

# THE EPOCH TIMES

# MIND &

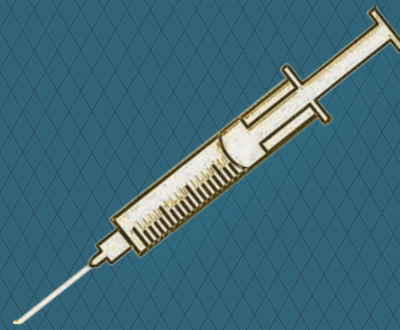
# BODY

## Natural Immunity

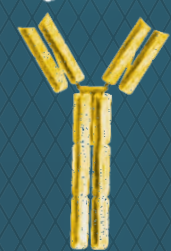
### PUBLIC HEALTH'S FORGOTTEN ALLY

Researchers continue to grapple with questions over value of vaccines versus natural immunity

Much of our multi-layered immune response still remains a mystery to modern science.



Vaccines can offer specific protection but studies suggest there may be unintended consequences to our immune system.



Both vaccines and infection trigger the body to develop antibodies, which special Y-shaped proteins.

#### CONAN MILNER

In the United States, everyone, 16 years of age and older, is now eligible for the COVID-19 vaccine.

HealthCare.gov, the agency behind the Affordable Care Act, recently sent out an email announcing the “good news.” They said the new shot was “an important tool to help end the pandemic, and it’s your best protection from getting COVID-19.”

But is it really the best?

An alternative form of immune security hardly gets any attention, but it may have benefits that any one of the COVID shots now available under emergency use authorization do not. And many of us may already carry this protection, no shot required.

Natural immunity (the inborn process of catching a virus and recovering from it) has been common knowledge for many years. The process has also shown to produce significant antibody protection against COVID-19. According to research funded by the National Institutes of Health (NIH) and published in January in the journal *Science*, the immune systems of “more than 95 percent of people

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Ginger has high levels of anti-inflammatory phytochemicals.

TETIANA ROSTOPIRA / SHUTTERSTOCK

## Foods to Help Face Seasonal Allergies

Inflammation triggered by allergies can be unpleasant, but there are pleasant ways to relax it

#### JOSEPH MERCOLA

As the weather warms and trees and grasses bloom, the challenges of seasonal allergies rise. The condition is called allergic rhinitis or hay fever and affects 19.2 million U.S. adults and 5.2 million children. Many doctors lean heavily on prescription drugs to alleviate symptoms.

If you suffer from allergies, it’s important to understand what is happening inside you. Once you do, you can see why it’s a good idea to eat foods that trigger metabolic and immune actions that can reduce your dependence on medication.

To give an example, consider one of the less acknowledged symptoms. You’re likely familiar with the common symptoms of sneezing, stuffy or runny nose, watery and itchy eyes. However, a sizable number of people with allergies also experience noticeable brain fog.

This is because the inflammatory response triggered by an allergic reaction can affect your brain. It can interfere with sleep and cause stuffiness in your middle ear. This inflammation can lead to feelings of dizziness or brain fog. Data also suggests that allergies have a significant effect on cognitive function.

For example, research has found that allergy-linked inflammation may impede learning in school-age children, cause disturbed cognitive function in areas requiring sustained attention, affect short- and long-term memory and information processing, and may cause significant fatigue and mood changes.

One study found evidence to support a close relationship between an allergic response, inflammatory cytokines, and sleep as potential mediators. There are several natural options available for people who experience seasonal allergic reactions. The following five foods are among those that help reduce the symptoms and inflammation associated with allergies.

**Can Reduce Seasonal Allergies**  
Ginger has a long history of medicinal use, including as a natural remedy for digestive and respiratory conditions. High levels of anti-inflammatory phytochemicals

*Continued on Page 4*

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# Natural Immunity: Public Health's Forgotten Ally

Researchers continue to grapple with questions over value of vaccines versus natural immunity

Continued from Page 1

who recovered from COVID-19 had durable memories of the virus up to eight months after infection."

Symptoms don't have to be severe for protection to be strong. One study screened individuals who had recovered from a mild case of COVID-19 and found that immune "cells not only persist but continuously differentiate in a coordinated fashion well into convalescence, into a state characteristic of long-lived, self-renewing memory."

### Rhinovirus triggers an interferon response that blocks SARS-CoV-2 replication.

But is it better than a vaccination? One study from Denmark doesn't think so. It suggests that vaccine-induced immunity for COVID-19 may perform slightly better than natural immunity, which was found to prevent reinfection about 80 percent of the time (compare that to the 95 percent effectiveness that vaccine makers claim).

However, researchers admit that big unknowns still remain. For example, the study did not look at the severity of reinfections from either immunity method. It may still be too soon to tell how natural immunity stacks up next to the protective promises of Pfizer's, Moderna's, or Johnson and Johnson's jabs, because the disease they guard against is still so new. Meanwhile, strong comparative data is lacking.

But when it comes to vaccination protection for viruses we've known about for generations, natural immunity is typically superior.

In a March 2020 video, Dr. Paul Offit, director of the Vaccine Education Center and professor of pediatrics at Children's Hospital of Philadelphia, addressed the potency difference between natural immunity and vaccine protection using himself as an example. Offit explained that the measles antibodies he developed when he caught the disease as a child in the 1950s are "probably threefold greater than what children will get if they get a vaccine."

But acquiring this top-grade protection comes with a big catch: an increased risk

of serious illness, hospitalization, and potentially death.

"The high price of natural immunity, that is, occasionally severe and fatal disease, is a risk not worth taking," Offit said.

The better question, says Offit, is whether vaccines are good enough. Can this medical intervention provide an immune response that can eliminate disease, without subjecting the population to the risks associated with acquiring natural immunity?

"Well, we have the answer for measles. When we added a second dose measles vaccination recommendation in 1991 ... we eliminated measles in the United States by the year 2000. The only reason that it has come back recently is because of the critical number of parents who have chosen not to vaccinate their children," Offit said.

But a 1984 study adds a crucial detail missing from Offit's story. Published in the American Journal of Epidemiology, researchers found that the natural immunity of the baby boomers plays a substantial role in the elimination of U.S. measles cases.

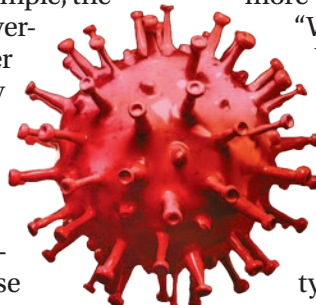
In a 2019 interview, Barbara Loe Fisher, co-founder and president of the National Vaccine Information Center, says this stronger, longer-lasting natural immunity protection that our elder generation carries can't necessarily be replaced by more vaccines.

"We never were vaccinated, but we are contributing to the concept of what looks like vaccine-acquired herd immunity. When we die, you won't have that barrier anymore," Fisher said. "Vaccine-acquired immunity is not the same as naturally acquired immunity. That has been the problem from the very beginning with the creation of these vaccines. They have never understood how to make vaccines mimic naturally acquired immunity exactly."

**Eroding Trust in Natural Immunity**  
Vaccines allow an avenue for immunity without the risks that come with catching the wild disease. But, to be fair, the treatment comes with its own set of risks.

One problem is that vaccines may actually spread disease. In 2019, The Associated Press reported that more polio cases in four African countries were now caused by vaccine than by the wild virus.

Another concern is that vaccines may leave us more vulnerable to diseases other than the ones we get vaccinated against. The phenomenon is known as



Human immunity has developed alongside many different viruses.  
CARINA METZGER/SHUTTERSTOCK



RIID/SHUTTERSTOCK

"virus interference," and it was demonstrated in a study published in a January 2020 issue of the journal *Vaccine*. The study explored virus interference by comparing cases of viral respiratory infections among Department of Defense personnel based on whether or not individuals got an influenza vaccine.

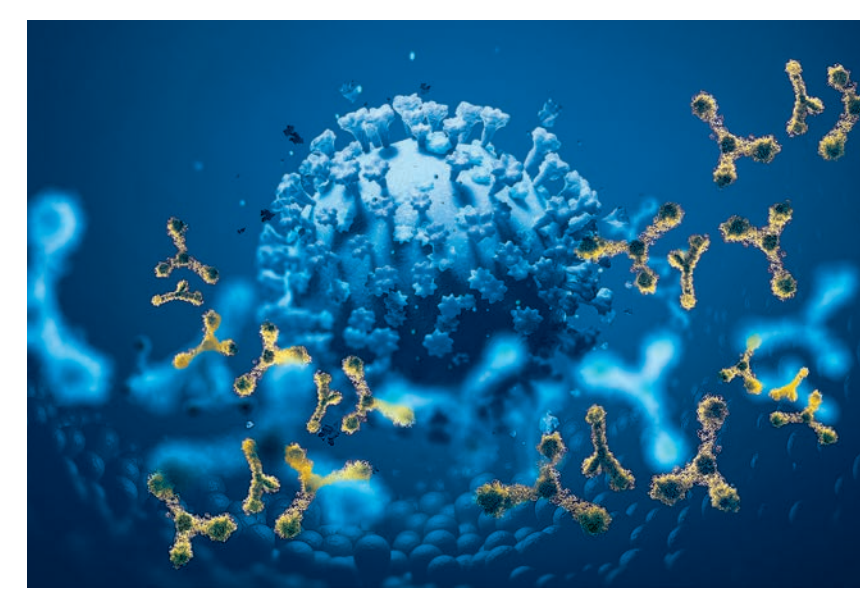
The flu shot didn't raise the risk of all respiratory infections but it was "significantly associated with unspecified coronavirus." In other words, those getting the flu shot were more likely to get sick with a coronavirus.

Meanwhile, the natural immunity we develop from some diseases may give us protection from new diseases. A recent study published in the *Journal of Infectious Diseases* shows that human rhinoviruses, the cause of the common cold, "triggers an interferon response that blocks SARS-CoV-2 replication."

"Mathematical simulations show that this virus-virus interaction is likely to have a population-wide effect as an increasing prevalence of rhinovirus will reduce the number of new COVID-19 cases," researchers reported.

Although the media likes to portray vaccination as a black-and-white issue, characterizing people as either for or against the treatment, individual examples are usually more complex. Health experts in particular often favor some vaccines over others.

And much of the public health community have more faith in the power of natural immunity than officials would like to acknowledge. One example is the Great Barrington Declaration, a document written by infectious disease epidemiologists and public health scientists. Last year, before any vaccine was available, this declaration proposed an end to the devastating lockdown measures that characterized the official COVID-19 response by giving natural immunity a chance to flourish. The proposal called for more protective measures among the vulnerable, while the vast majority could live as normal, developing the antibodies



YURCHANKA SIARHEI/SHUTTERSTOCK

Antibodies are Y-shaped proteins the body uses to identify and neutralize foreign objects, including viruses like COVID-19.

### An increasing prevalence of rhinovirus will reduce the number of new COVID-19 cases.

*Journal of Infectious Diseases*

that could protect the population.

"The most compassionate approach that balances the risks and benefits of reaching herd immunity, is to allow those who are at minimal risk of death to live their lives normally to build up immunity to the virus through natural infection, while better protecting those who are at highest risk. We call this Focused Protection," states the declaration, signed by more than 43,000 medical practitioners and more than 14,000 public health scientists.

More than 99 percent of people who tested positive for COVID-19 have survived, suggesting that the natural protection built against this virus could be enormous. For these individuals, the risk of disease may have already been conquered. But officials don't seem very interested in examining this influence, or rewarding the antibodies that have been earned the old-fashioned way.

For example, Canada's Federal COVID Immunity Taskforce believes the use of passports "will be restricted to immunity conferred by vaccines, as there is more scientific evidence for immunity from vaccines than from natural immunity."

It's as if natural immunity has been removed from the conversation. In June 2020, the World Health Organization

Different people face different risks from COVID-19 and other viruses due to ailments like diabetes that are linked to more severe infections.



Vaccine-induced immunity for COVID-19 may perform slightly better than natural immunity.  
RAUL VALCARCEL ROMERO/SHUTTERSTOCK

(WHO) changed its definition of herd immunity. The term describes a point at which enough people become immune to a disease to erase its risk, and it previously included those who had acquired their antibodies through natural infection along with vaccinated individuals. But the WHO's new definition now says herd immunity happens exclusively through vaccination.

Part of the reason officials may dismiss natural immunity's influence is that, unlike a vaccine, natural immunity development can vary from one individual to the next. That's why the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) says people who have tested positive for COVID and recovered are still urged to get the shot.

"At this time, experts do not know how long someone is protected from getting sick again after recovering from COVID-19. The immunity someone gains from having an infection, called natural immunity, varies from person to person. Some early evidence suggests natural immunity may not last very long," the CDC states.

But the agency is also known to inflate the vaccine's virtues. In December 2020, the CDC stated that the Pfizer vaccine demonstrated benefit for those with evidence of prior COVID infection, but the health agency was later forced to admit the claim was made in error when a U.S. congressman pointed out that the study demonstrated no such benefit.

There is reason to suggest that natural immunity to COVID-19 may have some unique merit, just as the immune system demonstrates with similar diseases. Like the vaccine (which experts already expect to require booster shots in the near future) no one knows how long natural immunity may last for SARS-CoV-2, the virus said to cause COVID-19. But a study published last year in the journal *Nature* showed that patients who recovered from the first SARS outbreak in 2003 still possessed long-lasting memory T-cells for the virus 17 years later.

Those T-cells, developed naturally several years ago, may still contribute to public health. Researchers detected SARS-CoV-2-specific T cells in individuals with no history of SARS, COVID-19, or contact with individuals who had SARS and/or COVID-19.

But officials say even those who have developed their own immune protection against COVID-19 still need a drug industry intervention. Everyone is encouraged to get the shot, but pushing naturally immune individuals toward this treatment may actually push them toward greater risk with no benefit to public health. One survey study found that people with prior COVID-19 illness experience significantly increased incidence and severity of side effects after receiving the COVID-19 vaccine compared to those who did not have the disease beforehand.

Researchers found that the mRNA vaccines (Pfizer and Moderna) caused milder, less-frequent systemic side effects, compared to viral vector vaccines (Johnson and Johnson), which resulted in more local reactions.

### CHINESE WISDOM FOR SEASONAL LIVING

## Humility and Modesty Help the Body Adjust to Heat

Solar Term: 'Grain Buds' (May 21 to June 4)

MOREEN LIAO

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

Solar Term: 'Grain Buds'

2021 Dates: May 21 to June 4  
Looking at the natural world, we see that the grains of summer crops are

becoming plump but are not yet ripe. As we prepare to enjoy the fruits of our labor, yang is at the extreme on earth and in our bodies, so we must also take care to protect ourselves from the potential negative impacts of this extreme state.

This solar term's name, "Grain Buds," is xiao man in Chinese. The meaning of "xiao" is a little bit, while "man" can mean replenishing, full, or contented. Contented can refer to the feeling farmers have when seeing their hard work about to come to fruition. Another meaning is fullness, which refers more directly to the crop.

Shennong, one of the three sage rulers of ancient China, was born during

Grain Buds, which this year falls on May 21 through June 4.

Shennong was believed to be an overseer of harvests and medicinal herbs. In fact, he left to history the first medicinal herb book, "Shennong's Root and Herbal Classic."

From this book, we learn that the best time to pick and process herbs is Grain Buds. The ancient Chinese used to make herbal teas and ointments during this time of year.

### Watch That Yang Heat

In the Chinese spiritual text "Bagua" ("The Eight Trigrams"), Grain Buds is purely yang in all six of its trigrams. This reflects that yang is at its zenith and yin is extinguished.

For our health, we are reminded to be careful with our heart, blood vessels, and skin, as they can easily be damaged at this time.

In the Taoist system, it is believed that there is both yin and yang in our bodies, regardless of whether we are male or female. Good health is said to



"Grain Buds" is the best time to pick herbs for teas and ointments.

come from the balance of yin and yang.

When yang becomes stronger than yin, traditional Chinese medicine doctors regard this person as having "heat" in the body. When yang is far stronger than yin, one is said to have "fire" in the body.

These heat-related conditions are very common during this solar term, leading to skin problems such as dryness and skin irritation.

### Living in Harmony With 'Grain Buds'

Going to bed late and getting up early help our body to adjust to the temperature more easily during this season. Humility and modesty in temperament; meditation and gentle exercise; and a lot of herbal tea can also help.

For those who have skin irritation, one can make an herbal tea with chamomile, peppermint, comfrey, witch hazel, melon, or peppermint. Soak a clean hand towel in a tea made from these

ingredients and place it in a sealed container in the freezer. Whenever you feel itchy skin, use the cold cloth to cool and cleanse it.

Those who are in their first three months of pregnancy need to be careful of getting skin diseases, as these may weaken the immune system for both mom and baby.

### Seasonal Foods

Artichoke, broccoli, celery, tomato, water chestnut, yam, and all bitter vegetables are good to eat, to bring balance. Starfruit, lemon, lime, melons, and all citrus fruits are also good for this time.

Those suffering from skin problems should avoid seafood, especially shellfish.

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

# Foods to Help Face Seasonal Allergies

Inflammation triggered by allergies can be unpleasant, but there are pleasant ways to relax it

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may have contributed to the positive effects ginger had in an animal study to suppress proinflammatory cytokines and mast cell activation, which reduces the symptoms of allergic rhinitis.

Another lab and human study demonstrated that a special variety of Japanese green tea (Benifuuki green tea) and ginger extract had a significant effect on suppressing cytokines and delayed-type allergies that come on one to three days after exposure. Eleven weeks after starting the study, those taking Benifuuki tea had a reduced incidence of itchy eyes, runny nose, and throat pain.

The results suggested a consecutive month of drinking green tea with ginger extract could reduce the symptoms of seasonal rhinitis without affecting the normal immune response. Ginger holds several other benefits, including protecting against DNA damage after exposure to free radicals. In one landmark study published in the *Journal of the American College of Nutrition* in 2012, ginger demonstrated the ability to reduce several inflammatory markers.

Of course, ginger has other studied therapeutic effects unrelated to allergies as well. The most common use for ginger is in alleviating symptoms of nausea and vomiting. One study from the University of Miami showed that ginger has the potential to replace nonsteroidal anti-inflammatory drugs in patients with knee osteoarthritis. It was also as effective as pain medication in helping women with primary dysmenorrhea (menstrual cramps) and was effective against exercise-induced muscle pain.

## Benefits of Bee-Made Superfoods

The honeybee produces valuable natural foods that some have called “superfoods.” These include royal jelly, propolis, and bee pollen. Bee pollen is the pollen honeybees collect from plants and bring back to the hive.

Analysis has shown bee pollen contains eight of the nine essential amino acids and these may be up to seven times higher than found in an equal weight of other high protein foods. Bee pollen is also high in bioflavonoids, vitamin B complex, and vitamins A, C, D, E, and K. It has traditionally been used for increasing energy, including by some Olympic athletes.

Analysis of the compounds found in bee pollen reveals they have anti-inflammatory, antimicrobial, and antifungal properties in the body and free radical scavenging potential. Bee pollen mediates wound healing, has anti-cancer properties, and can stimulate the immune system. Further evaluation shows it can inhibit the mast cell activation that triggers seasonal allergic reactions.

Bee pollen can also be used to help desensitize your body to your seasonal allergies. For maximum effectiveness, begin taking bee pollen each day at least six weeks before you commonly begin showing allergy symptoms. Continue taking it throughout the season. The bee pollen helps to stimulate the production of antibodies, which in turn helps eliminate your allergic reaction.



Bee pollen is an anti-inflammatory.

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Vitamin C is a natural antihistamine.

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Turmeric can open up your sinuses.

NALUPPHOTO/SHUTTERSTOCK



Omega-3 fats are an anti-inflammatory.

SEA WAVE/SHUTTERSTOCK



MIKAEL BLOMKVIST/PEXELS

**Antioxidant Power of Vitamin C**  
Vitamin C is also known as ascorbic acid. When you think of foods high in vitamin C you might first think of citrus fruits like oranges and grapefruit. However, other good sources include bell peppers, strawberries, broccoli, Brussels sprouts, and black currants.

Vitamin C is a water-soluble vitamin that's an essential cofactor in several enzymatic reactions and has been linked with a lowered risk of high blood pressure, stroke, and coronary heart disease. Further evidence suggests it may be an adjunctive therapy to reduce heart injury after heart attack or a cardiac procedure.

You may be familiar with studies that show that regular use can modestly shorten how long you have the common cold. But did you know that vitamin C may also help reduce your symptoms of seasonal allergies?

One study published in 2018 used intravenous vitamin C on patients with allergy-related respiratory symptoms. Over 50 percent of the study participants only used vitamin C. The researchers found that the observations suggested that “intravenous high dose vitamin C reduces allergy-related symptoms.” Vitamin C is a natural antihistamine and antioxidant. Histamine is one of the inflammatory mediators that trigger symptoms common in a seasonal allergic response. Some people find relief from their allergic symptoms when taking over-the-counter antihistamine drugs.

**Treat Allergic Rhinitis With Turmeric**  
Turmeric, which is from the ginger family, is a common spice that's also used in traditional medicine. Historically, it was used in Ayurvedic medicine and traditional Chinese medicine. The main active ingredient in turmeric is curcumin, which gives this rootstalk its yellow color.

Curcumin has anti-inflammatory, anti-septic, antitumor, and antioxidant properties. When used in an animal model, curcumin inhibited the release of histamine from mast cells and demonstrated a “marked inhibition of allergic response in animals treated with curcumin, suggesting a major role for curcumin in reducing the allergic response,” according to the study published in *Molecular Nutrition and Food Research*.

A more recent human study published in *Annals of Allergy, Asthma & Immunology* engaged 241 patients with symptoms of allergic rhinitis (AR) to test the efficacy

One consequence of allergies is brain fog caused by the way allergy-induced inflammation affects the brain.

of curcumin. The researchers measured nasal airflow resistance and found curcumin alleviated nasal congestion, sneezing and rhinorrhea. Past laboratory study suggested curcumin may have a significant effect on symptoms of seasonal allergies.

Researchers from this human study concluded, “This pilot study provides the first evidence of the capability of curcumin of improving nasal airflow and modulating immune response in patients with AR.”

**Salmon May Lower Allergic Sensitivity**  
Wild-caught Alaskan salmon is high in omega-3 fatty acids. There are three identified forms of omega-3 fats: alpha-linolenic acid (ALA), eicosapentaenoic acid (EPA), and docosahexaenoic acid (DHA). ALA is found mostly in plants, while DHA and EPA are found in fatty fish and seafood.

Your body typically converts ALA to DHA at levels not nearly enough for brain and heart health. Some studies have found the conversion rate is less than 0.5 percent. In other words, to get enough EPA and DHA to have an anti-inflammatory effect on diseases such as asthma and allergies, you need to eat foods rich in EPA and DHA. Studies have also suggested a higher intake of omega-6 fatty acids is linked to an increased incidence of seasonal allergic responses. Omega-6 fats can be found in processed seed or “vegetable” oils such as safflower, corn, soy, and sesame oils. In other words, most—if not all—processed foods.

There is also an association between taking omega-3 fats during pregnancy and a reduced incidence of seasonal allergies in infants and children, suggesting there is a protective association. A cross-sectional, population-based study of 568 adults showed that those with a higher omega-3 index had a decreased risk of allergic rhinitis.

Interestingly, they also found those with a higher dietary intake of ALA experienced some of the same reductions. A more recent study analyzed the association between the Mediterranean diet, high in omega-3 fatty acids, and chronic inflammatory diseases such as seasonal allergies.

They postulate that the solubility and uptake of certain phytochemicals may improve when consumed with omega-3 rich foods. This may explain the mechanism of action behind omega-3 fats' and fat-soluble micronutrients' role in the development of allergic inflammation.

**More Ways to Ease Seasonal Allergies**  
Seasonal allergies affect several body systems, so using a multifaceted approach increases the potential that you'll reduce

# Core Strength: Why It's Important and How to Maintain It

The muscles that surround our spine play wide-ranging, essential roles in our everyday movement

ANDREW LAVENDER

Many people have become more sedentary in recent times with lockdowns and working from home because of the COVID-19 pandemic.

If you're moving less, this may have affected your core strength. Or, you may just be thinking you need to improve it.

So, what exactly is the core? And why is it important to have good core strength?

## What Is the Core?

The core consists of the muscles in your midsection, or torso, surrounding the spine and pelvis. This includes the abdominal muscles at the front, but also muscles within the lower back, and around your sides.

The core muscles aren't considered powerful, but they play a fundamental role in stabilizing the spine and pelvis. They're also key to maintaining good posture.

These functions are important to ensure you can move your limbs easily. Your core also protects you against injury. People with a weaker core are more likely to sustain a back injury, and core muscle strengthening is often an important part of rehabilitation after a back injury.

We use our core muscles while performing daily tasks like getting up from a chair, standing, walking, vacuuming, and lifting things.

The core muscles are also important for

athletic activities like running, jumping, tackling, and lifting weights.

## Some Signs That Your Core Might Need Help

As with other muscles, if we don't use our core muscles enough, they become weak.

When our core becomes weak, our movements are less supported, which can put pressure on other parts of our bodies.

Weakness in the core muscles can be associated with lower back pain, particularly among older people.

Knee pain is another possible sign that core muscles are too weak. Research has shown a core strength training program with physiotherapy has a greater effect on reducing knee pain than standard physiotherapy alone.

If you haven't been exercising for a while, and you're experiencing lower back pain or knee pain, it may be a sign your core muscles have become too weak and it's time to do some work on strengthening them.

The good news is, we can improve core strength with exercise. And there's no one exercise that is best; you can choose whatever approach works best for you.

If you do have back or knee pain, or have recently had a baby, consult your doctor or physiotherapist before getting started.

## How to Strengthen Your Core: Some Exercises to Do at Home

While walking and running do activate the

**The core muscles play a fundamental role in stabilizing the spine and pelvis.**

# COVID During Pregnancy Poses Little Risk to Newborns, Research Shows

New data out of Sweden reveals no justification to separate newborns from mothers infected with COVID-19

MIKAEL NORMAN

Since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic, there has been great concern about how to protect the most vulnerable—particularly newborns. In past pandemics, newborn babies and young people have been at an increased risk of disease and death.

This has probably influenced COVID-19 guidelines in hospitals and health care systems.

A recently published global survey found that newborns were being separated from their mothers in half the world's countries last year as a precautionary measure if the mother had tested positive for COVID-19. Separating a baby from its mother at birth can have negative consequences for the health of both the mother and baby. This must be weighed against the possible benefits of keeping them apart.

Yet more than a year into the pandemic, the outcomes for babies born to mothers who have had COVID-19 remain largely unknown and unreported, putting great stress on families and healthcare providers.

With this in mind, my colleagues and I—working with the Public Health Agency of Sweden—tried to gain a better understanding of the potential risks to babies whose

symptoms and reactions. As with most health conditions that affect your immune system, it's crucial to start with a healthy gut.

Allergic reactions begin in the immune system when a relatively harmless protein triggers an overreaction, producing antibodies to attack the allergen. Your diet and gut health play crucial roles in optimizing your immune function.

Of course, a strategy that helps reduce symptoms is to reduce your exposure

mothers tested positive for this coronavirus during pregnancy or childbirth.

We were able to do this because, during the pandemic in Sweden, the separation of mothers and infants at birth has only been practiced if either was unwell, with breastfeeding allowed if following strict hygiene procedures.

## Analyzing a Year's Data

Our study looked at daily reports made to three Swedish registries: the National Quality Register for Pregnancy, the National Quality Register for Neonatal Care, and the Communicable Diseases Register. By cross-referencing these, it was possible to monitor and report outcomes for babies during both the first and second waves of COVID-19.

Altogether, we captured the outcomes of 92 percent of all babies born in Sweden between March 11, 2020, and Jan. 31. This accounted for almost 90,000 births, making this one of the largest datasets on this subject to date. We found that 2,323 babies were born during this period to mothers who had tested positive for COVID-19 during pregnancy, with 642 mothers (28 percent) testing positive at the time of delivery.

All babies born to mothers who had tested positive were themselves tested between 12 and 24 hours after birth. For babies admitted to a neonatal unit, COVID-19 tests were repeated at 48 and 96 hours after birth. Only 21 babies (0.9 percent) tested positive for COVID-19, most without displaying any symptoms. A few babies were treated for reasons other than COVID-19.

There are several ways to help, including limiting outdoor activities to times when pollen counts are lowest. This is usually in the late afternoon, since on an average day pollen counts peak beginning midmorning. Limit outdoor time when the weather is warm, dry, and windy, as pollen counts may be higher.

Wear gloves while gardening and avoid touching your eyes. When you're finished outdoors, take a shower and wash your



GOODLUZ/SHUTTERSTOCK

Exercising on a Swiss ball is a great way to improve core strength.

core muscles to some degree, to really target the core, we can look to some specific exercises such as traditional sit-ups or abdominal crunches. These exercises work well to strengthen the muscles on the front of the torso and carry a very low risk of injury.

Modified versions can enhance the effects. For example, exercising on an unstable surface such as a Swiss ball can increase the demands on the muscles.

Think of how much your ankle moves when you stand on one leg, for example. Being in this unstable position forces the muscles of your lower leg to work harder to keep your balance. It's similar to the way your muscles tighten when you're walking on a slippery surface.

So, when you do sit-ups while sitting on a Swiss ball or a BOSU ball, you find you must engage your core muscles to stay on the device. This increases the intensity of the exercise.

The traditional crunch or sit-up predominantly works the muscles at the front of the torso, the rectus abdominis, commonly known as the abs.

A standard plank is also good for your abs, and engages other muscles of the torso as well. And you can engage the

core muscles at the side of the torso, called the obliques, even further with a side plank.

You can also try getting into a push-up position and raising one leg at a time from the hip while keeping the knee straight.

You can make this more challenging by raising the opposite arm at the same time, so your only points of contact are the ball of one foot and the other hand. This is a good workout for your core, which is working hard to keep you in position. You can make it easier by doing this on hands and knees.

Any exercise that activates the core muscles more than usual will help improve core strength. Sit-ups, crunches, and planks will target these muscles directly, and adding unstable surfaces like Swiss balls can enhance the activation.

But remember, other types of physical activity, like going for a jog or doing squats, can help your core strength too.

*Andrew Lavender is a senior lecturer at the school of science, psychology and sport at Federation University Australia. This article was first published on The Conversation.*

Separating babies from their mothers at birth poses other risks.



AMINA FILKINS/PEXELS

Babies born to women who've had COVID-19 don't need to be separated from their mothers.

in the COVID-19 group were breastfeeding their babies at hospital discharge, with 99 percent of their infants testing negative. The small number of infants that were infected showed no signs of infection.

Although not all countries are like Sweden—there are population differences as well as country-specific differences in health care and COVID-19 levels—our work should reassure pregnant women in other countries (and their families) that a COVID infection during pregnancy poses a low risk.

*Mikael Norman is a professor of pediatrics and neonatal medicine at Karolinska Institutet in Sweden. This article was first published on The Conversation.*

are triggered from the histamine release.

*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*

# Lessons From Our Minimizing Journey

Here are 10 things we learned when identity theft forced us to reset our lifestyle

CHERYL SMITH

For years, my family and I struggled with overloaded schedules, overwhelming debt, and feeling enslaved to our four-bedroom, three-bath home with an excess of possessions. The things we thought we owned really “owned” us, and living in bondage to them rendered us ill, exhausted, and miserable.

To be honest, we didn’t even know what all we owned or how severely our lives were affected by these things until an unexpected identity theft crisis forced us to face reality.

Since then, we’ve sold our home, released about 90 percent of our physical possessions, eliminated 100 percent of our debt, and discovered a new and profound peace.

We are now a few years into this journey and have learned a few things. Here are 10 lessons our minimizing quest has taught me.

## Fear of knowing where we stood kept us from asking the hard questions and facing the facts.

**1. The hardest trials can produce the most desperately needed change.** When we found out someone had stolen our identity, we felt blindsided and violated. This tribulation was alarming and long-lasting. But despite the suffering—or more accurately, because of it—we had the very catalyst we needed to propel ourselves from a life of material abundance to a truly abundant life.

**2. Embracing reality is the first step toward changing your life.** Coming face-to-face with identity theft forced us to examine each one of our debts, develop a stark picture of where we stood overall, and acknowledge the severity of how much we owed. Even though nothing had changed—and our debt still remained—knowing the specific reality of our situation gave us a sense of control and helped us find the fortitude to sell what we had to and pay what we owed. Fear of knowing where we stood kept us from asking hard questions and facing the facts regarding our financial situation. Once we owned up to what was real, the truth set us free and gave us the necessary courage to take the next step.

**3. No one can change your life except you.** Change is hard. Sometimes it seems easier to perpetuate what is familiar and feels safe, despite the misery it inflicts on our lives. As much as we would all love to have someone come in and do the heavy lifting—pun intended—of minimizing for us, we’re the only ones who can make those decisions and let go of what’s burdening our lives.

**4. ‘The American dream’ doesn’t have to be your dream.** Just because the world around us

Buying a home may be part of the so-called American dream, but you can find your own path. ▶



dictates its definition of “normal” doesn’t mean we have to conform to its demands. When pursuing the prescribed ideal of expected behavior requires us to go deep into debt, overburden our lives with excess, and keep our noses to the grindstone, that dream can become a nightmare. We no longer own a home but rent instead, and that’s OK. Being debt-free means far more to us than knowing we’re meeting someone else’s ideal.

**5. Hoarding is not necessary.** Both my husband and I come from parents who were born in the 1920s and early 1930s. They grew up in an entirely different time, when supplies and money were scarce. They were well-meaning in rais-

ing us with the mentality of “you better hold onto it in case you need it someday.” What we have learned is that there is no need to hold onto things we don’t need today. With each new day comes new provision, and our faith has taught us that we’ll always have what we need.

**6. The freedom of owning less quickly eases the pain of letting go.** As difficult as it is to release certain things, the sting only lasts a short time. The dread and separation anxiety ahead of time is the most vexing part, and we’ve found that once it’s out of sight, we don’t even miss it. The relief of being rid of emotionally and physically heavy baggage is liberating.

**7. Peace is a trustworthy guide.** The process of minimizing generates many conflicting emotions. Making the right decisions often requires careful consideration and soul-searching. Take your time to identify choices that calm your spirit and always follow the path to peace.

**8. You only need to see the next step.** When it became clear that we would need to sell our home to get out of debt, the only thing we knew for sure is that we needed to get in touch with a realtor and list our house on the market. What we were going to do next or where we were going to go afterward was a complete mystery.

But by the time the house sold a few months later, these questions were answered, and our next step had come into view. When we started out, I wanted a flashlight to illuminate the whole road ahead of us. What I found is that I can’t take step two before step one anyhow, and the only thing I need to see is the next step in front of me. When it’s time to know more, the guidance will be there. Leaps, when taken in faith, will land you where you need to be.

**9. There is a huge difference between a want and a need.** On our journey, it became necessary for us to live in tight quarters for a span of time after we sold our home and were waiting for our rental to become available. We learned quickly that we only needed a small handful of items to survive each day. Most of what we had surrounded ourselves with was entirely unnecessary to have a meaningful life.

**10. Physical possessions are not the only things that need to be minimized.** Unhealthy relationships, excessive obligations and commitments, a cluttered mind, and emotional toxins are equally detrimental to our lives, and they need to be pruned until balance and wellness are achieved.

## The process of minimizing generates many conflicting emotions.

You can read our story and find an in-depth dive into the lessons we have learned in our book, “Biblical Minimalism: Following Jesus from a Life of Abundance to a More Abundant Life.”

Though we’re all different and our paths are diverse, I believe the desire for peace is common to us all. Wherever you’re on your journey, I wish you well.

Cheryl Smith blogs at *Biblical Minimalism*, where she shares her family’s journey to relinquish excess and deepen their connection to Christ. Her book, “Biblical Minimalism,” is now available for purchase.

# ‘Different’ Is Needed When ‘Normal’ Is Broken

How we learned to be a ‘ScreenStrong Family’ in a screen addicted world

JULIE CHRISTIAN

“I don’t want to go to school today,” my 10-year-old son whined. Jacob was the most naturally curious of my three children. He loved going to school. His words were a warning that something was amiss.

“Why don’t you want to go to school?” I asked. “What’s wrong?”

“I don’t have any friends.” His face remained downcast as he picked at his fingers.

“What about Peter?” Peter had come over to our house for a few days over the summer when his mother had to work. Back then they were best friends.

“Peter is a popular boy now. He plays Fortnite. So do all the other kids. They don’t want to be friends with me because I don’t play it.”

I couldn’t believe my ears. Just a year before, Peter had been the new boy at school who moved from another school because he had been bullied. And now, he was accepted into a group of boys who spent most of their free time outside of school gaming, and their free time in school making fun of my non-gaming child.

It was early in our screen-free journey, and I was tempted to acquiesce.

But I was committed, even if it meant my son lost friends faster than his ex-friends could press the fire button on a game controller. I had removed screens near the end of his third-grade year. There were so many positive benefits from the change that I couldn’t fathom going back to the way things were. In only a few months without screens, Jacob’s reading skills increased by more than a grade level. His brother’s tantrums diminished and then disappeared. Our lives became almost normal, and more peaceful. If my son was unpopular, I thought, so be it.

Then, the other parents began treating

me with the same skepticism. Even my mother and father were critical of my choices. It was difficult for my husband and me to stand firm in our commitment, but we had seen the difference in our children and our family. My husband, a juvenile probation officer, had seen the impact of gaming and screen use in his caseload of juveniles. We had been given a glimpse of the future, and we chose not to allow our sons to go down that path.

After much thought and quite a bit of prayer, I realized that we live in a society in which social media, video games, movies, and other screen-based entertainment penetrate every aspect of our lives. Adults and kids share lives that revolve around the consumption of massive amounts of screen-based entertainment. Most of our social engagements begin and end with discussions about social media, movies, and what we’ve watched or plan to watch.

If I continue to eschew these things, my kids will always be the “odd” kids in the

class at school who don’t know the latest Fortnite dances, or who don’t watch the most popular YouTube channels. My kids won’t know about the latest TikTok trends, and they won’t be notified of social gatherings via Snapchat.

They will not be popular. And I had to force myself to be OK with that. With no access to screens, they most likely will never be the “cool kids” at their school.

I thought back to my own childhood. Had I been one of those “cool kids?” In hindsight, I think my friends and I were pretty cool, and we all turned out to be cool adults for sure, but we certainly were not part of the in-crowd. But being in the popular crowd isn’t all it’s cracked up to be. I realized I didn’t need to take steps to make my kids cooler, I needed to begin educating my kids on why being uncool in today’s society is better.



Taking devices away from children creates more space for them to be children. BY SVETLANA/SHUTTERSTOCK

lar crowd isn’t all it’s cracked up to be. I realized I didn’t need to take steps to make my kids cooler, I needed to begin educating my kids on why being uncool in today’s society is better.

We are a different family. What matters to us is different than what matters to other families. And because of that, my kids are always going to be different from other kids. And because we keep them away from screens and fill their lives with other, more beneficial activities to replace that time, they are always going to stand out.

I am more than three years into this journey, and it’s true. Being a Screen-Strong family has closed some doors, but opened many others. Our kids don’t participate in popular “gaming” clubs, and they aren’t in on the conversations with their peers on social media. But what they are doing is inviting their friends over to celebrate their birthday in their cool new treehouse that they built themselves. They are lending out books to neighborhood kids and sharing sidewalk chalk with the girls across the street.

Over time, my children stopped worrying about their popularity. They were so busy doing the things that kids are supposed to do, they forgot to care. They came home exhausted, with scuffed knees, dirty clothes, and lots of stories to share with us.

In the beginning of this journey, there were parents who smiled to our faces and then criticized us behind our backs. But those same parents began to experience the negative consequences of screen time and excessive gaming in their own homes. Family members who told us we’d taken things too far began to witness an appreciable difference between our children and the children of our relatives who hadn’t made the same changes.

Over time, the same parents who “tsk-tsked” at our extreme choice secretly came to us with their embarrassing stories. One mom’s 11-year-old daughter posted provocative dances on TikTok. One relative’s son dropped out of college after losing his scholarship because he stayed up all night gaming.

The same people who complained about how different I was forcing my children to be were now complimenting us on our children’s behavior and wishing their kids were a little less like everyone else’s. People in church came up to us to tell us how kind and respectful our

little boys were. My oldest son started coming home with cards and letters from his teachers thanking him for his hard work and pleasant attitude in school.

My boys are in middle school now, and sometimes it is difficult for them to begin friendships when they don’t have the common ground of a smartphone or video games. But they’ve learned a valuable lesson.

## My children are different in a good way. They are becoming the thinkers and leaders of tomorrow.

It’s OK to be different.

Life isn’t a popularity contest, and someday how many friends come to their birthday party on a Saturday afternoon won’t matter. What will matter is what they stand for and what they work hard to accomplish. And the interesting thing is, that when they stand for and accomplish positive things, more and more people want to be their friends.

My children are different in a good way. They are becoming the thinkers and leaders of tomorrow. And eventually, when the kids busy playing with their screens want to be friends with my kids, there’s plenty of room in our treehouse.

Julie Christian is a ScreenStrong Ambassador and mom of four children. ScreenStrong is an organization that helps parents empower their children to gain the benefits of screen media without the toxic consequences of overuse that threaten healthy mental and physical development. The ScreenStrong solution promotes a strong parenting style that proactively replaces harmful screen use with healthy activities, life skills development, and family connection. This article was republished from ScreenStrong.com

# Feeling Young Can Reduce the Aging Effects of Stress, Research Suggests

SARAH COWNLEY

New research shows how feeling young can protect people from the physiological ravages of stress. People who feel younger have a greater sense of well-being, less inflammation, and better cognitive function, according to research. They also have a lower risk of hospitalization.

According to a study published by the American Psychological Association, feeling younger may help adults handle stress as they age. Researchers analyzed three years of data from 5,039 participants in the German Ageing Survey who were aged 40 and older.

The survey included questions about the stress in people’s lives and their functional health. This included how much they were limited in daily activities such as walking, bathing, and dressing.

Participants were also asked, “How old do you feel?”

There are a few ways researchers and others look at age. There is chronological age, which is the age we refer to when asked how old we are. And then there is biological age, which is how old our body is in terms of its overall condition. And then there is subjective age, which is how old we feel.

It was found that, on average, participants who recorded more stress in their lives had a steeper decline in functional health over three years. The link between stress and health decline was also found to be stronger for chronologically older participants.

Since there is a relatively large volume of research that links the biochemical effects of stress to an overall acceleration of biological age, this part of the study is fairly well established. The interesting part of the study showed that participants who “felt” younger seemed to have a protective buffer. Among those who felt younger than their chronological age, the link between stress and health decline was weaker. This

## Participants who recorded more stress in their lives had a steeper decline in functional health.

People who feel younger have a greater sense of well-being, less inflammation, and better cognitive function.

protective effect was strongest among the oldest participants.

“Generally, we know that functional health declines with advancing age, but we also know that these age-related functional health trajectories are remarkably varied. As a result, some individuals enter old age and very old age with quite good and intact health resources, whereas others experience a pronounced decline in functional health, which might even result in need for long-term care,” said study lead author Markus Wettstein.

“Our findings support the role of stress as a risk factor for functional health decline, particularly among older individuals, as well as the health-supporting and stress-buffering role of a younger subjective age.”

In other words, those with a younger subjective age seemed better protected against the toll stress normally inflicts on biological aging.

## Health Interventions

The results of this study suggest that interventions aimed at helping people feel younger could reduce stress

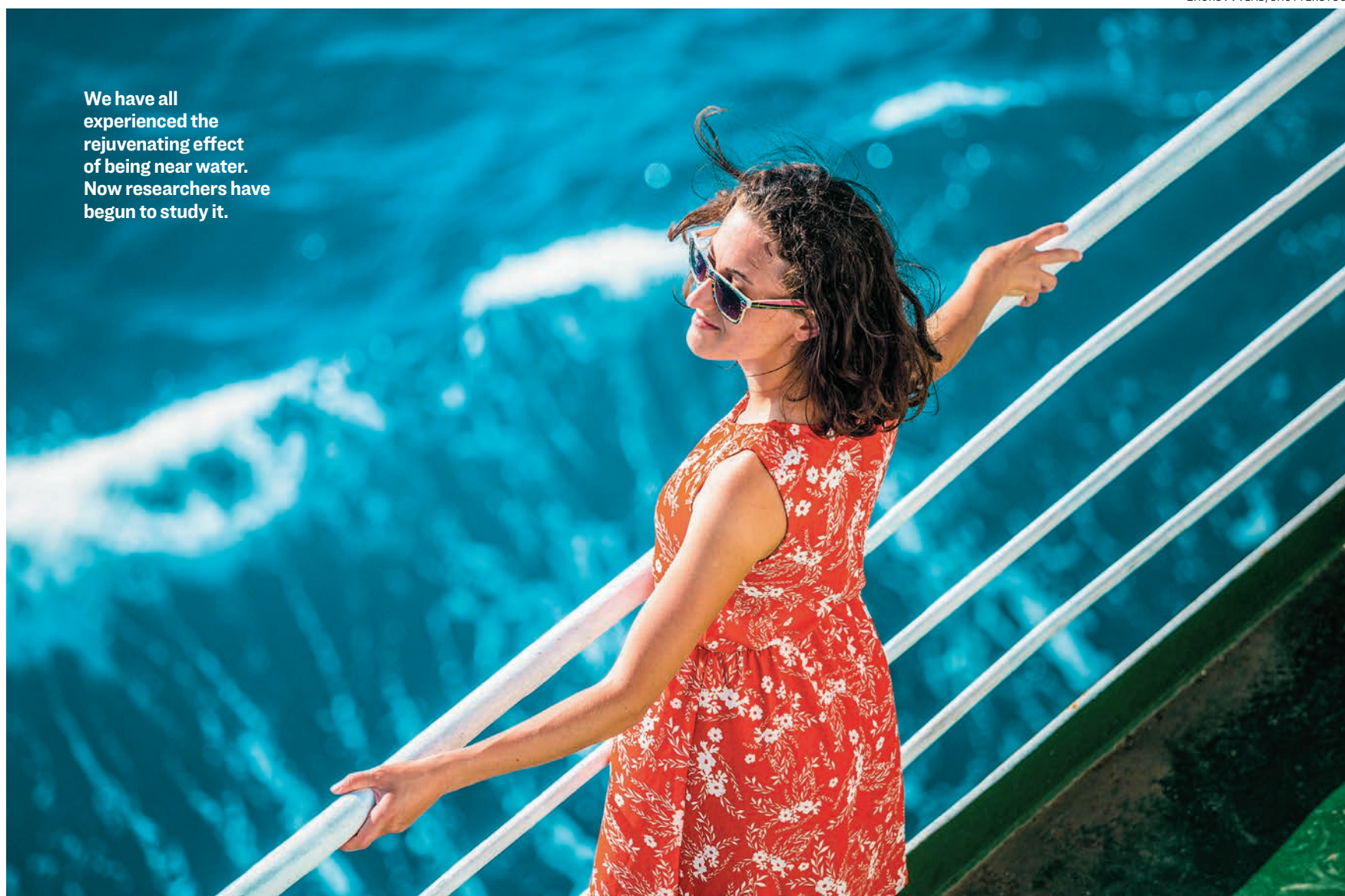
and improve health, including lowering the risk of cognitive decline in older adults. Further studies are needed to help determine what kind of interventions would work best, but health care providers are encouraged to help promote positive views on aging.

These types of interventions, combined with stress management training, could improve both physical and mental health, and reduce the risk of illness and disease. So, if you are middle-aged or older, don’t dwell on your age. Focus on the age you feel, and start doing activities that can help you feel younger!

Sarah Cownley earned a diploma in nutritional therapy from Health Sciences Academy in London, and she enjoys helping others by teaching healthy lifestyle changes through her personal consultations and with her regular contributions to the *Doctors Health Press*. This article was originally published on *Bel Marra Health*.



KOZLUBEL/SHUTTERSTOCK



We have all experienced the rejuvenating effect of being near water. Now researchers have begun to study it.

## Blue Is the New Green

Research has affirmed the psychological benefits of green spaces, but what about blue spaces?

LYNN JAFFEE

When I need to relax, I think about a particular beach in the Caribbean. I've only been there once, but it's so profoundly beautiful that I go back to it time and again in my mind.

The lush hillside above gives way to over a half-mile of clean white sand. The beach is punctuated with just enough palm and sea grape trees to give you some shade from the Caribbean sun. And the fineness of the sand extends far into the water, turning it into a turquoise blue that looks like it's lit from beneath.

Why am I telling you this? Well, because this beach is my happy place. Even though I can't go there every day, I can conjure it up in my mind. My body doesn't know the difference between real and imagined, so it reacts as though I'm lying on a blanket on the sand, listening to the waves gently lapping at the shore.

And there's more. My beach is just one of the countless bodies of water throughout the world that are considered to be blue spaces. But before talking about the blue, let's talk about the green.

You may have heard about the healing potential of green spaces. In the past 20 years, a great deal of research has discovered the benefits of spending time in natural green spaces, such as the woods and parks. Scientists have discovered that spending time outdoors in green landscapes, called forest bathing, can help lower your blood pressure, decrease stress, boost your immune response, and help ease feelings of depression.

Now, scientists are beginning to examine the effects of water-based environments on your health. One study surveyed 18,000 people in 18 countries. The results, while self-reported, found that being near the water helps to promote mental and physical well-being. Other research has documented that people who live near the water have a lower risk of premature death and experience a decreased risk of being obese, as well as reporting being in better mental health than people who don't live near water.

There are a few reasons why being near blue space is so therapeutic. One of the best-known books on this phenomenon is "Blue Mind: The Surprising Science That Shows How Being Near, In, On, or Under Water Can Make You Happier, Healthier, More Connected, and Better at What You Do," by Wallace J. Nichols. If you really want to dive into the topic, Nichols will give you an ocean of information about the therapeutic benefits of being near water.

While the research is early, there are a number of intuitive reasons that being near water is so beneficial, and one is that the sound of moving water is relaxing. Listening to the rain, a babbling brook, or waves splashing against the shore is peaceful. I know firsthand that when I have a hard time falling asleep, I

plug in a recording of a gentle rainstorm, waves on a beach, or a mountain stream. I never get to the end of any of them because I've drifted off to sleep. And I'm sure I'm not alone—these recordings work because the sound of water is soothing and produces a sense of calm.

Also, people tend to be more active when they're around water, and that's a good thing. Walking along a lakeshore or strolling along a beach, kayaking, swimming, and paddling are all examples of ways that water inspires people to move their bodies. And water activity can be emotionally healing, too, as in the case of surf therapy or scuba programs that help veterans with post-traumatic stress.

Water is also restorative when it's an intentional component of a landscape, especially in urban areas. A water feature is relaxing, visually pleasing, promotes activity, and can actually help to cut the heat. When you think about it, the fountains in Rome, the River Walk in San Antonio, the canals of Venice or Amsterdam, or the Tidal Basin in Washington all enhance not only the landscape, but also the quality of life for the people in those cities.

And finally, the beauty of water is that it doesn't matter what shape it takes in order to be therapeutic. It can be a pond, river, waterfall, ocean, or a fountain—all of these water features are attractive and make you feel better. I instinctively know how healing water can be when I walk along the creek that runs by my house.

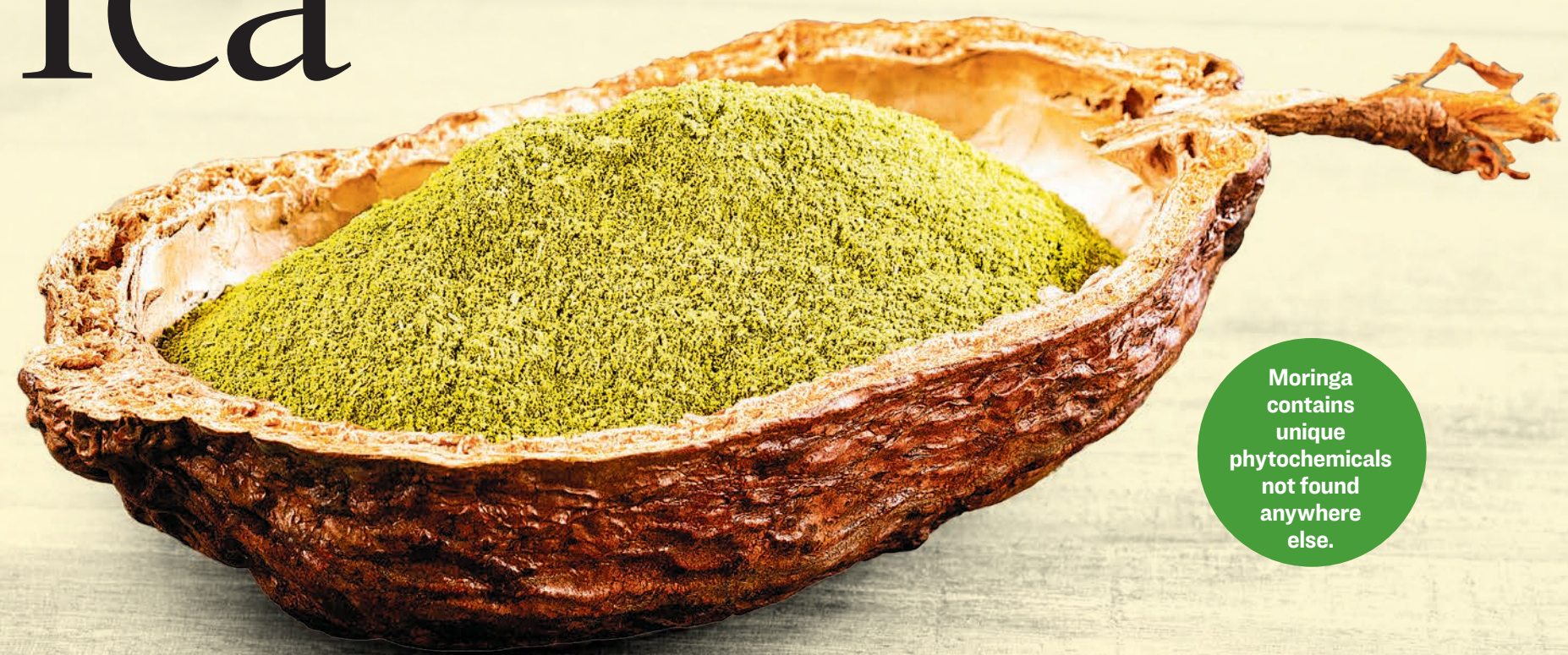
*Lynn Jaffee is a licensed acupuncturist and the author of "Simple Steps: The Chinese Way to Better Health." This article was originally published on AcupunctureTwinCities.com*

There are a number of intuitive reasons that being near water is so beneficial.



WHY YOU SHOULD DRINK

# Moringa Tea



Moringa contains unique phytochemicals not found anywhere else.

## Drought resistant 'miracle tree' offers therapeutic benefits

JOSEPH MERCOLA

Moringa is a tree with a rich nutritional profile that's native to India, Bangladesh, Pakistan, and Afghanistan. There are several different species, but the most common and widely consumed is moringa oleifera. This is sometimes referred to as "the miracle tree." It's also been called the "tree of life," "mother's milk," "drumstick tree," and "horseradish tree."

The tree is fast-growing, drought-resistant, and can reach 40 feet in height. Nearly every part of the plant is edible and has medicinal qualities, but the pods, leaves, flowers, and bark are most frequently used. It's valued in Ayurvedic therapy for a range of uses, including its anti-inflammatory, antifungal, antiviral and antidepressant properties.

Its bark is thick and white-colored and its leaves are long and oval-shaped. The tree has been used since ancient times and was valued by the Greeks and Egyptians. Currently, several humanitarian organizations are encouraging its growth in rural communities to help combat malnutrition.

The plants grow so quickly that within six months of planting a cutting, the first harvest can be taken. By the second year, one tree can produce nearly 300 seed pods that might be parboiled and added to curry or roasted and eaten like nuts.

Moringa tea can be made from dried leaves, seeds, or flowers, but dried leaves are the most popular. While moringa tea is frequently consumed in India, the benefits of the tea have only recently reached the Western world. Roughly 1 teaspoon of dried loose-leaf tea is used in 1 cup of freshly heated pure—not distilled or flavored—water. For added health benefits and a different flavor, try blending it with some green tea.

**Moringa is rich in vitamins, minerals, and essential amino acids.**

**Unique Glucosinolate Found in Moringa**

Other health benefits from moringa plants are the unique glucosinolates that are unique to the tree. A glucosinolate is an inert sulfur-containing phytochemical that is most notably found in cruciferous vegetables like Brussels sprouts, broccoli, and cabbage.

*Continued on Page 12*

WISE HABITS

## The Basic Anxiety of Life

Learning to manage the underlying anxiety of life is key to stepping beyond its grip

LEO BABAUTA

Underlying much of what we do is a sense of anxiety, uncertainty, fear, doubt, or dissatisfaction.

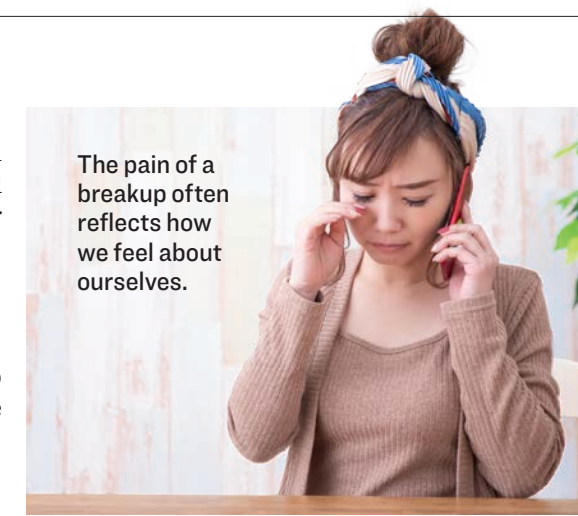
And we react to this in so many unhelpful ways: We seek distraction, we eat unhealthy food, we procrastinate, and we get caught in a cycle of anxiety and unhappiness. We lash out at others, we dwell in our loneliness, and then we go into denial

about it all.

If we could learn to deal with the basic anxiety of life, we would have much more ease—and far less struggle—in all that we do.

**The Anxiety Underneath Our Problems**  
On Twitter, I asked people to share a problem they'd like me to write about.

*Continued on Page 14*



The pain of a breakup often reflects how we feel about ourselves.

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## Walking Off High Blood Sugar

For those with Type 2 diabetes, sitting can cause problems with blood sugar levels

AYE CHAN PAING & SEBASTIEN CHASTIN

Many people spend much of their day sitting, which can cause a range of health problems and worsen certain health conditions, such as Type 2 diabetes. Research shows that sitting too much can cause problems with blood sugar levels—making it even more important for those with Type 2 diabetes to get plenty of physical activity into their day.

Type 2 diabetes causes the level of sugar in the blood—glucose—to become too high. High sugar levels in the blood can then cause serious damage to the body, including the heart, kidneys, eyes, feet, and nerves.

Diabetics can use lifestyle changes, such as diet and exercise, and medications, such as metformin or gliptin, to lower blood sugar levels. Yet following recommended diets and taking diabetes medications aren't always effective at controlling blood sugar levels, as our research found. This shows us there's a need to re-think diabetes care and management.

Type 2 diabetes can be different for everyone. Blood sugar levels can be influenced by different factors, such as age, gender, activity levels, diet, and weight. This makes it important to target new, modifiable lifestyle factors, such as how much time is spent sitting.

The research we've done, which looked at 37 adults with Type 2 diabetes, found that over a period of two weeks, prolonged sitting was associated with high blood sugar levels. But we also found that when people stood up or walked around between periods of sitting, they had lower blood sugar levels. Other studies have also produced similar results.

Our research has also shown that sitting less or breaking up periods of sitting with bouts of activity could be a simple way to manage blood sugar levels—including high sugar levels before and after breakfast, which is a common problem for people with Type 2 diabetes. Simply walking more often could help with blood sugar control throughout the day.

In fact, walking every 15 minutes for as little as three minutes each time at a person's usual pace could be enough to help them control their blood sugar—and could even be as effective as standard diabetes medications. Other research has shown that keeping bouts of sitting shorter than 15 minutes is better for blood sugar levels.

Walking and other exercise is so good for regulating blood sugar because movement causes muscles to contract, which subsequently starts the mechanisms that allow the sugar in the blood to enter cells and fuel the body.

With many people continuing to spend large portions of their days sitting while working from home, it's important for people with Type 2 diabetes to stand and walk often. Even small changes in sitting patterns throughout the day may improve a person's blood sugar control. For example, going to the kitchen to get water or make tea can be a great opportunity to walk around for a few minutes. Even standing or walking while taking calls or during meetings can be a good idea.

It's still important for people with Type 2 diabetes to follow the advice of their doctor and stick to any special diets or medications they've been prescribed. But adding extra movement into their day will not only improve blood sugar control, it may also improve other aspects of health, including heart health and bone density.

*Aye Chan Paing is a doctoral candidate of sedentary time and glucose control in Type 2 Diabetes at Glasgow Caledonian University in Scotland. Sebastien Chastin is a professor of health behavior dynamics of people, places, and systems at Glasgow Caledonian University. This article was first published on The Conversation.*

Going to the kitchen to get water or make tea can be a great opportunity to walk around for a few minutes. Even standing or walking while taking calls or during meetings can be a good idea.

High blood sugar can cause serious damage to the heart, kidneys, eyes, feet, and nerves.

Over a period of two weeks, prolonged sitting was associated with high blood sugar levels.

Simply walking more often could help with blood sugar control throughout the day.

## Eat These Mushrooms to Live Longer

These 7 fungi serve up a host of nutritional benefits alongside delectable flavors

What if you could fight a host of diseases and even increase your longevity just by adding a few delicious servings of fungus to your everyday diet?

Paul Stamets, renowned mycologist—that's a mushroom expert—and TedTalk favorite, fervently believes that mushrooms can save the world.

He describes fungi as "the grand molecular disassemblers of nature" due to their transformative ability to generate humus soils from decomposing organic materials. Fungi turn the decay of nature into nutrients for plants, trees, animals, and humans alike.

As part of this amazing dance of biosynthesis, mushrooms alchemize Earth's most powerful elements for the benefit of mankind. Fungi produce our best antibiotics and have medicinal potential for a host of diseases. Certain varieties of mushroom possess psychotropic properties that have been prized for millennia. But these beneficial attributes merely scratch the surface of what the fungi kingdom are up to—which is apt, since most of fungi's prolific activities take place below where our eyes can see.

The fungi kingdom represents a distinct type of organism, separate from animals, plants, and bacteria. Like animals, fungi absorb nutrients from the environment and excrete digestive enzymes—in the case of mushrooms—into the surrounding soil. Mycelium is the unseen part of mushrooms that extend below the surface of the soil.

Strongly resembling neural networks, thread-like roots known as hyphae can extend for miles into the Earth, absorbing nutrients and decomposing organic materials. In his book, "Mycelium Running: How Mushrooms Can Help Save the World," Paul Stamets established his belief that mycelia are the "neurological network of nature."

Intrinsically aware of their host's needs, Stamets believes mushrooms are sentient, "devising diverse enzymatic and chemical responses to complex challenges" perceived in their environment. Beyond sentience, Stamets explains that mushrooms possess a co-creative consciousness, arguing that it would benefit humanity greatly to learn how to interface.

"Because these externalized neurological nets sense any impression upon them, from footsteps to falling tree branches, they could relay enormous amounts of data regarding the movements of all organisms through the landscape," he said.

Stamets's recently published research explores another fundamental way in which fungi communicate with humanity: through our digestive systems. Mushrooms are prebiotic, boosting the microbiome's beneficial bacteria, such as acidophilus and bifidobacterium, thereby improving digestion and overall health.

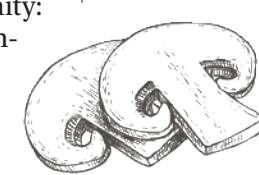
Recent independent research shows that certain varieties of mushroom are also our best dietary sources for potent antioxidants, such as sulfur-rich ergothioneine, and the "major biological antioxidant," glutathione. A diet rich in antioxidants like ergothioneine and glutathione protects cells from free radicals, helping the body withstand normal oxidative stress that damages healthy cells. In addition to



Fungi produce our best antibiotics and have medicinal potential for a host of diseases.



The fungi kingdom represents a distinct type of organism, separate from animals, plants, and bacteria.



Fungi turn the decay of nature into nutrients for plants, trees, animals, and humans.

boosting longevity, mushrooms pack a serious nutritional punch, providing a great source of vitamin D, which is essential for strong immune system function.

Adding almost any type of edible mushroom to your diet will provide a healthy dose of nutrients, but there are some mushrooms that stand out from the rest. A recent study conducted at The Pennsylvania State University College of Medicine tested 11 species of mushroom to determine which varieties possessed the strongest antioxidant properties.

Of the 11 species tested, the top seven mushrooms with the strongest antioxidant constituents are also some of the most nutritionally dense. According to this latest research, these are the seven mushrooms we should be eating, ranked in order:

### 1. Porcini

Porcini are a large mushroom, with a cap that can reach up to 12 inches in diameter. Popular in Italian cuisine, porcini mushrooms represent a few different varieties, are typically reddish-brown in color, possess a thick stem, and are slightly sticky to the touch. This species of mushroom fruits from summer to fall, so you can find them most of the year in specialty markets. If you're a forager, search for porcini mushrooms in the mulchy undergrowth of hardwood forests with pine, chestnut, hemlock, and spruce trees.

### 2. Golden Oyster

Golden oyster mushrooms are typically cultivated rather than wild-harvested, making them a great mushroom to grow at home. They grow in virtually anything—using straw mats and ordinary compost—with mushroom "starters" from inoculation kits that can be purchased in specialty stores. They possess a golden hue, grow in clusters, and have a nutty, slightly bitter flavor.

### 3. Pioppino

Pioppino mushrooms, often called velvet pioppino due to the velvety-brown appearance of their small caps, grow on decaying logs or at the mulchy base of hardwood trees. Pioppinos have a mild, slightly peppery flavor, making them a popular choice for adding to recipes. They grow in clusters on long, sturdy stems, are smaller in size—their caps are only about one inch wide—and retain a firm texture when cooked.

### 4. Oyster

Oysters are among the most common and versatile mushrooms. Easy to cultivate, oysters grow mainly on decaying wood and possess a slightly sweet, anise-like smell. Called "oysters" due to having a similar appearance to the sea creature, the mycelia of oyster mushrooms eat small roundworms and bacteria, making them one of the few carnivorous mushroom species. Colors range from green to pink to yellow, depending on the variety. Fluted caps span from two to eight inches, with white gills on the underside, and a short, stubby stem.

### 5. Lions mane

It's easy to see how the lion's mane mushroom got its name. This popular edible and medicinal mushroom has exceptional neuroprotective powers, thanks to its ability to stimulate synthesis of nerve growth factor (NGF). NGF is a protein that plays a major role in the maintenance, survival, and regeneration of neurons in the central and peripheral nervous systems. Known to improve memory and mood, lion's mane mushrooms are a staple in traditional Chinese medicine, and can be found in supplement form as a powder or tincture in many health food stores. If you'd rather enjoy their meaty texture in a meal, sauté them in butter to intensify the flavor, or boil them as a meat replacement in soup or stew.

### 6. Maitake

Found in clusters, typically at the base of oak trees, maitake mushrooms have potent anti-cancer properties. A polypore mushroom, maitakes lack the distinctive gills on the underside of the cap. Multiple caps emerge in layers from a single, thick underground stem, and can grow quite large. The entire "fruit body" can weigh 50 pounds or more, with a single cap growing as wide as 12 inches in diameter. Caps range from white to brown, are semi-firm when cooked, and possess a slightly earthy flavor that takes on the taste of your chosen cooking medium. Maitakes have been researched for a variety of health benefits, including lowering cholesterol and blood glucose in rats.

### 7. Shiitake

Shiitake mushrooms are one of the most popular mushrooms in the world, and for good reason. Revered in Asia for centuries for their potent medicinal properties, shiitake mushrooms have become a symbol of longevity in some cultures. Hearty and versatile, shiitakes can be consumed raw or cooked, and are found in powdered supplement form in many herbal pharmacies. Shiitakes grow in clusters on decaying hardwood trees, and are also commonly cultivated for food and medicinal uses. A classic umbrella shape, shiitakes are both beautiful and substantial. Caps range from white to light brown with white spots, and can reach up to eight inches in diameter. Cooking releases a "garlic pine" aroma and a rich, earthy flavor. And luckily for us, shiitakes are available year-round in most areas.

For additional research on the health benefits of mushrooms, visit the GreenMedInfo database on the subject.

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## 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.

SEÁN HANNITY  
Talk show host



The Epoch Times is a great place where you can understand traditional values in a way and in a tone and through content that is accessible. It's smart.

CARRIE SHEFFIELD  
Columnist and broadcaster



I congratulate you and The Epoch Times for the work you are doing, especially with regard to keeping the menace of the communist threat in front of us.

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Military and intelligence analyst and former deputy assistant to the president



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THE EPOCH TIMES

TRUTH AND TRADITION

## WHY YOU SHOULD DRINK

# Moringa Tea

Drought resistant ‘miracle tree’ offers therapeutic benefits

*Continued from Page 9*

According to one paper in Scientific Reports, moringa contains not only high levels of glucosinolates but also a unique formulation that is responsible for many of its medicinal properties. When glucosinolates are metabolized by an enzyme called myrosinase, they produce a bioactive isothiocyanate compound.

The isothiocyanate found in broccoli and many other cruciferous vegetables is sulforaphane. However, the unique glucosinolate (glucosinolate) found in the moringa plant is metabolized to moringin.

Researchers recently discovered a new glucosinolate in wild forms of moringa oleifera called 4-(L-glucopyranosyloxy)benzyl GS (4GBGS). Domestic forms of moringa oleifera grown for human consumption had some levels of 4GBGS but in much lower concentrations.

## Nearly every part of the plant is edible and has medicinal qualities.

Researchers speculated that this may be due to breeding the plant to reduce the naturally bitter taste. Since glucosinolates contain sulfur, they have a distinct, sometimes off-putting flavor. In addition to glucosinolate and 4GBGS, moringa oleifera also contains at least 10 other glucosinolates that work together to provide many of the health benefits of the plant.

According to Jed Fahey, a nutritional biochemist from Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health, the overall nutritive value of the moringa tree has led to widespread use in order to reduce the burden of undernutrition. In a 2009 article in the journal Ecology of Food and Nutrition, he wrote:

“However, scientifically robust trials testing its efficacy for undernourished human beings have not yet been reported. If the wealth of anecdotal evidence (not cited herein) can be supported by robust clinical evidence, countries with a high prevalence of under-nutrition might have at their fingertips, a sustainable solution to some of their nutritional challenges.”

In the years following Fahey’s article, human and animal studies have begun to reveal some of the health benefits that have been enjoyed by traditional medicine practitioners for hundreds of years, including improving iron levels in lactating women, reducing malnutrition in children, and showed promising results in treating malaria and malnutrition in a study using mice.

### 7 Benefits From Drinking Moringa Tea

Many of the benefits associated with drinking moringa tea are likely the result of the tree’s nutritional profile, including the unique glucosinolates discussed above. Additionally, the plant is rich in vitamins, minerals, and essential amino acids, which are protein building blocks.

According to the U.S. Department of Agriculture, 100 grams of the pods contain 45 milligrams (mg) of magnesium, 15 mg of phosphorus, and 461 mg of potassium. They’re also rich in zinc, vitamin C, folate, and vitamin A.

Drinking moringa tea is a satisfying and relaxing way of ingesting many of the health benefits associated with it. If you’d like to experiment with a different flavor, try adding cinnamon or lemon basil to your drink. Seven of the potential health benefits of adding moringa tea to your routine include:

**Reducing arsenic toxicity:** A review of the literature revealed *M. oleifera* may be useful in people with chronic hyperglycemia (high blood sugar) and dyslipidemia. Chronic exposure to arsenic in contaminated drinking water or food is associated with an increased risk of high blood sugar

and cardiovascular disease.

Long-term exposure to arsenic can lead to several types of cancers and can contribute to the development of neurological, lung, and kidney diseases. Animal studies also show the antioxidant and anti-inflammatory properties of moringa help reduce those long-term risks.

**Helping to control blood sugar:** One animal study demonstrated moringa could reduce blood sugar by up to 29.9 percent in normal subjects, up to 32.8 percent in mildly diabetic subjects, and 69.2 percent in severely diabetic subjects.

**Supporting cardiovascular health:** Animal studies show moringa helped normalize elevated levels of blood sugar, cholesterol, and triglycerides in diabetic subjects. Cardiovascular disease is a significant complication associated with a diagnosis of Type 2 diabetes. Moringa may also help reduce the formation of plaques in the blood vessels.

**Offering possible anticancer effects:** Moringa has a cytotoxic effect on breast, colorectal, and prostate cancers. It may also be a potential adjunctive treatment in benign prostatic hyperplasia, which is one of the most common conditions in men as they age.

**Supporting brain health:** In an animal model, moringa helped alleviate the effects of homocysteine on the brain in the development of Alzheimer’s disease and mitigated memory impairment in age-related dementia.

**Preventing chronic disease:** Moringa tea is rich in phytochemicals, including tannins, saponin, and polyphenols. These compounds play a role in resisting the development of nonalcoholic fatty liver disease (NAFLD), high blood pressure, cancer, and overall inflammation.

**Supporting male reproductive health:** Animal studies have suggested that moringa has a beneficial effect on male reproduction, including libido and fertility. However, the same is not true for females, who, in one study, experienced negative fertility effects from supplementation.

**Plant Protein With All Essential Amino Acids**  
Moringa is also a source of high-quality amino acids. They are the building blocks of protein, which are used in a variety of functions. There are 20 different amino acids that have been identified and are classified as either nonessential or essential. Your body can make the nonessential amino acids but needs to get the essential amino acids from food.



Moringa tea is becoming more popular in North America, though often as a weight loss aid.

There aren’t a lot of plant foods that contain all the essential amino acids, but moringa is one. According to the African Journal of Biotechnology, the plant has 19 amino acids, including all nine essential amino acids.

Each of these has important biological roles including being used to stabilize blood sugar, being used in the production of collagen, being necessary in the production of red and white blood cells, and playing a role in memory formation and nervous system function.

### Antibiotic and Anti-Inflammatory Activity

Biological effects of moringa extend to having potent antibiotic properties against a variety of pathogens, including *Escherichia coli*, *Salmonella typhimurium*, *Candida*, and *Helicobacter pylori* (*H. pylori*). Specifically, the isothiocyanate 4-(alpha-L-rhamnopyranosyloxy)benzyl isothiocyanate (4RBTC) is a potent antibiotic against *H. pylori*, *Staphylococcus aureus*, and *Candida albicans*.

The anti-inflammatory effects from moringa may also help protect your skin from pollution. Moringa leaves are rich in antioxidants that contribute to healthy skin as well as sulfur, which is a key ingredient in the production of collagen and keratin. Moringa oil, pressed from the seeds of the tree, keeps for years without turning rancid and is easily absorbed into the skin. Although the product hasn’t gained widespread popularity, there is evidence that it helps reduce wrinkles. The oil is also naturally moisturizing and nourishing.

**Use Caution When Ingesting Moringa**  
It’s important to remember that certain plants, like moringa, are bioactive and may interfere with medications or supplements you’re taking. The leaves are considered to be generally safe and edible, but there is a slight controversy about the roots and stems.

The information about using moringa before or during pregnancy, or while nursing, is also unclear. Until there’s more evidence that moringa is safe during pregnancy, women who are pregnant or who want to become pregnant shouldn’t use it.

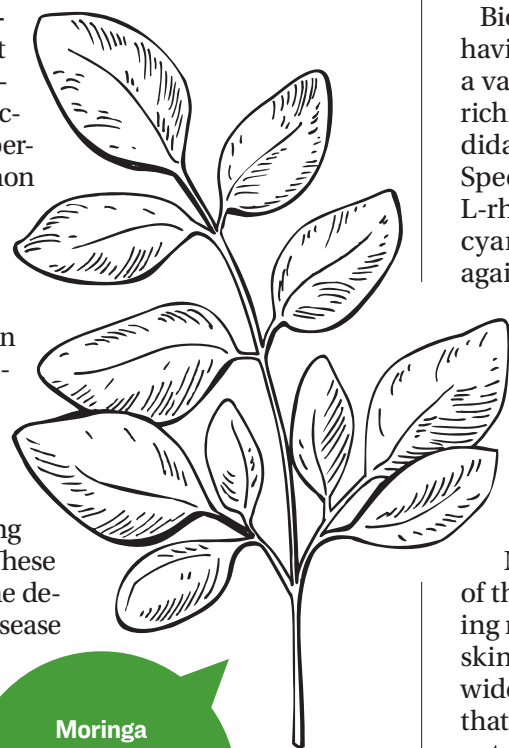
## Moringa is the rare plant that contains all essential amino acids.

Early studies have also demonstrated there’s an immunosuppressive effect from the seeds or extracts that contain the roots and seeds. The plants can also have a mild laxative effect.

Since moringa has an effect on blood sugar, inflammatory response, and may interact with other medications, it’s important to first check with your pharmacist, inform your holistic physician of the addition, and monitor your blood sugar frequently if you are a diabetic.

*For links to the studies used in this article, please see the online version at TheEpochTimes.com*

*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*



Moringa is toxic to breast, colorectal, and prostate cancer cells.



The moringa tree is native to Asia and parts of Africa and tropical America.

# Doctors More Likely to Prescribe Opioids to COVID ‘Long Haulers’

With millions of people facing long-COVID, health experts worry about a resurgence of opioid addiction

LIZ SZABO

COVID survivors are at risk from a separate epidemic of opioid addiction, given the high rate of painkillers being prescribed to them, according to health experts.

A new study in *Nature* found alarmingly high rates of opioid use among COVID survivors with lingering symptoms at Veterans Health Administration facilities. About 10 percent of COVID survivors develop “long COVID,” struggling with often disabling health problems six months or longer after a diagnosis.

For every 1,000 long-COVID patients—sometimes referred to as “long haulers”—who were treated at a Veterans Affairs facility, doctors wrote nine more prescriptions for opioids than they would have otherwise, along with 22 additional prescriptions for benzodiazepines, including Xanax and other addictive pills used to treat anxiety.

Although previous studies have found many COVID survivors experience persistent health problems, the *Nature* article is the first to show they’re using more addictive medications, said Dr. Ziyad Al-Aly, the paper’s lead author.

Al-Aly is concerned that even an apparently small increase in the inappropriate use of addictive pain pills will lead to a resurgence of the prescription opioid crisis, given that there are a large number of COVID survivors. More than 3 million of the 31 million Americans infected with COVID have developed long-term symptoms, which can include fatigue, shortness of breath, depression, anxiety, and memory problems known as “brain fog.”

## “Many clinicians are under the false impression that opioids are appropriate for chronic pain patients.”

*Dr. Andrew Kolodny, medical director of opioid policy research at Brandeis University*

The new study also found many patients have significant muscle and bone pain.

The frequent use of opioids was surprising, given concerns about their potential for addiction, said Al-Aly, who also serves as chief of research and education service at the Veteran Affairs St. Louis Health Care System.

“Physicians now are supposed to shy away from prescribing opioids,” said Al-Aly, who studied more than 73,000 patients in the Veteran Affairs system. When he saw the number of opioid prescriptions, he recalled thinking to himself, “Is this really



COVID has reignited the risks of opioid overprescription and overdose.

happening all over again?”

Doctors need to act now, before “it’s too late to do something,” Al-Aly said. “We must act now and ensure that people are getting the care they need. We do not want this to balloon into a suicide crisis or another opioid epidemic.”

Since 2012, as more doctors became aware of their addictive potential, new opioid prescriptions fell by more than half. But U.S. doctors still prescribe far more of the drugs—which include OxyContin, Vicodin, and codeine—than physicians in other countries, said Dr. Andrew Kolodny, medical director of opioid policy research at Brandeis University.

Some patients who became addicted to prescription painkillers switched to heroin, either because it was cheaper or because they could no longer obtain opioids from their doctors. Overdose deaths surged in recent years, as drug dealers began spiking heroin with a powerful synthetic opioid called fentanyl.

More than 88,000 Americans died from overdoses during a 12-month span ending in August 2020, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Health experts now advise doctors to avoid prescribing opioids for long periods.

The new study “suggests to me that many clinicians still don’t get it,” Kolodny said. “Many clinicians are under the false impression that opioids are appropriate for chronic pain patients.”

Hospitalized COVID patients often receive a lot of medication to control pain and anxiety, especially in intensive care units, said Dr. Greg Martin, president of the Society of Critical Care Medicine. Patients

placed on ventilators, for example, are often sedated to make them more comfortable.

Martin said he’s concerned by the study’s findings, which suggest patients are unnecessarily continuing the use of medications after leaving the hospital.

“I worry that COVID-19 patients, especially those who are severely and critically ill, receive a lot of medications during the hospitalization, and because they have persistent symptoms, the medications are continued after hospital discharge,” Martin said.

While some COVID patients are experiencing muscle and bone pain for the first time, others say the illness has intensified their preexisting pain.

Rachael Sunshine Burnett has suffered from chronic pain in her back and feet for 20 years, ever since being involved in an accident at a warehouse where she once worked. But Burnett, who first was diagnosed with COVID in April 2020, said the pain soon became 10 times worse and spread to the area between her shoulders and spine. Although she was already taking long-acting OxyContin twice per day, her doctor prescribed an additional opioid called oxycodone, which relieves pain immediately. She became infected with COVID once again in December.

“It’s been a horrible, horrible year,” said Burnett, 43, of Cossacke, New York.

Doctors should recognize that pain can be a part of long COVID, Martin said. “We need to find the proper non-narcotic treatment for it, just like we do with other forms of chronic pain,” he said.

The CDC recommends a number of alternatives to opioids—from physical

therapy to biofeedback. Over-the-counter anti-inflammatories, antidepressants, and anti-seizure drugs can also relieve nerve pain.

The country also needs an overall strategy to cope with the wave of post-COVID complications, according to Al-Aly.

“It’s better to be prepared than to be caught off guard years from now, when doctors realize ... ‘Oh, we have a resurgence in opioids,’” he said.

Al-Aly noted that his study may not capture the full complexity of post-COVID patient needs. Although women make up the majority of long-COVID patients in most studies, most of the patients in the Veteran Affairs system are men.

The study of Veteran Affairs patients makes it “abundantly clear that we are not prepared to meet the needs of 3 million Americans with long COVID,” said Dr. Eric Topol, founder and director of the Scripps Research Translational Institute. “We desperately need an intervention that will effectively treat these individuals.”

Al-Aly said COVID survivors may need care for years.

“That’s going to be a huge, significant burden on the health care system,” Al-Aly said. “Long COVID will reverberate in the health system for years or even decades to come.”

*Liz Szabo is a senior correspondent focusing on acute care and end-of-life issues for Kaiser Health News, which originally published this article. KHN’s coverage of these topics is supported by The John A. Hartford Foundation, Gordon and Betty Moore Foundation, and The SCAN Foundation.*

# The Superfoods That Are Worth Your Money

MAT LECOMPTÉ

So, what makes a food super? Not much. The bar is pretty low. Truthfully, “superfood” is little more than a term created by the food industry.

But that doesn’t mean the term is completely without merit. Any food that’s earned the title of “superfood” did so because it packs a major nutritional punch that may provide some health benefits. But the truth is that even many of the most humble foods contain phytonutrients with a long list of therapeutic and nutritional benefits.

Despite their title, superfoods aren’t magical. While some have anticancer properties, for example, they won’t cure cancer. In fact, these superfoods won’t even make a significant difference to your health if your overall diet and lifestyle are unhealthy. You can’t eat a few pomegranates to make up for eating fast food and sitting around all the time.

Superfoods generally get their title because they are high in antioxidants, which protect your cells from free radicals. Free radicals can damage your cells and boost the risk for conditions such as heart disease. Superfoods can’t cure the effects of cell oxidation, but they may limit the effect of free radical damage.

## Superfoods generally get their title because they are high in antioxidants.

Another common feature of most superfoods is cost. They’re generally imported and expensive. So, are any of them worth the money? Are there alternatives? Let’s take a look.

**Berries:** Some berries are easily accessible and affordable. Raspberries and blueber-

ries are both heavy hitters that are rich in antioxidants, fiber, and other nutrients that are associated with better health. Acai and goji berries are great, but good luck finding them for a reasonable price.

**Chia seeds:** Chia seeds are a versatile way to boost omega-3 fatty acid intake. They’re also higher in fiber than most other grains and feature a good protein profile for a plant-based food.

**Hemp protein:** Hemp protein, like quinoa, is one of the few plant-based complete proteins. That means it features all nine essential amino acids. It’s also a good source of fiber and important minerals like magnesium and potassium.

**Garlic:** Garlic is affordable, versatile, and rich in antioxidants that may help battle inflammation.

That’s just a small list of some common affordable superfoods that can help boost your diet. But the truth is if you’re eating plenty of fruits and vegetables and regularly consuming a healthy diet, you’re probably already getting the benefits you seek.

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



Some so-called superfoods are expensive and exotic, but others carry a credible claim to the title—without the high cost.

## WISE HABITS

# The Basic Anxiety of Life

Learning to manage the underlying anxiety of life is key to stepping beyond its grip

Continued from Page 9

While the problems they shared were all very difficult, the undercurrent to all of them was the same. Each person had an external problem with an internal, underlying problem of anxiety, fear, or uncertainty. Let's take a look at a few:

- Feeling left out, or a lack of belonging: We can all relate to this feeling of not belonging. Externally, the problem is that you're not finding people you can connect with and not having that connection in your daily life. But on top of that, you add the internal problem of feeling like you're left out and don't belong. This is normal and it's good to notice it when it comes up.
- Finding your passion and optimizing your potential: The external problem is that you have a job you're not passionate about. Underneath that is the anxiety/dissatisfaction of feeling like you're not finding your passion or optimizing your potential. We can all relate to this, too.
- Having chronic headaches (or other physical issues) holds you back from building a career and paying your way properly, affecting your self-worth: The external problem—bad headaches, leading to career or financial issues—is very real, and not easy to deal with. But on top of that, we add self-criticism—most of us do this, right?—self-doubt, and a downgrading of our self-image.
- Experiencing that phase of anxiety before big changes occur: The external issue is that we're facing a big change, and then, because it's a situation filled with great uncertainty, we feel anxious about it.
- Having PPSD—Post Political Stress Disorder: A lot of people are coping with dissatisfaction about the political scene right now, no matter what their views on the president might be. There's the external situation of what's going on, and then they add their dissatisfaction and uncertainty.
- Purchasing self-improvement books/classes/plans, but not using them: The external problem is not finding the time or energy to use materials you've bought, adding internal issues such as anxious feelings about not living up to your potential, not taking advantage of opportunities, and not doing what you hoped you'd do as well.
- Having an addiction to social media, videos, or your cellphone: The external problem is that distractions keep pulling your attention away from what's important. But the underlying anxiety is that you feel addicted and that something is wrong with you for not being more focused. In addition, the addiction is probably a coping mechanism for dissatisfaction with the moment in front of you or fears in other parts of life.
- Getting over a breakup: The external problem—the end of a relationship—is

**External problems come with an internal, underlying problem of anxiety, fear, or uncertainty.**

Dealing with life's basic anxiety begins with simply allowing yourself to feel it.



overshadowed by the pain and dissatisfaction that follow the breakup. We might have frustration about not wanting it end, about not wanting to be alone, about how the other person acted, and about how we feel about ourselves after being dumped.

- Feeling helpless and empty for a reason you can't identify: There's likely to be an external situation that's causing this vague feeling of emptiness. But the real problem is the feelings about it all: the uncertainty about it and the anxiety about wasting the time it takes to get over it.

I think we can all relate to these problems—both the external situation and the reactions that we have to them.

There's a fundamental anxiety and dissatisfaction that runs through the human condition—about whatever we're experiencing in life, about other people, and about ourselves.

So how do we deal with it all?

## Where Does Basic Anxiety Come From?

It's good to start by recognizing why we have this basic anxiety. It's caused by wanting certainty and stability when life isn't certain or stable. It's about being dissatisfied with this fact, which then manifests in dissatisfaction with our situation, ourselves, and others.

If you sit right now for 5 to 10 minutes and just pay attention to your breath, you'll likely notice the fundamental anxiety. It results in wanting to stop paying attention to the breath, wanting the meditation to be over, wanting to get on with the tasks of life, wanting distraction, thinking that the exercise is stupid, or wanting to think about problems you have.

But instead of running from this anxiety we suffer in life, what if we just stayed with it and paid attention to it? Then we could start to work with it.

## Learning to Deal With This Basic Anxiety

Instead of trying to cope with anxiety by using distractions like food, shopping, alcohol, drugs, or Facebook, we're going to find the courage to face it, with a smile.

Here's how to work with it:

1. Face the physical feeling. Drop out of the story that's spinning around in your head and causing the anxiety. Instead, just be mindful of how your body feels. What does the anxiety feel like, and where in your body is it located?
2. Stay with it and be curious about it. Don't run, just stay with the physical feeling. Instead of rejecting it and wanting it to stop, just open up to it and see it with curiosity. What does it feel like? Does it change? What kind of reaction does your mind have to the feeling?
3. Smile at it. Develop a feeling of friend-

liness toward the physical sensation of this anxiety. See it as one of the fundamental realities of your existence, and learn to be friends with it. See this as a chance to work with something that will be with you for your entire life, an opportunity to get comfortable with this discomfort. If you can do that, you'll need your coping mechanisms a lot less.

4. Open to a bigger space. Our normal way of relating to this feeling is by wanting to reject it, because we're stuck in a small-minded, self-centered way of seeing it—I say this without judgment; it's just something we do. Instead, we can start to touch the wide-open space of our minds—like a big blue sky—not a small space, but an expansive one. In this open space, we can hold the anxiety like a cloud against the backdrop of the blue sky, but not be lost in the cloud. We can see anxiety as a tangible thing, but one that is like a cloud: It's temporary, it's not that solid, it's not all-encompassing, and it's just floating by. This wide-open space of our mind is always available to us.

It's that simple and yet it's not always easy. Sometimes the anxiety we feel is small and just a bit of tightness in our chest once we investigate it. But sometimes it's quite big, a looming depression or a manic energy that we just can't tolerate. So face it in small doses, just for a minute, just for a moment. Then let yourself run. Continue to work with it in small, tolerable doses, until you start to trust that you'll be OK if you face it and smile at it.

Once we start to touch on this anxiety, face it with courage, and stay with it like a good friend would, we start to realize it's not so bad. It's just something that comes up, like a ripple in a pond or like a breeze in a field, and it will go away. We don't need to panic; we can relax, invite it to tea, and see that nothing else is required. Instead, we stay and see that this place of uncertainty we're in is absolutely perfect as it is.

Leo Babauta is the author of six books and the writer of *Zen Habits*, a blog with over 2 million subscribers. Visit [ZenHabits.net](http://ZenHabits.net)

**If we could learn to deal with the basic anxiety of life, we would have much less struggle in all that we do.**

BARBAR OLSEN/SHUTTERSTOCK

## Serene Sounds May Help Older Adults Slip Into Slumber

MAT LECOMPTÉ

If you're over 60 and having trouble sleeping, listening to music before going to bed may help improve your slumber.

A new study suggests that incorporating soothing music into your bedtime routine could prove beneficial for older adults battling insomnia. It offers a low-cost, non-intrusive option if you're looking to fall asleep faster and stay in slumber for longer periods.

The study, published in the *Journal of the American Geriatrics Society*, found that when adults aged 60 or older listened to calming—rather than rhythmic—music for at least four weeks, they slept better during that period.

In other words, you'll want to leave your James Brown on the shelf and opt for some spa sounds. The goal isn't to dance and nod your head, but to abandon energy and rhythm to reach a state of pure relaxation.

The tempo should be slow with a smooth



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melody, if it's melodic at all. These sounds may help calm anxiety, slow your heart rate and breathing, reduce blood pressure, and prime your body for sleep.

Better sleep is associated with several positive mental and physical health outcomes.

Roughly 40–70 percent of adults more than 60 years old report sleep problems, while approximately 40 percent experience some form of insomnia or sleep disturbances.

After reviewing five studies with 288 participants, researchers determined that listening to 30–60 minutes of calming music for roughly a month offered the best result. So, if you give it try for a few nights and notice no difference, keep at it: It may take a few weeks to adjust to those new conditions.

Including serene sounds into your sleep routine could serve as another mode of relaxation to help you sleep better. After your evening routine, crawl into bed and

put the music on at a low volume. Set a 60-minute timer and let the sounds take you into dreamland.

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

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# Why Some People Are Incapable of Saying 'I'm Sorry'

How to cope when we need an apology, but are never going to get one

NANCY COLIER

Why is it so hard for some people to say they're sorry? It's remarkable how difficult these two simple words can be to say out loud.

I've been gifted with my share of never-sorry people over the years. I say gifted because not getting the apology I craved (and thought I deserved) has forced me to investigate the psychology of apologies, as well as my own relationship with them.

I've also spent a lot of time wondering why some people refuse to apologize even when they know they've caused harm, even when the offense is small and doesn't require taking much responsibility.

Recently, I was confronted with a friend who refused to say she was sorry for having misplaced an object she borrowed from me. It wasn't there when I needed it; so what? A simple "I'm sorry" would've put the whole thing to bed in a few seconds. But those two words were never going to be said, and I, in my less-evolved incarnation, was left exasperated, angry, and demanding an apology for something I didn't really care about.

## The Psychology of Sorry

At the most basic level, the act of saying sorry is an admission of having done something wrong. For some people, admitting wrongdoing isn't possible, even when they feel bad about their actions and know they're in the wrong. It's odd to witness, but this never-sorry person can actually be remorseful while still refusing to utter the two words that would right their wrong.

To be able to admit that we've done something wrong requires a certain level of self-esteem or ego strength. People who are deeply insecure can find it challenging to apologize, in part because a single mistake has the power to obliterate their entire self-worth. The idea that they could make a mistake and still be a good person who has value is unthinkable for someone whose self-esteem is severely lacking.

An apology is an admission of fallibility, which can trigger the vast reservoir of inadequacy and shame they carry, and thus threaten the fragile narrative they've constructed about themselves. For a person with a damaged sense of self-worth, acknowledging an error can be tantamount to annihilation.

There's also the person who was blamed relentlessly as a child, who, from a young age, was told they were responsible for every problem that arose and punished accordingly. As adults, such people tend to go in one of two directions: Either they apologize for everything, even things they haven't done, or they refuse to apologize for anything, even things they have done.

**To admit that we've done something wrong requires a certain level of self-esteem.**

The non-apologizers have decided—consciously or unconsciously—that they will never again accept blame of any kind. They've closed the door to anything that holds a whiff of it. For this sort of person, saying sorry puts them in touch with the feelings attached to their early experience of being deemed inescapably guilty and bad. Having been unfairly and indiscriminately blamed for everything wrong, they simply don't have any psychic space left for responsibility.

And then there are those who refuse to



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say sorry because they lack empathy, and don't actually feel sorry that you were hurt by their actions. They believe that an apology is only appropriate for situations in which they purposefully caused you harm. There's no sorry deserved or indicated when the pain you felt was not intentionally caused and thus not "technically" their fault. Your hurt, in and of itself, has no particular value to them.

I've touched on only a few aspects of the never-sorry individual, but there are many more reasons why some people can't or won't apologize to another human being. To be able to say we're sorry is to be able to be vulnerable, which is too scary, too sad, and too dangerous for some people.

To say "I'm sorry" is also to acknowledge that I care about how you feel and care that you were hurt. I care enough about you to be willing to put my ego aside and stop defending my version of myself for long enough to hear your experience at this moment. I care enough about you to be willing to admit that I'm imperfect.

## The Gift of Sincere Apology

To receive a sincere apology is an incredible gift. We feel heard, acknowledged, understood, and valued. Almost any hurt can be helped with a genuine, heartfelt "I'm sorry." When another person looks us in the eye and tells us that they're sorry for something they did that caused us harm, we feel as if we matter.

When someone apologizes to us, we also feel justified in being upset. The apologizer is taking responsibility on some level for the results of their actions—intended or not. And when that happens, our insides relax. We don't have to fight anymore to prove that our experience is valid, that we are entitled to our hurt, and that it matters.

I recently told a dear friend about something she was doing that I felt was damaging our friendship and making

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me want to avoid her. I was nervous to tell her, given that I've been around more than my fair share of never-sorry people. But this friendship is important to me, and I couldn't just let it go; I needed to express what wasn't working. I had to take the chance that telling her my truth—kindly—might lead us to a better place.

What happened was deeply healing. I told her my truth, how her behavior was painful for me. She listened, and then she did something amazing: she said sorry. She was sorry she had caused this hurt, even if it was unintentional and even if she didn't know it was happening. She went on to say many other love-infused things, but she didn't need to—she had me at "sorry."

This is not an essay on how to make the never-sorry person say sorry. For the most part, I've failed at that task in my life. What I've gotten better at, however, is accepting the things I can't change and putting less energy into the fight for an apology from someone who doesn't have the capacity to offer it.

I've also gotten better at honoring my craving for an apology when it arises and providing myself with the kindness and legitimization I'm seeking. The more I practice awareness in the absence of an apology, the less I need it to validate what I know to be true.

When hurt by another, our bodies are hardwired to need an apology in order to relax, move forward, and let go of the hurt. But sometimes, when we can't get what we think we need, we have to learn to relax on our own—without the help that comes with an apology. Trusting and knowing that our pain is deserving of kindness, and that our truth is justified and valid, is the beginning of our independent healing process.

Consider the profound value of a simple and sincere "I'm sorry." When you're lucky enough to receive a genuine apology, take it in. Feel the majesty of what this other person is offering. Receive their willingness to be vulnerable and accountable, to take care of you instead of their own ego. That's big stuff.

So when you recognize an opportunity to say sorry and mean it, relish the chance to give that experience to another, to step up and perhaps move out of your comfort zone. Let go and be generous. And when you can, honor the profundity of the gift you're giving. "I'm sorry" and "thank you" are really two sides of the same coin.

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## BECOMING MINIMALIST

# The Cost of Adding New (Free) Things to Your Life

When we overfill our lives, it's inevitable we will sometimes lose track of what matters most

LOUIS CHEW

It's hard to stop adding things to your life.

When I spot a new phone app or a new physical object that confers a benefit, my first instinct is to try to acquire it. I look at the cost; if it's free like a cool phone app then I don't think twice. The only thing that makes me move along is the price tag.

I'm sure I'm not alone. It's normal to want to have things that add value to your life. But as people are slowly realizing, that can come at a hefty cost. You don't always pay with your wallet. Sometimes you pay with your time and attention.

It's especially evident with digital products. Google changed everything when they realized that they didn't have to make money off consumers. Instead, they targeted advertisers who had deeper pockets and were happy to pay to get their product in front of thousands of eyeballs.

For a long while, it appeared that this was a win for everyone. Consumers won because they no longer had to pay for the products. Advertisers won because they could finally get the attention of consumers. Google won because they figured out how they could generate billions of dollars.

Today, Google is joined by Facebook, Twitter, Amazon, and a consortium of other companies. The name of the game has changed. They're no longer going straight for our wallet, but instead for our attention.

What does this mean for us? For one, we can't go about viewing things through what Cal Newport calls the "Any-Benefit Mindset."

It's a brilliant description of what we do. We identify any possible benefit as sufficient justification for using or acquiring a tool. But this disregards all the negatives that come along with such usage.

To use the example of Facebook, we use it to connect with friends, catch up on the latest news, and find like-minded communities. It's a network tool that sounds

**Every purchase or acquisition comes with hidden costs such as time, attention, and storage.**



Take a craftsman approach to adding things to your life and ask if their positive impacts on time, attention, and storage outweigh their negative impacts.

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brilliant, but we're also paying for it in extremely subtle ways. We spend more time and attention on our phones and laptops, hunt for social validation in the form of likes, and even risk our personal data.

Of course, not all devices or tools can hurt us in such a manner. But every purchase or acquisition comes with hidden costs such as time, attention, and storage. We can't just chase benefits without factoring in costs as well.

The solution to this problem is what Cal Newport calls the craftsman approach to tool selection: Adopt a tool only if its positive impacts on time, attention, and storage substantially outweigh its negative impacts. When we view things this way, we're more hesitant about adding more into our lives.

With less clutter, we have more space to pursue what really matters. Beyond just objects, I think it's worth considering how we introduce things into our life. When our life is filled up, it's hard to remember what's important and what isn't.

The jar analogy, while cliché, provides some guidance here.

If we were to fill a jar with rocks, pebbles, and sand, there is a fixed order we must follow. We can't fill up the jar with either the pebbles or sand first, because that leaves no place for the rocks. The biggest object must come first, then the next in size, and finally the smallest.

It doesn't matter if the biggest object is your family, health, or career. The important lesson is that we must put first things first. If we introduce new objects into our life indiscriminately, we'll quickly find that there's no space for anything else.

We can't have it all. For everything we include, there's something we must exclude as well. That's the mentality we must have when deciding whether to introduce new things into our lives.

The people and things we already possess will thank us for it.

Louis Chew blogs at *Constant Renewal* where he inspires others to overcome mental barriers and fears to live their best life. This article first published on *Becoming-Minimalist.com*

Like the analogy about fitting rocks and sand in a jar, we have to put the big things first and fit the little things in around them.



ELENA ARES/SHUTTERSTOCK

## Virtue of the Brush in a Time of Chaos

"When things are chaotic to the extreme, order must be restored."

- "The four books" by Zhu Xi

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