feel emotionally attacked, blamed, or criticized in some way, we experience fear, even if we aren't consciously aware of it. Our ego is threatened. Our identity is threatened. Our narrative of our self is threatened.

Conflict feels dangerous to the survival of the ego organism.

As a result, we react from the place of fear, which means defending our ego or attacking back, attempting to disable the threat. Fear, as a primal emotion, can sweep over us like a tsunami and cause us to react without thinking or consulting our more rational and loving self. Our reaction is often out of alignment with how we feel, in our heart, about this other person.

If we want to choose love over fear as a life practice, we don't have to wait for a crisis to happen. We can simply use the opportunities presented in those moments that happen every day when the person we imagine ourselves to be doesn't align with how we are being seen in that moment.

To choose love in these situations is to first pause and take a full breath before doing anything. It is to stop and get quiet, to do our best to actually hear what the other person is saying, without defending our version of who we are or what we think happened.

It also means refraining from attacking back with a criticism of the other, or with something that they did or said (related or unrelated). It is to just listen—without conditions.

Operating from love is to set our own ego aside long enough to listen to the experience of the other. It is to be courageous enough to try to understand what the other person is experiencing, no matter how radically different it is from what we intended to happen, think happened, or believe was the cause of what happened.

Operating from love means having the strength of heart to understand and open our heart to what the pain is that the other is trying to express. A response—not a reaction—that comes from love is listening to the other's pain as if we were just ears hearing, ears alone, not ears attached to a head,

KAROLINA GRABOWSKA/PEXELS



There is a profound freedom and dignity in giving up the fight to prove we are the better person.

attached to an ego, attached to an identity, attached to a person intent on remaining intact and unchanged.

To live from love not fear, on a practical level, is to shift from a goal of protecting our ego and winning the argument and move into actually being kind and loving in our actions.

It is to be willing to stop proving that we're a good person and actually be that good person.

And amazingly, in the moments when we have the strength to choose love over fear, we are rewarded with the gift of experiencing ourselves as love, and something infinitely more than just the small, fragile ego we thought we were and so desperately needed to protect.

We gain the dignity of knowing that we have done something incredibly challenging and beautiful.

We are rewarded with a freedom that surpasses all other freedoms.

Ultimately, it is in our willingness to stop defending our idea of ourselves that we discover our true and indestructible self.

Nancy Collier is a psychotherapist, interfaith minister, author, public speaker, workshop leader, and author of several books on mindfulness and personal growth. She is available for individual psychotherapy, mindfulness training, spiritual counseling, public speaking, and workshops, and also works with clients via Skype around the world. For more information, visit NancyCollier.com



FIZES/SHUTTERSTOCK

Airports Step Up Mental Health Assistance as Passenger Anxiety Soars

As travel resumes, airports face greater volumes of people, many of whom are struggling with fallout from pandemic

KATJA RIDDERBUSCH

ATLANTA—Robin Hancock gently played her steel tongue drum with a pair of mallets, producing a set of soothing, mystical tones. They blended with the soft sound of chirping birds and bubbling creeks pouring from a Bluetooth speaker. Her warm voice invited the two visitors in the dimly lit room to slip into a nature setting of their choosing.

The 20-minute guided meditation took place at an unlikely location: Atlanta's Hartsfield-Jackson International Airport, the world's largest airport chapel. During the pandemic, he said he has seen depression, anxiety, and addiction increase among the travelers and workers served by him and his staff of 20 chaplains.

"We have encountered a tremendous amount of grief and fear," McBryer said, especially among airport employees. In the past year, he logged over 300 counseling sessions via Zoom and more in person. Many struggled with economic woes, health concerns, COVID deaths, as well as with feelings of guilt for being well and employed when some of their former colleagues weren't.

"We've seen a lot of workers come up to the chapel because they need a quiet space to sit, chill, and maybe cry," said Walker.

In the early months of the pandemic, Hartsfield-Jackson also became a refuge for up to 300 homeless people per night, many with mental health conditions such as addiction and schizophrenia. They were redirected to hotels rented by the city. Now, the Transportation Research Board is conducting a \$400,000 study of homelessness at airports, including how to stage mental health interventions.

"We will put together best practices of what airports can do to assist these vulnerable populations," said Steve Mayers, the airport's director of customer experience.

Chaplains typically encounter people in distress as they walk the concourses in what they call "the ministry of presence."

Walker and McBryer said they've seen more breakdowns and panic attacks during the pandemic. Many of these events are triggered by the contentious issue of wearing masks, said Walker. A few weeks ago, a gate agent called when a passenger furiously refused to wear a face covering and then broke down as the airline took her off the flight.

"It was obvious there was much more going on than just the mask issue," Walker said.

The guided meditation at Hartsfield-Jackson is designed to "help people breathe, recenter, step away," said Hancock, who inherited a love of flying from her pilot

Mental health and well-being were on the radar of airport administrators long before COVID.



Many airports offer interfaith chapels where anxious travelers can find helpful volunteers.



Flying might take us to the clouds, but getting there often comes with loads of stress—especially amid COVID.

the need for our services to a new level," said the Rev. Greg McBryer.

McBryer, an Anglican priest, is the corporate chaplain for American Airlines and director of the interfaith chapel at Dallas/Fort Worth International Airport, the world's largest airport chapel. During the pandemic, he said he has seen depression, anxiety, and addiction increase among the travelers and workers served by him and his staff of 20 chaplains.

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father and volunteers at the airport once a week. On a busy day, each session has up to five participants to accommodate physical-distancing guidelines.

"I can read people pretty well," she said. "Many of them carry a lot of vulnerability and angst right now."

Most people are quiet when they come in, and their bodies are tense. Hancock remembers an older couple who were on their way to Texas for a family emergency. After the meditation, the couple became more talkative.

"They were fearful about what to expect. They were fearful about traveling," Hancock said. "They were fearful just being among people."

Cattie, the clinical psychologist, said practices such as mindfulness, meditation, yoga, and controlled breathing can be very effective at thwarting anxiety triggers that are inherent in air travel.

Mental health and well-being were on the radar of airport administrators long before COVID, but some services were paused because of the pandemic. Now, though, they're making a comeback. Several airports have yoga, stretching, and silent meditation areas. Live music and therapy pet programs are also intended to calm stressed-out travelers.

As more people get vaccinated, passenger volumes continue to rise and more trips are for vacations and other joyous occasions. Still, Cattie expects the pandemic's mental health fallout to last a while longer.

"COVID has seeped into every crack and every foundation and created so much loss and change and fear," she said. "There will be a huge echo."

In her clinical practice, she's seen many patients who are anxious about rejoining life, with its crowded places and people on the move.

"This past year, many of us have been living in a safety bubble," she said. For most people, traveling is a social muscle that hasn't been exercised in a while. "It's OK to be scared," she said. "It's normal to feel uncomfortable."

Katja Ridderbusch is an Atlanta-based independent journalist. Print, radio, online. German-American. Ridderbusch focuses on health care, business, and social issues. This article was originally published on Kaiser Health News.

WISE HABITS

Delight in Uncertainty

Life is beyond our control—and this is what makes it interesting

LEO BABAUTA

Most of us have a troubled relationship with uncertainty, often without even knowing it.

Our most difficult problems often stem from uncertainty: procrastination, overwhelm, distraction, anxiety, frustration with others, beating ourselves up, trouble with forming (or quitting) habits, health issues, relationship issues, financial issues, control or perfectionist issues.

At the root of these may be our troubled relationship with uncertainty. We don't like uncertainty, we want to avoid or control uncertainty, and we get stressed when we can't. And uncertainty is unavoidable: nearly everything is uncertain nearly all of the time.

The good news is that uncertainty doesn't have to be this terrible thing that we hate and need to avoid. In fact, we can delight in uncertainty, and fall in love with it.

This new relationship with uncertainty can unlock so much for us—freedom and joy and the ability to take on whatever we want.

Let's dive in!

Finding the Delight in Uncertainty

We might instinctively dislike uncertainty, but in truth, we would be so bored without it. Imagine watching a movie and always knowing how it turns out, or reading the same book over and over. We want surprise, adventure, and possibility.

Uncertainty is the place where we learn—if we are certain about something, there's nothing new to learn. It's the place where we form intimate relationships, create art, make something new. It's the place of discovery, play, dance, growth. It's the prerequisite for adventure.

Connect with the times when you've felt the most meaning and joy: these times

were filled with delicious uncertainty.

Imagine doing something meaningful for someone, with uncertainty along for the ride, adding so much meaning to the endeavor.

Imagine the uncertainty and dance of a new relationship, the vulnerability, and discovery of it.

Notice the uncertainty in your life right now: is there a way you could be grateful for it?

How to Practice

Of course, this doesn't come naturally to most of us. We like our routine, we like our control, we like solid ground under our feet. Unfortunately, life doesn't let us have that solid ground. Or maybe I should say "fortunately," because life would be dull and meaningless without groundlessness and uncertainty.

So how can we learn to delight in the uncertainty? Practice.

Here's the practice you might try:

1. Notice the uncertainty in a task.

A good signal that you're feeling uncertainty is that you feel like avoiding it. If that's the case, notice how turning towards the task (even thinking about it) causes you

to feel, as a bodily sensation. This is how uncertainty feels in your body.

2. Commit to dancing with it. Turning away from the uncertainty gives you certain predictable results in your life. What would it be like to do something different? Commit to doing something different: face it, be with it, dance with it. Give yourself 10 minutes to be with the uncertainty of this task.

3. See the opportunity in the task, see the joy in it. What could you do with this task that would light you up?

4. Let yourself move, physically. Get up, and move. Dance, do some exercise, walk, jump. If we're stuck sitting, it's harder to feel delight. We need to move.

And to really see what the world is like in this moment—look around, find the delight in this ever-changing moment, and full appreciation for life!

What delight can you find in this task, in this moment? Keep practicing, each day, and see what happens in your life!

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

If we are already certain about something, there's little to learn.



ALL PHOTOS BY SHUTTERSTOCK

Sometimes we spend so much effort defining ourselves through possessions that we forget to discover who we actually are.

How to Declutter Your Life and Heal Your Heart

Our lifestyle and possessions can be rooted in confusion about who we are

JENNIFER BURGER

There are many wonderful reasons for decluttering your life, but one that's very rarely mentioned is healing a broken heart.

I've been a minimalist for nearly a decade. Before that, my life looked very different. I was a work-and-shopaholic. It was stressful and exhausting.

There were so many things that I wanted to do and be, and it came from a place of deep longing. As a little girl, I never felt like I fit in. I was a first-generation American, and I felt most comfortable in our family restaurant, curled up next to my grandmother, packing fortune cookies into tiny wax bags.

But at school, things were different. My round face and thick, dark hair set me apart, and I quickly learned to feel uncomfortable in my own skin. Most days, I longed to be anyone other than who I saw in the mirror.

Then one day, I realized something exciting. With the right shoes and the latest jeans, I could fit in with everyone else. I begged my mom to take me to the Gap, and a new habit was formed.

Throughout my teens and 20s, I shopped compulsively. My clothes were like a suit of armor, with stiletto heels and designer dresses to protect me, no one had to see the shy, insecure girl hiding behind a very expensive closet.

Things only escalated from there. As I got older, I used owning and doing more to hide from all the pain in my life: my

I learned that the more I worked and the more I shopped, the less I had to feel. But in the end, it wasn't sustainable.



Possessions can seem to offer excitement and distraction, but the feeling soon falls.

failing marriage, my dead-end career, and the loss of my younger brother. I learned that the more I worked and the more I shopped, the less I had to feel.

But in the end, it wasn't sustainable. I was exhausted and trapped in the gilded cage that I'd built for myself. I knew deep in my heart that something had to change, and somewhat surprisingly, it all started with decluttering my life.

How to Declutter Your Life

When I first discovered minimalism, I hoped for a functional wardrobe and an easy-to-clean home. I thought decluttering would be quick and easy and that nothing fundamental would change about my life.

Before long, I learned that this couldn't be further from the truth. I quickly realized that decluttering is about so much more than letting go of old stuff.

Instead, it's a profound act of introspection. For every old handbag or never-worn sweater that goes out the door, there are thoughts and beliefs that need to be released as well.

This mindful approach is both the secret to effective decluttering and the unspoken benefit. Here's are some tips to help you get started:

1. Get Clear About What Matters Most to You

My life was overwhelming because I was trying to do everything and please everyone. Deep down, I was still that little girl

who felt like she didn't fit in, and I was desperate to prove everyone wrong.

I worked late, wore the most expensive shoes, and decorated my house like the stylish magazines that covered my bedside table. I thought that if I kept playing by the "rules," I'd eventually feel better about myself.

But you know what? I don't know who wrote those rules, but it sure wasn't me. I was never going to feel successful or good enough by chasing other people's dreams. Instead, I had to get clear on my values and priorities—and if you want to declutter your life, you need to do the same.

This step is an often-overlooked part of decluttering, but it's essential.

Get out a pen and paper, tune out the noise, and decide what you believe. What are your values, and what kind of life do you want for yourself? This clarity will become the compass that will guide you through the decluttering process.

2. Evaluate Your Stuff Against Your Goals

The beauty of defining what matters in life is that it helps you see what doesn't.

Slowly and systematically, I began to work through everything, from my closet to my to-do list. I questioned everything from this new perspective—what would help me create the life I truly wanted? And what was simply weighing me down?

3. Understand the 'Why' Behind What You Own and Do

Once you've identified the nonessential, the next step is to let go—and this part can be challenging to explain. Even when we know that something isn't adding value to our lives, it can be hard to let go.

I can't tell you how many times I cried over something seemingly insignificant, like an old textbook or a silk blouse. I felt so silly—until I eventually realized that my tears weren't for my physical possessions. Instead, I mourned for the hopes and dreams that my stuff represented.

I couldn't let go of that old physics book because it was proof that I was once smart—and if I was smart, then I mattered. But without the evidence, who was I? A college dropout who never lived up to her full potential.

Decluttering my life meant facing stories like this time and time again. It wasn't easy or comfortable, but I soon discovered that overcoming my limiting beliefs was the key to letting go.

The more I understood my relationship with my stuff, the more empowered I felt. I began to declutter with confidence, and something inside me started to change.

As I cleared the excess that had weighed me down for decades, I began to feel more like myself. And perhaps more significantly, I began to mend my long-broken heart.

I've been writing about minimalism for over five years because I know that decluttering your life is about more than letting go of old sweatshirts.

Instead, it's about bridging the gap between who we are and who we think we have to be. It's life-affirming, and I'm grateful to share this story with you.

As a shopaholic turned minimalist, Jennifer Burger is passionate about helping overloaded women clear their clutter and create space for joy. She blogs at Simply + Fiercely and is the author of "Mindful Decluttering," a free decluttering guide that will help you clear your clutter. This article was originally published on BecomingMinimalist.com



We're living in a time when parents are supposed to be our children's best friends—and parents.

Am I Supposed to Be My Kid's Friend?

We've abandoned the distinction between adult and child—and our kids are paying for it

NANCY COLIER

Parents often ask me for advice in managing their children's use of technology, usually the amount of time the child uses it, or the kind of tech the child is using.

I suggest they set limits and guidelines for incorporating those limits. The parent then says something like, "But if I do what you're suggesting, I'm going to be yelled

It is precisely because we love our children that we need to be able to tolerate their not liking us all the time.

at or hated by my kid; it's going to cause a huge problem."

I usually smile and say "yes." This seems to confuse the parent, as if they want a solution that doesn't create disagreement—a policy that's easy to implement. I then deliver the following, sometimes surprising news alert: "As a parent, you're not supposed to be your child's friend."

We're living in a time when parents are supposed to be our children's best

friends—and parents.

Moms and dads hang out with their kids as if they're hanging out with peers. When there's a disagreement, parents believe we're supposed to negotiate with our kids as if we're negotiating with equals. Parents of 7-year-olds report to me (with a straight face) all the reasons their child doesn't agree with their decisions regarding the child's behavior.

Continued on Page 10

Liver Damage Is Off the Charts

Alcohol and fructose fuel surge in liver disease amid pandemic lockdown

JOSEPH MERCOLA

Rates of alcoholic liver disease have soared 30 percent in the last year at the University of Michigan's health system, a rise doctors blame on higher amounts of alcohol intake during the pandemic. Anecdotal reports suggest that some patients increased drinking to a bottle of wine

or five to six drinks daily from March 2020 to March 2021, an amount that raises the risk of severe liver disease.

Speaking with NPR, University of Michigan liver specialist Dr. Jessica Mellinger said, "In my conversations with my colleagues at other institutions, everybody is saying the same thing: 'Yep, it's astronomical. It's just gone off the charts.'" Mel-

linger said the pandemic "supercharged" already rising rates of liver disease, which are now also showing up in younger populations.

"We're seeing kids in their late 20s and early 30s with a disease that we previously thought was kind of exclusive to middle age," she said.

Continued on Page 14



Drinking alcohol can lead to a number of health risks in the short- and long-term.

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When there's a disagreement, parents believe we're supposed to negotiate with our kids as if we're negotiating with equals.

Am I Supposed to Be My Kid's Friend?

We've abandoned the distinction between adult and child—and our kids are paying for it

Continued from Page 9

I see parents whose children under the age of five get an equal vote in setting up the rules of the house, which includes the rules that will apply to the children. I hear the delight of parents who are befriended by their kids on social media. We're spoon-fed the message that we're supposed to be buddies with our kids and that they should like us, all the time. And that we're bad parents if they're upset by our decisions.

We've thrown away the distinction between adult and child. This has undermined our ability to share the wisdom of our adult experience. We're choosing to be our children's playmates rather than do what's best for them.

As parents, we're taking the easy path, the path of least resistance, telling ourselves that if our kids like us, then we must be doing this parenting thing right. In the process of trying to be friends with our kids, however, we're giving away our authority, depriving them of the experience of being taken care of, and denying them the serenity, trust, and confidence that arises from knowing we can stand our ground and protect them even when it incites their anger. It is precisely because we love our children that we need to be able to tolerate their not liking us all the time.

Allowing children to make their own rules around technology is like handing an opioid addict a bottle of oxycontin and asking him to write his own prescription, need or not.

When we're driven by the desire or responsibility to be liked, we're giving ourselves an impossible task. We simply cannot prioritize being liked and simultaneously raise healthy, sane human beings who can tolerate frustration and disappointment. We are setting ourselves up for suffering and failure.

We strive to be liked for giving them what they want while denying ourselves the dignity of providing our kids with what they really need. We're opting for the easiest, most pleasurable option over the deeper, more thoughtful and satisfying choice.

We are also, in this friending-overparenting process, failing our kids. Our kids need boundaries and guidelines. A woman I work with—who was raised by a parent who, above all, wanted to be her friend—put it this way: "I never felt like there was some-

one to stop me if I got to the end of the earth and was going to die off."

Our kids may scream and throw things, but they also want us to know things they don't know. They want us to stick with our wisdom despite their rants, to be willing to tolerate their rants in service to their best interests—to take care of them in ways they can't yet take care of themselves.

Our kids want us to demonstrate fierce grace.

We, too, feel our best when we walk the walk of fierce grace.

Often children don't know what's best for them, and almost never do they know what's best for them when it comes to technology use. It's hard enough for us grownups to realize what's best for ourselves, and children have front brains that are not anywhere near fully developed.

Allowing children to make their own rules around technology is like handing an opioid addict a bottle of oxycontin and asking him to write his own prescription, need or not. Young children and teenagers should not get an equal vote in matters that relate to their technology use, nor in many other matters.

As parents, we usually possess at least two or more decades of experience than our children. Put simply, we know things they don't. We can tell them this truth. This is why our kids are not equal in matters that require discipline or hard choices. These are often situations that overwhelm their brains' pleasure centers, hormones, and inexperienced thinking.

Remember this: It's okay for your child to be upset with you; it's okay if they don't like the decisions you make; it's okay if your child is mad at you for setting limits and sticking to those limits.

You're allowed to say "no." It takes great courage to say "no." You're not a bad parent if your child goes through periods when he or she doesn't like you—and maybe even says she hates you for a while. It probably means you're doing your job.

Your role as the authority in your child's life is critical. The more you assume that role, the more you'll feel the wisdom of your own authority.

Being the authority doesn't mean turning a deaf ear to your child's anger, disappointment, or feelings. We can listen to our kids' emotions and thoughts while simultaneously holding our ground on what we know is best for them. Being the authority in your kid's life doesn't mean being callous or insensitive, but it does mean being brave enough to stay strong in the face of their fury or resentment.

Your role is to be the grown-up in the parent-child relationship, to be loving in your willingness to do what's best for your kids. Your role is not to be your child's friend.

Nancy Colier is a psychotherapist, interfaith minister, author, public speaker, and workshop leader. For more information, visit NancyColier.com

WISE HABITS

Want More Time for Your Meaningful Work?

The days flow by and our deeper mission is often forgotten—but that can change

LEO BABAUTA

A member of my Fearless Training Program has a full-time business that she loves, but it isn't the meaningful work she'd like to do in the world. She struggles with finding enough time for that meaningful work.

Can you relate to this? The rest of our life fills up all the space—how can we find enough time to focus on what's really important?

This is a common problem for anyone who wants to launch a new venture, volunteer, create art, write a book, or build an audience or a brand. How do we create the time when we're already busy and overloaded?

It can feel overwhelming when it's a huge pile of stuff and seemingly not enough time.

I'm going to share some ideas in this article:

1. Create structure for all the stuff in your life
2. Create even more space
3. Really pour yourself into it
4. Bring some zen to disruptions and frustrations
5. Replenish yourself
6. Bring freedom, joy, and energy to any activity

These are all meant to address various problems we face when we're making time for our meaningful work. You can decide which ones apply to your life. Let's take a look!

Create Structure in Your Life

Our lives can feel overwhelming, with too many things to do. We have chores, small tasks, messages to answer, bills to pay, dishes to wash, people to contact, and much more. So how do we handle all of this?

First, it can feel overwhelming when it's a huge pile of stuff and seemingly not enough time.

Second, the small stuff will overwhelm all the available space, because it always feels urgent when we're feeling behind and overwhelmed.

So one good answer is to create structure. Create spaces to deal with all the things in your life:

- Bill Pay Mondays
- Inbox Zero Tuesdays
- Admin Fridays
- House Chore Party Saturdays
- Email and Messages Happy Hour—daily at 4 p.m.
- Morning Planning and Intentions
- Monthly Taxes Day
- Meaningful Work Play Time at 10 a.m. daily
- And so on

You don't need these specific spaces; your structure will be different than these. But if you have a space for all the stuff, you can relax and know that it will be taken care of at its assigned time.

With structure, you can then create intentional space for your meaningful work.

Create Even More Space

Let's say you're so busy that you can only find 30 minutes a week for your meaningful work. That's a great start!

Maybe you can create more time by bundling your emails and messages into a certain hour each day. Maybe you can free up some time by hiring a babysitter, a house cleaner, or someone on Craigslist to haul away your junk for you. Someone to answer your customer service emails, or an administrative assistant to take care of routine tasks.

Or maybe you can eliminate or simplify some things to create more space. Get out of commitments. Tell people no. Ask for postponements.

Sometimes we can cut out distractions, such as social media or video watching or news/website reading. If we're honest, there's a lot of wasted time in our days that can be streamlined for the sake of what's truly important.

Get creative. Sometimes it takes a little time investment to simplify, but then it pays off in space in a week or two.

Really Pour Yourself Into It

Once you have the space, it can be hard to focus. All the other stuff is calling to you. Maybe you spend the first 20 minutes of the 40 minutes you've carved out just getting ready. Maybe the whole focus block gets pushed back until later because you feel something else is more urgent.

Create the structure to make the meaningful work happen. Sometimes it means doing it on a video call with someone else and each of you does your meaningful work on mute for an hour.

But when you're in the focus block of time, pour yourself into it. Give it your full being. Be all in.

Bring Some Zen to Disruptions

Sometimes, despite our best efforts, we



Distractions are inevitable, but taking them lightly will let you get back to your important task with the shortest interruption.

get disrupted. Our kid interrupts wanting a snack. Our spouse interrupts with their latest frustration. A message comes in that sidetracks us.

And then we can get frustrated or angry. That's normal. Give yourself a breath or two, and some compassion.

Then let it go. Relax, breathe, and accept the interruption as just a natural part of the chaos of life. It doesn't have to derail you completely. See the gift in the interruption. Find the gratitude for having this person in your life.

Then simply return to the meaningful task, with your whole self.

If we're honest, there's a lot of wasted time in our days that can be streamlined for the sake of what's truly important.

Replenish Yourself

It can be hard to find focus when we're drained, anxious, exhausted, or feeling resigned and resentful. We just don't have the focus or capacity to face anything.

So it can be a great act of leadership to recognize this and take care of it. This is an act of generosity to yourself and your meaningful work.

Recharge your batteries, give yourself nurturing and nourishment, and replenish yourself so that you can return with full life force.

Some ideas:

- Get more sleep. Shut down earlier and let yourself relax into deep, nourishing sleep.
- Get outdoors daily. Go for a walk or run, enjoy the quiet beauty of nature.
- Take a hot bath. Drink some tea while doing nothing else. Take some space.
- Any kind of self-care is helpful: a nap, yoga, a workout, therapy, talk with a friend, get a massage, meditate.

More space, more relaxing, more nourishing.

Bring Freedom, Joy, and Energy to Every Activity

We can feel trapped because we're craving freedom, but our day job isn't allowing for it. We can feel drained and discouraged because our day job feels draining, stressful, dull.

But it doesn't have to be that way. We can bring joy and freedom to any activity, including our routine work.

What would it be like to do the activity you normally experience as suffocating with a sense of freedom and joy?

What if you could do the dull routine activities with vitality? What if you could be lit up in any moment you liked?

This is a possibility few people allow themselves. I encourage you to explore it. What could your life be like, bringing freedom and joy to anything you liked?

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

What People Are Saying



I read The Epoch Times daily. I still like hard papers [...] and I still like to grab that paper in my hand, but I get more printed versions of stories than ever before. You guys have done an amazing job, and really—I think there's such a void in media, especially newspapers. They slant so solidly one way that there are very few papers that I can really feel that I can rely on, and The Epoch Times is one.

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Talk show host



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DR. SEBASTIAN GORKA
Military and intelligence analyst and former deputy assistant to the president



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THE EPOCH TIMES

TRUTH AND TRADITION

A Simple, Natural Approach to a Better Memory

MAT LECOMPTÉ

Brain games, crosswords, hobbies, and conversation can all help your memory, but you should prioritize getting a better night's sleep.

A good sleep might be one of the best things you can do to build a strong memory and improve your ability to think and recall information.

Sleep influences memory function in several ways. The first and most obvious is that it makes it a lot easier to pay attention. Fighting to stay awake can make learning nearly impossible, and caffeine can only help so much.

Being well-rested is the best way to stay alert and focused.

Your brain is better prepared to learn after a good night's sleep, as well. The information you learn each day is temporarily stored in the hippocampus, where it can take up a lot of limited space. Sleep helps shrink and store these memories, so more space is available for the next day.

It also helps you filter out all the unimportant stuff you may have picked up that day.

Memory consolidation also happens during sleep, which basically means memories can be stored and grouped together. This process usually occurs during stage two sleep, a lighter sleep stage that occurs a couple of hours before waking up.

But think about this: If you're waking up early or not moving through the stages of sleep because of going to bed too late, you could be missing out on, or at least compromising, this important process.

Getting 7 to 8 hours of uninterrupted sleep each night can do wonders for your memory. It may involve some changes to your routine, like setting a bedtime and wake time. Your body will adjust in a relatively short period.

When it does, you may realize a noticeably improved memory.

Mat Lecompte is a health and wellness journalist. This article was first published on BelMarraHealth.com.



Sleep plays a crucial role in restoring focus and consolidating memory.

Memory consolidation also happens during sleep, which basically means memories can be stored and grouped together.



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Declutter Your Collectibles With the ‘Longaberger Principle’

Those things we once pursued with passion can often feel difficult to let go despite our new interests

JENNIFER TRITT

As my love and I prepare to downsize and move, we’re sorting through our belongings once again. We’ve completed much decluttering over the years as we’ve grown to embrace a minimalist lifestyle. We examined our belongings with discerning eyes and parted with what we no longer used or cherished.

Our living space is functional, open, and peaceful. In my experience, decluttering stuff helps to declutter the mind and open the heart. Having less to do allows us to be. In this fresh space, we can explore new interests and find new meaning in our lives. We’ve donated clothing, kitchen items, furniture, art, and books. We’ve invited our college-aged kids to take what they want. We’ve eliminated dumpsters full of unnecessary paperwork and sorted through mementos and keepsakes, holding onto the most precious.

Now we’re looking at furniture and collectibles. We’re giving furniture that won’t fit into our new home to family members who’ve expressed interest. We’re planning a garage sale and attempting to sell some items on eBay.

I’m doing my best not to push, and I’m

thrilled he’s ready to part with some sports memorabilia and work-related mementos, even though he’s holding onto the comic books and Hot Wheels for now. He may later decide that he’s ready to part with them. This is a personal process, and there’s no need to rush decisions.

The Longaberger Principle

Last night I coined the phrase “the Longaberger lesson” when we discovered, with shock, that some items he thought would be in great demand failed to garner any bids on eBay. I had a similar experience, early in my decluttering, when I decided to let go of my once-treasured Longaberger baskets.

I found an auction house that was about to host a Longaberger auction and anticipated making big bucks. The amount of money that I made on my collection would have paid for one basket during the heyday of my collecting.

This experience and resulting deflated feeling got me thinking. Why do we collect? How do we arrive at the decision to part with our collections? What is the true value of a collection?

I collected baskets because I thought they were beautiful, many of them were useful, I enjoyed comparing collections

Longaberger baskets became quite the collectible, though the trend has passed, along with the value. It’s a pattern that can teach an important principle about our relationship to material things.



and hosting parties with girlfriends, and I loved seeking the sense of completion that finalizing a collection could bring. I spent a significant amount of money and managed to rationalize each purchase.

I believed my collection would increase in value and never considered that it might decrease. I parted with the baskets because they reminded me of a different time in my life and I no longer found them useful. I’ve eliminated other collections that were simply taking up space: collectible plates, jewelry, dishes, and books—and it’s been freeing.

How to Part With Collectibles

Here are a few thoughts on how to approach parting with a collection:

1. Keep a piece.

When I sold my baskets, I kept a few that I use. If you have a collection in storage—for example, Hot Wheels, you could create a small display of your favorites that you actually enjoy seeing as you pass by, and part with the rest.

2. Seek collectors.

Find your kindred spirits. There are many ways to sell your collection: online, at a garage sale, or through an auction house or flea market. See any money you make as a bonus as you part with your collection. Even if the collection has decreased in monetary value, the sentimental value may be equally important to the new owner.

3. Embrace change and release guilt.

Our interests and preferences change over time. We grow. We expand our interests, our values shift, and our tastes change. Remember the joy you felt while collecting, and release the guilt you may attach to the dollars you spent and will not be able to recover.

My collection was packed and stored for a while, and whenever I saw the boxes, I felt bad. I was happy to free the space and release the energy. I also released the guilt for the money I had invested.

4. Define value more broadly.

Value extends beyond the price you can fetch for an item or a collection. What you once loved, but wish to release, someone else may love and treasure. Focus on the fun you had amassing your collection, and move on to pursuing your new interests. Live in the present.

5. Find joy in giving.

Seek friends or other folks who would appreciate your collection. Enjoy watching the joy on their faces when they receive. Consider donating or selling if you can’t find a friend or acquaintance who’s interested.

I do believe that minimalists can be collectors. Although I’ve shifted my priority from things to experiences, I continue to collect refrigerator magnets from my travels. Looking at them makes me smile as I think about the associated visit.

Jennifer Tritt is an academic counselor at a community college, has recently adopted a minimalist lifestyle, and is passionate about sharing her experiences. This article was originally published on BecomingMinimalist.com

It can be hard to part with collections we spent a lot of money creating, even though the value has dropped—along with our interest.

MADE TO MOVE

Want to Be More Creative? Go for a Walk.

Get creative juices flowing through moving your arms and legs

CONAN MILNER

Walking is as healthy as it is simple. This easy, natural movement has proven neurological and physiological benefits, but it can also help you to think more creatively.

For author Nita Sweeney, walking helps spark ideas in her writing. She says the rhythmic movement and the physical distance away from her work provide clarity to concepts that previously seemed too difficult to articulate.

“Once I let go of the thing I’m worried about or trying to figure out, often a solution will arise. It will often just pop up into my consciousness,” she said.

Sweeney is not alone. Lots of writers use walking to stimulate new ideas or to refine the ones they’re struggling with.

Tim Tamashiro says he began walking when he was the host of “Tonic,” a music show on Canadian radio. Tamashiro said short walks would help him find the words he needed to fill the program.

“My daily routine would have me writing 12 to 16 short stories that I would prepare for the radio show. As you could imagine,

Lots of writers use walking to stimulate new ideas or to refine the ones they’re struggling with.

Few things can get creative ideas flowing as pleasantly as going outside for a walk.

I was often stuck with writer’s block. I learned that if I stood up and took a 10-minute walk outside, I would return refreshed and ready with a fresh approach to the story

DUSTOCK/SHUTTERSTOCK



I was working on,” Tamashiro said.

Tamashiro says he still goes for walks every chance gets, and it continues to inspire his creativity. He says walking proved to be a reliable tool when he wrote his first book.

“A brisk walk always helped me clarify ideas and come up with new approaches,” he said.

Walking can also help with other creative endeavors. Jeff Wilson, host of “Real Rail Adventures” on PBS, said that when he was a music major in college studying classical piano, he used to practice hard for a couple of hours and then take a break with a long walk, no matter the weather.

“I always came back to the instrument fresh and ready to play, with some of the problems I’d been experiencing in my playing ironed out from having just thought a bit about them,” Wilson said.

Wilson found that, when it came to walking and music, he was in good company. Ludwig Van Beethoven, Gustav Mahler, and Benjamin Britten all took long walks to spark their compositional ideas.

“Creativity is encouraged by walking,” Wilson said.

Exposure to Household Chemicals Affects Gut Microbiome

Research finds children at greater risk for chemical exposures and resulting consequences

A study out of Washington State University, in collaboration with Duke University, has found the first evidence linking exposure to household chemicals with impacts on the gut microbiomes of children.

Published in the journal *Environmental Science and Technology Letters*, the pioneering study could lead to better awareness of the hazards of repeated exposures to common chemicals generally regarded as safe for use in the home.

Chemicals at Home: A Veiled Threat

The study, based in North Carolina and funded by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency and the National Institute of Environmental Health Sciences, sought to gauge the average toddler’s exposure to semivolatile organic compounds (SVOCs) in the indoor environment.

Researchers measured levels of SVOCs in urine, blood, and fecal samples obtained from 69 children between the ages of 3 and 6 years. Mothers and children were enrolled as a cohort from participants in the larger Newborn Epigenetics Study (NEST). Medical data for each child was obtained from NEST records.

Among the chemicals detected in the children’s biological samples were phthalates, found in consumer plastics and personal care products like soap and lotion, and per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances (PFASs), found in the coatings on cookware, carpets, and furnishings, as well as in paint, cleaning products, and more.

Toddlers More Susceptible to Chemical Exposures

Extensive data was collected from mothers regarding their child’s home environment, diet, health, and behavior, with dietary questions limited to potential exposures to PFAS and phthalates. Common sources of dietary exposure to these chemicals include foods in single-use plastic or micro-wavable packaging, and frequent restaurant meals, as many restaurants serve food that has been stored in plastic containers.

Blood and urine samples were analyzed for 44 SVOC biomarkers, including organophosphate esters, parabens, phenols, antimicrobials, phthalate compounds, and PFASs. Fecal samples were tested for the presence of bacterial and fungal colonies that indicate the health of the human gut microbiome.

After analyzing the samples, researchers found that children with higher levels of certain chemicals in their bloodstream had lower amounts of specific bacterial colonies and less bacterial diversity in their gastrointestinal tract. Specifically, higher levels of PFASs in the blood correlated to a reduction in types and numbers of certain bacterial strains, and increased phthalates were associated with reduced fungal populations.

The Microbiome Works to Maintain Balance

Researchers were surprised to discover the presence of several types of dehalogenating bacteria in the guts of children with high levels of chemical exposures. Dehalogenating bacteria are a class of bacteria often used to remediate persistent chemical contaminants in the soil and groundwater. Dehalogenating bacteria are not commonly found in the human gut.

According to the study, this appears to be an attempt by the microbiome to self-regulate an environment under attack from chemicals. According to Courtney Gardner, lead author of the study, “Finding the increased levels of these type of bacteria ... means that, potentially, the gut microbiome is trying to correct itself.”

According to Gardner, the correlation between chemical exposure and less abundant bacterial organisms in the gut was the most pronounced takeaway from the study, and potentially the most concerning. With our scientific understanding of the microbiome still limited, what we don’t know could hurt us.

“These microbes are perhaps not the main drivers [of health] and may have more subtle roles in our biology, but it might be the case that one of these microbes does have a unique function, and decreasing its levels may have significant health impacts,” Gardner said.



ALL PHOTOS BY SHUTTERSTOCK

A study has linked exposure to household chemicals with impacts on the gut microbiomes of children, which may increase their risk of some diseases.

“Gaining a more holistic understanding of the interactions between human-made chemicals, the gut microbiome, and human health is a critical step in advancing public health.”

Courtney Gardner, lead author of the study



More Chemical Exposures: Fewer Healthy Microbes

Children, especially toddlers, are more vulnerable to ingesting environmental toxins for many reasons, including closer proximity to carpets, dirt, and dust, and a tendency to put toys and household items into their mouths.

Kids are also at greater risk from toxic exposure due to their smaller size, dietary habits, and inability to modify their environment. It’s up to adults to protect them, which begins with awareness of the causes and effects of chemical exposures.

Gardner hopes the study will prompt more research into diagnostic tools for detecting chemical exposures, as well as probiotic interventions to improve health outcomes. “Gaining a more holistic understanding of the interactions between human-made chemicals, the gut microbiome, and human health is a critical step in advancing public health,” she said.

Are Microbes the Key to Human Health?

The human microbiome refers to the collection of microbes, including bacteria, fungi, viruses, parasites, and protozoa living in and on the human body. It’s estimated that there are 200 times more microbial genes in the human body than human genes. Not acknowledged by science until the 1990s, much of the functioning of the microbiome remains to be discovered.

Put simply, the microbiome is responsible for supporting human life. So far, science has credited the bacteria in our bodies with helping digest food, metabolizing vitamins and minerals, regulating the immune system, and protecting the body from diseases caused by unhealthy microbes.

Many autoimmune diseases, such as rheumatoid arthritis and multiple sclerosis, are associated with dysfunction in the microbiome. You may even be the recipient of ancestral bacteria in the form of a microbiome inheritance that functions not unlike the passing of DNA from generation to generation.

Dietary support for the microbiome is one of the most powerful ways to please your microbes. Fruits, vegetables, and seeds like flax and chia, high in soluble fiber, are excellent probiotics that not only boost the immune system but also balance the microbiome. For more information about the microbiome, consult GreenMedInfo.com, the world’s most widely referenced, evidence-based natural medical resource.

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EDGAR CASTREJON/UNSPLASH

Avocado, olive oil, legumes, whole grains, nuts, seeds, fruits, and veggies are anti-inflammatory foods with healthy cholesterol.

Using Cholesterol to Reduce Inflammation

Foods that offer a dose of the ‘good’ cholesterol can help counteract the ‘bad’

MAT LECOMPTÉ

Here’s a crazy concept: You may be able to reduce inflammation by increasing cholesterol.

Now, why would you want to increase cholesterol? Doesn’t high cholesterol contribute to atherosclerosis, high blood pressure, and inflammation?

Most certainly can. But remember, not all cholesterol is created equal.

First, you’ve got low-density lipoprotein—LDL—cholesterol. This is the bad stuff. It’s the stuff that can accumulate along arterial walls and blood vessels to boost blood pressure, increase the risk for heart disease, and contribute to inflammation.

On the other hand, there is high-density lipoprotein, or HDL cholesterol. It’s the “good” cholesterol you hear about, and it picks up excess cholesterol and transports it to your liver, where it is eventually excreted as waste.

New research has revealed that more HDL may lead to less inflammation.

People were 23 percent less likely to have a cardiovascular event over a 10-year period for every 22 percent increase in the anti-inflammatory capabilities of HDL in their blood.

A recent study published in *Circulation*, the American Heart Association journal, has shown that HDL cholesterol can fight inflammation in blood vessels and help doctors identify patients at higher risk for cardiovascular events.

The research uncovered that HDL could contribute to anti-atherosclerotic function in a number of ways that are not reflected by simple cholesterol measurements. They include:

- HDL’s anti-inflammatory abilities were 32 percent higher in those who had a “healthy” level in their blood.
- People were 23 percent less likely to have a cardiovascular event over a 10-year period for every 22 percent increase in the anti-inflammatory capabilities of HDL in their blood.

How do you get more HDL cholesterol to reduce LDL cholesterol and help reduce the risks of a heart attack or stroke? It’s relatively simple: Eat more foods that can boost HDL and limit those that contribute to LDL deposits.

Anti-inflammatory foods like avocado, olive oil, legumes, whole grains, nuts, seeds, fruits, and veggies are good for HDL levels. On the other hand, cutting sugary snacks can help reduce LDL and the inflammation it creates.

Mat Lecompté is a health and wellness journalist. This article was first published on [Bel Marra Health](http://BelMarraHealth.com).

Liver Damage Is Off the Charts

Alcohol and fructose fuel surge in liver disease amid pandemic lockdown



Continued from Page 9

Alcoholic liver disease was also up 30 percent from 2019 to 2020 at Keck Hospital of the University of Southern California, with other hospitals, including Northwestern University and Harvard University, reporting 50 percent increases in admissions for alcoholic liver disease since March 2020.

Overall, 4.5 million U.S. adults are diagnosed with liver disease each year, and 44,358 die as a result. It's likely that increased alcohol consumption is worsening the already growing epidemic of liver damage being triggered by poor diet, including high consumption of fructose and seed oils high in omega-6 polyunsaturated fatty acids (PUFAs).

Lockdowns Increased Hazardous Alcohol Use

Doctors' anecdotal reports of patients' increased alcohol usage during the pandemic were confirmed by multiple studies. In a study published in Psychiatry Research earlier this year, University of Arizona College of Medicine researchers found that over the six-month period from April to September 2020, "hazardous alcohol use and likely dependence increased month by month for those under lockdowns compared to those not under restrictions."

"This increase in harmful alcohol use and related behaviors is likely to have prolonged adverse psychosocial, interpersonal, occupational, and health impacts as the world attempts to recover from the pandemic crisis," they wrote.



We're seeing kids in their late 20s and early 30s with a disease that we previously thought was kind of exclusive to middle age.

Dr. Jessica Mellinger, liver specialist, University of Michigan

An editorial published in The Lancet Gastroenterology & Hepatology likewise noted that sales in United Kingdom alcohol stores increased by 31.4 percent compared to the previous month, in March 2020—the month the UK went into lockdown. It cited a survey conducted by Alcohol Change UK, which found that 1 in 5 of those who drank alcohol daily said they had increased the amount they were drinking during the lockdown. The liver is at risk from heavy alcohol consumption in part because it's where ethanol is metabolized. Steatosis, or fatty liver disease, which is diagnosed when at least 5 percent of the liver weight is fat, is often the liver's first sign of heavy drinking.

Overall, 4.5 million U.S. adults are diagnosed with liver disease each year, and 44,358 die as a result.

Alcohol is a physiological depressant. It depresses your central nervous system, which slows down the communication between your brain cells.



This can progress to steatohepatitis, which is characterized by inflammation and progression to advanced scarring (cirrhosis) and liver failure. About 35 percent of problem drinkers will develop advanced liver disease. As noted in an article published in Alcohol Research:

"This stage of liver disease can lead to the development of fibrosis, during which there is excessive deposition of extracellular matrix proteins. The fibrotic response begins with active pericellular fibrosis, which may progress to cirrhosis, characterized by excessive liver scarring, vascular alterations, and eventual liver failure."

While, historically, alcohol-related liver cirrhosis has been regarded as a condition that develops after two or three decades of heavy drinking, it's increasingly showing up in 20- and 30-year-olds. In the 25 to 34 age group, death from cirrhosis more than tripled between 1999 and 2016, according to research published in the British Medical Journal. The rise in alcohol-related deaths overlapped with a rise in binge drinking in the United States that correlates with the 2008 financial crisis.

At the time, researchers suggested that the loss of opportunity and psychological burden may have driven some people to abusive drinking—likely foreshadowing what was to come with the COVID-19 pandemic.

Additional Risks of Excessive Alcohol Intake

If you've increased alcohol intake over stress, fear, or anxiety related to current events, it's possible your health could be affected. About 90 percent of people who drink excessively don't have an alcohol use disorder, according to the CDC. This doesn't mean that their health isn't being damaged by excessive drinking, however.

Drinking alcohol can lead to a number of health risks in the short and long term. Alcohol depresses your central nervous system, which slows down the communication between your brain cells. Your limbic system, which controls emotions, is also affected. This is why alcohol consumption lowers your inhibitions.

Your prefrontal cortex, a brain region associated with reasoning and judgment, also slows in response to alcohol, leading to more impulsive behavior and poor judgment. In the long-term, alcohol consumption promotes not only fatty liver disease but also weight gain and disruption of your gut microbes, according to research published by the American Physiological Society.

It's well known that altering the balance of bacteria in your digestive tract can weaken your immune system, making you more prone to inflammation and disease. Chronic alcohol abuse, in particular, is also known to cause neuronal dysfunction and brain damage, and each additional gram of alcohol consumption per day is associated with aging your brain an additional 0.02

years, according to research published in Scientific Reports.

In addition, excessive alcohol use increases your risk of chronic disease and other health problems, such as the following noted by the CDC:

- High blood pressure
- Poor school or work performance
- Stroke
- Liver disease
- Digestive problems
- Cancer (breast, mouth, throat, esophagus, liver, and colon)
- Learning and memory problems, including dementia
- Heart disease
- Mental health problems, including depression and anxiety
- Social problems, including lost productivity, family problems, and unemployment
- Alcohol dependence, or alcoholism

Nonalcoholic Liver Disease Also on the Rise

Nonalcoholic fatty liver disease (NAFLD) is the most common chronic liver disease in developed countries. It's characterized by a buildup of excess fat in your liver that's not related to heavy alcohol use. Lifestyle factors such as diet, exercise, weight, and smoking all play important roles in exacerbating (as well as reducing) your chances of developing some form of liver disease.

While alcohol consumption certainly doesn't help liver health, the rise in NAFLD is likely related even more to increased intake of toxic industrially processed seed oils, often referred to as "vegetable oils."

Examples of seed oils high in omega-6 PUFAs include soybean, cottonseed, sunflower, rapeseed (canola), corn, and safflower. Omega-6 is considered to be proinflammatory because of the most common variety, linoleic acid, which will radically increase oxidative free radicals and cause mitochondrial dysfunction if not eaten in the proper proportion with omega-3 fatty acids, according to an editorial published in the BMJ journal, Open Heart. Eating more omega-3 appeared to counteract the pro-inflammatory nature of omega-6.

As researchers noted in the journal Nutrients, "In addition, a few studies suggested that omega-6 PUFA is related to chronic inflammatory diseases such as obesity, nonalcoholic fatty liver disease and cardiovascular disease." As mentioned, at the root of the harmful biochemical reactions triggered by seed oils is linoleic acid, which is an 18-carbon omega-6 fat.

It's the primary fatty acid found in PUFAs and accounts for about 80 percent of the fatty acid composition of vegetable oils. Omega-6 fats must be balanced with omega-3 fats in order not to be harmful, but this doesn't happen in most Americans' diets. The Open Heart research mentioned above suggested that a 1:1 ratio with omega-3s may be the healthiest way

to consume omega-6 fats, but processed seed oils are ubiquitous in processed foods while more expensive omega-3s are much harder to come by. To make matters even worse, most of the omega-6 that people eat has been damaged and oxidized through processing.

Fructose Also Driving Liver Damage

When fatty liver occurs in the absence of significant alcohol consumption, it is often driven instead by excess sugar, which is why this condition is now found even in young children.

This is one reason why eliminating processed fructose and other added sugars from your diet is so important. Fructose affects your liver in ways that are very similar to alcohol. Unlike glucose, which can be used by virtually every cell in your body, fructose can only be metabolized by your liver, as your liver is the only organ that has the transporter for it.

Since all fructose gets shuttled to your liver, if you consume high amounts of it, fructose ends up taxing and damaging your liver in the same way alcohol and other toxins do. The way your liver metabolizes fructose is also very similar to that of alcohol, as both serve as substrates for converting carbohydrates into fat, which promotes insulin resistance, dyslipidemia (abnormal fat levels in the bloodstream), and fatty liver, notes an article published in the Journal of the Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics.

Fructose also undergoes the Maillard reaction with proteins, leading to the formation of superoxide free radicals that can result in liver inflammation similar to acetaldehyde, an intermediary metabolite of ethanol. Reducing your intake of fructose and seed oils while increasing your intake of healthy fats is a powerful way to support your liver health.

It's also important to avoid nearly all processed foods and fast foods, as virtually all of them contain these toxic oils and/or fructose. The easiest way to do this is to prepare the majority of your food at home so you know what you're eating.

How to Support Your Liver Health

The best way to avoid alcohol-induced damage to your liver is to abstain from drinking it, especially heavily. Alcohol-induced cirrhosis and NAFLD can be reversed in their early stages by quitting drinking and cutting out processed fructose and seed oils. Nicotinamide adenine dinucleotide (NAD)—the dietary precursor of which is niacin, vitamin B3—is also important if you have alcoholism.

People with chronic alcoholism are at risk for niacin deficiency, both due to a reduction in dietary intake of niacin and interfering with the conversion of tryptophan to NAD. Small doses of NAD (not time-released) can be incredibly helpful when provided while weaning off alcohol.

The treatment helps to curb cravings for alcohol, detox the body, flush alcohol (or other drugs) out of the system, and relieve withdrawal symptoms. As a potent antioxidant, NAD also helps to create energy in cells' mitochondria.

Choline, an essential nutrient, also supports normal liver function and liver health, helping it to maintain membrane integrity and manage cholesterol metabolism, including low-density lipoproteins (LDL) and very-low-density lipoproteins (VLDL), helping to move fat out of your liver.

By enhancing secretion of VLDL in your liver, required to safely transport fat out, choline may protect your liver health, according to research looking at preventing fatty liver disease among cattle. Unfortunately, an estimated 90 percent of the U.S. population is deficient in choline, according to an article published in Nutrition Reviews. You can increase your intake by consuming more choline-rich foods, such as organic pasture egg yolks, grass-fed beef liver, wild-caught Alaskan salmon, and krill oil. Arugula is also an excellent source.

Further, avoid exposure to glyphosate, the active ingredient in Roundup herbicide, as much as possible, as it's been linked to fatty liver disease as well. Magnesium, vitamin C, and milk thistle are also important for ongoing liver health.

Milk thistle contains silymarin and silybin, antioxidants that are known to help protect your liver from toxins and even help regenerate liver cells. If you believe you have an alcohol use disorder or are drinking excessively due to pandemic-related stress and anxiety, seek professional help.

Dr. Joseph Mercola is the founder of Mercola.com. An osteopathic physician, best-selling author, and recipient of multiple awards in the field of natural health, his primary vision is to change the modern health paradigm by providing people with a valuable resource to help them take control of their health. This article was originally published on Mercola.com



Frozen fruits and vegetables are picked and frozen when they're in season, which can cost less than buying out-of-season produce.

Is Frozen Food Healthy?

Many people have a mistaken prejudice against produce from the freezer

LYNN JAFFEE

If you're like me, you may think of the food in your freezer as second rate, a fallback choice when you can't think of what to make or didn't get to the grocery store. I've always thought that frozen food was just not as good as fresh, so I did a little research, and what I found was surprising.

In some cases, frozen food is actually healthier than fresh. Wait, what? It's true; while just-picked fruits and vegetables are the best, frozen produce can be just as nutritious, and sometimes more so than fresh. That's because unless you have your own garden or buy from the farmer's market, the produce you buy has been harvested before it's fully ripe. It's then packaged, transported, and stocked at your grocery store.

The reality is that produce typically loses most of its nutrients, such as vitamins and minerals, in the first three days after it's been picked. By contrast, frozen produce is picked when it's ripe and flash-frozen within hours of being harvested. A 2013 study looking at the nutritional value of fresh and frozen produce found that both were nutritionally similar on the day they were purchased. However, after five days, the frozen food actually had higher levels of vitamin A, vitamin C, and folate than the produce kept in the refrigerator.

Here are a few other things you may not know about frozen food:

You can refreeze frozen food that's been thawed.

This is true, but only if the food was thawed properly in the refrigerator—not sitting out on the counter. Food that's been thawed by sitting out rapidly produces bacteria that can make you sick, so this is actually never a good idea. But it's good to know that if you've properly thawed a frozen item and then changed your mind, it can go back into the freezer. Refreezing may change the flavor or texture, but it's safe to eat.

While we're talking about bacteria, you should know that freezing doesn't kill it. While ideal conditions for bacteria are between 40 and 140 degrees F, freezing bacteria just makes it inactive. If there was bacteria present in your food when you put it into the freezer, it'll still be there when you thaw it out.

Frozen food doesn't expire. That's right, you may find a package of frozen peas or corn buried deep in your freezer from a decade ago, and if it's been stored properly, it would be okay to eat. Would I eat it? Probably not, but it wouldn't make me sick. Chances are that the quality and

flavor have taken a hit, but the point is that foods that are frozen properly can be eaten months and even a year or more after they were put into the freezer.

How do you freeze properly? Some simple guidelines include making sure your freezer is at least 0 degrees F or colder, allowing cooked foods to cool before freezing them, and wrapping foods to be as airtight as possible to avoid freezer burn.

Foods that are frozen properly can be eaten months and even a year or more after they were put into the freezer.

Frozen foods can save you money.

Frozen fruits and vegetables are picked and frozen when they're in season, which can cost less than buying out-of-season produce. In addition, freezing food can help reduce food waste. Instead of tossing those leftovers that you won't eat for a couple of days, you can toss them into the freezer. You can also freeze in small or single portions.

One word of caution. While frozen produce tends to hold onto its nutritional value longer than fresh, some packaged frozen vegetables and many frozen meals can be high in sodium. The good news is that today food manufacturers are listening to the demands of consumers who want low-sodium, low-calorie, whole-grain, and plant-based frozen meals. The bottom line is that fresh or frozen, you need to read the label.

Don't get me wrong; during the summer I eat most of my produce from a shared community garden. However, when there's more than we can eat, I won't hesitate to put batches of pesto or loaves of zucchini bread made with ingredients from the garden into the freezer to enjoy at a later date. I now know that if frozen correctly, these foods are as nutritious in January as the day I froze them back in August.

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



Fresh, in-season produce is often flash-frozen within hours of being harvested.

MADE TO MOVE

Avoid This Common Retirement Health Risk

As sedentary lifestyles become more prevalent in the Western world, many are quick to proclaim that sitting is the new smoking.

Research published last year in the journal Occupational & Environmental Medicine shows that the transition to retirement is marked by a sharp rise in sedentary time, which is likely to be sustained for at least two years and bring about a range of health risks and disorders.

The study from November 2020 warns that the sharp rise of more than 20 minutes a day in the average sedentary time among new retirees appears to be maintained two or more years later. The risk is more gradual for men but the long-term pattern for both sexes is similar, earning them the same harmful impact.

Sitting on the Ill Effects of Sedentary Lifestyle

Previous studies have highlighted the adverse effects of sedentary behaviors, such as increasing the risk for cardiometabolic diseases and metabolic syndrome, while light physical activity reduced it. Excessive daily sitting time has also been linked to all-cause mortality.

Unfortunately, physical activity isn't always a popular choice among retirees, with 45 percent of American retirees reporting no physical activity, according to research published in the American Journal of Preventive Medicine in 2019.

In the November 2020 study, researchers set out to determine if the increased total sedentary time experienced by many retirees includes extended sitting time and if the patterns are sustained over time.

The team studied 689 out of the 908 eligible participants in the Finnish Retirement and Aging Study, an ongoing study of retiring Finnish municipal workers. Eighty-five percent of the subjects were women and had administrative or professional roles, with 63 years as the average retirement age.

The team had the subjects wear an activity tracker for at least 10 hours while awake for seven consecutive days and nights, twice—once before and once after retire-

ment. They then measured daily average totals of sedentary time and amount of time spent in prolonged (30 or more minutes) and highly prolonged (an hour or beyond) sedentary phases at each time point.

Greater Risks With Prolonged Sedentary Time Than Bouts

The findings showed that the transition to retirement came with an abrupt rise in prolonged sedentary time in women, whereas men had a more gradual increase.

Women upped their daily total sedentary time by 22 minutes, prolonged sedentary time by 34 minutes, and highly prolonged sedentary time by 15 minutes in the transition, while the numbers stayed at the higher level of sedentary time in post-retirement years. The steepest rise in sedentary time was seen in women retiring from manual jobs.

Men, on the other hand, had more total and prolonged sedentary time versus women, and while there was no change observed during the transition, there was a gradual climb of 33 minutes in prolonged sedentary time from pre- to post-retirement periods.

The changes persisted two or more years after the subjects retired, according to the observational study. The researchers warned that prolonged sedentary time is "more harmful for health compared with sedentary bouts." In a related study, the daily amount of sitting during free time increased from 4 1/2 hours to six hours on average during retirement transition. The time spent watching television increased specifically.

While having a sedentary routine may lead to significant health risks and conditions, as shown by GreenMedInfo.com's study abstracts on "sitting sickness," physical activity comes with great rewards, including for the elderly. Older adults who are less sedentary have superior executive functions and memory compared with their counterparts who are fond of sitting.

For those who haven't yet retired and are suf-

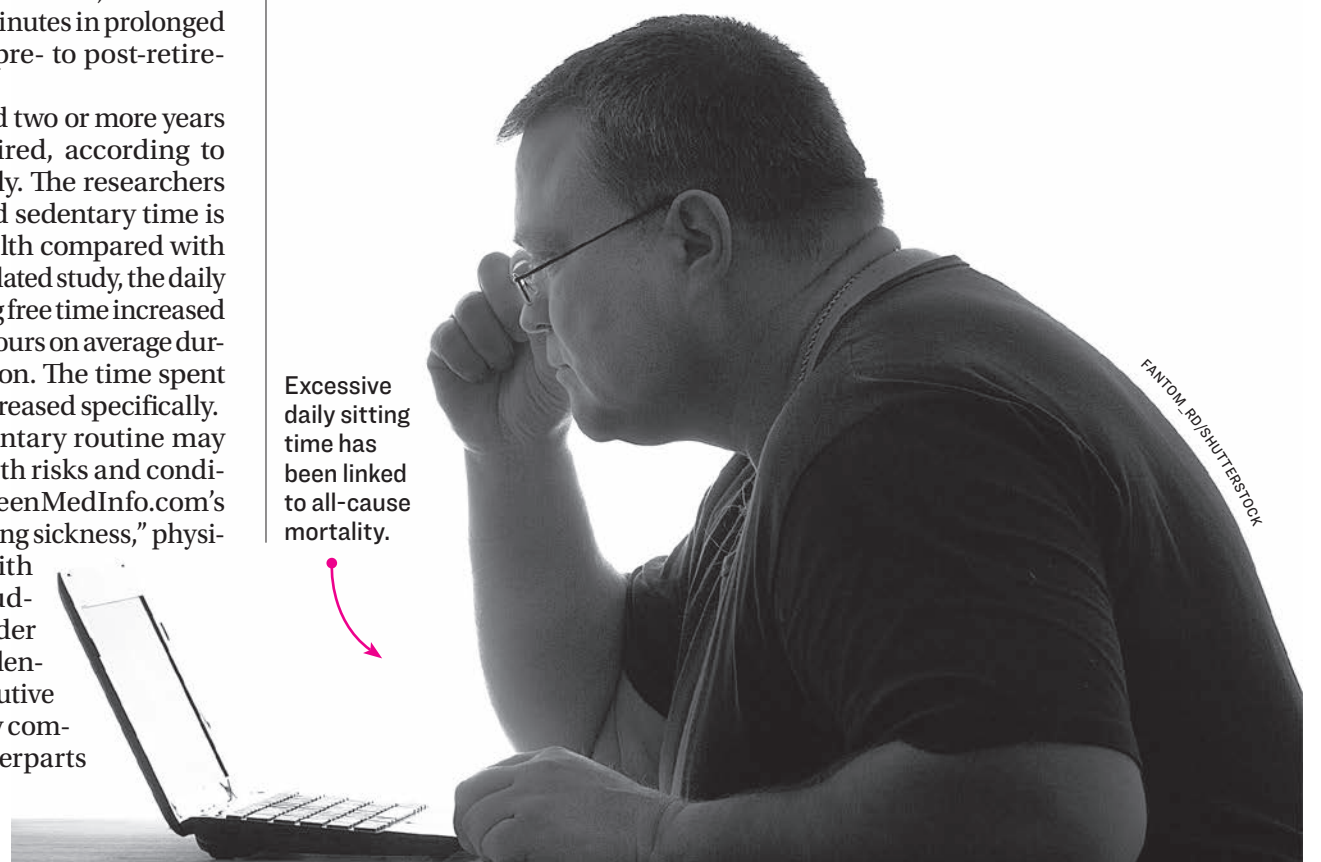
Older adults who are less sedentary have superior executive functions and memory compared with their counterparts who are fond of sitting.

fering the dangers of occupation-induced sitting, active workstations, which showed a positive effect on energy expenditure and physical activity in overweight or obese individuals, are one option that can help.

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Excessive daily sitting time has been linked to all-cause mortality.



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