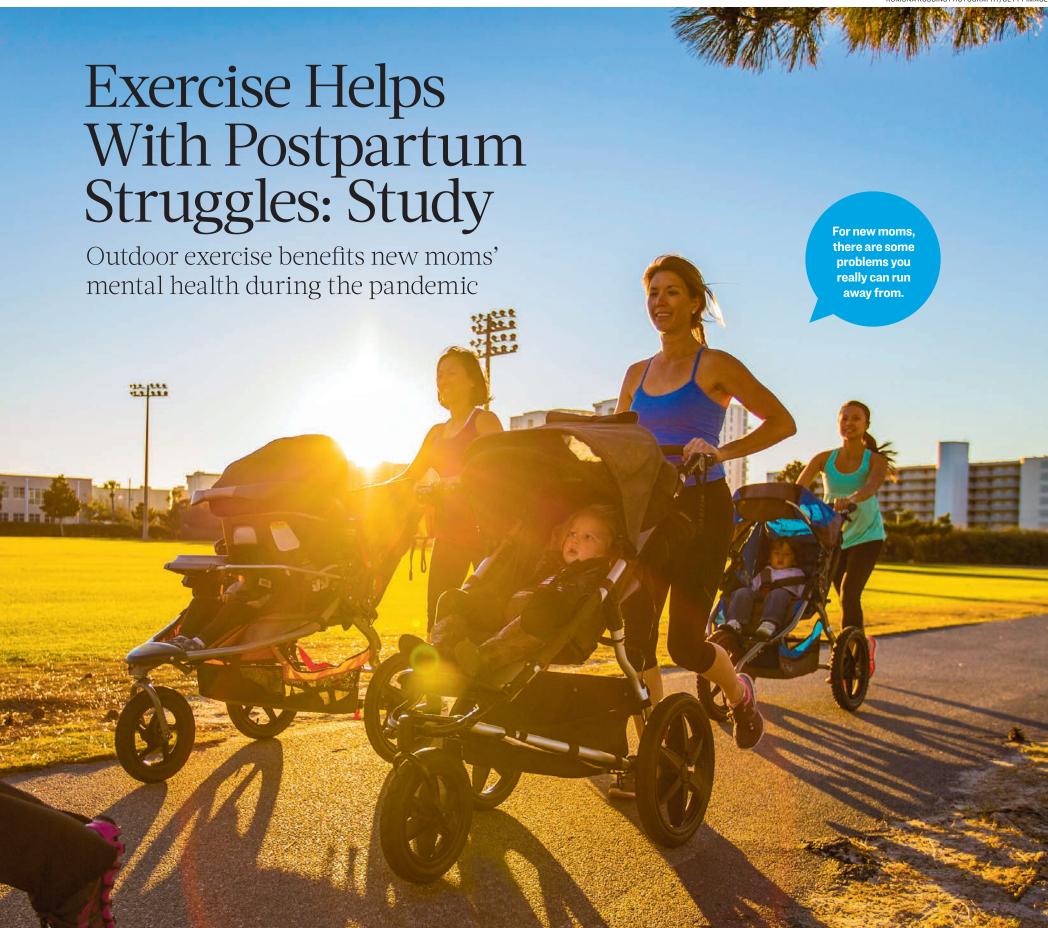
### THE EPOCH TIMES

# IMDES BOLLS



### IRIS LESSER & SCOTT LEAR

he extended duration of the CO-VID-19 pandemic means that more women will give birth during the pandemic, and some will have more than one pregnancy and postpartum experience. As physical activity researchers who advocate for exercise as medicine, we're studying the impact of exercise on the well-being of postpartum women during the pandemic.

The COVID-19 pandemic has affected everyone's day-to-day lives, but mothers have been especially challenged. Women have experienced a negative impact on mental well-being and physical activity behavior, with mothers being especially vulnerable because of increased child care responsibilities. New mothers in the postpartum

phase are at an additional disadvantage due to the heightened challenge of caring for infants.

### Being outside has been shown to increase enjoyment of exercise.

### **Postpartum Challenges**

The postpartum phase is often defined as the first six weeks after childbirth, when post-pregnancy physical changes such as uterine shrinking and hormonal fluctuations are the greatest. These changes can also greatly affect the mental health of new mothers—the prevalence of depression is approximately 15 percent. However, it's

possible for new mothers to continue to experience post-partum effects for up to one year

Since the onset of COVID-19, mental health issues have increased among post-partum women, with 41 percent reporting depression and 72 percent reporting moderate-to-high anxiety (compared to 15 percent and 29 percent pre-pandemic).

Pre-pandemic challenges such as sleep deprivation, lack of self-care, and medically complicated deliveries are now exacerbated. For example, women who gave birth during the pandemic may have experienced reduced direct maternal care, a lack of a home support system due to visiting restrictions, and a lack of in-person breastfeeding support.

As little as a single group exercise session of 45 minutes can improve anxiety levels in women without a history

of mental illness.

Continued on Page 5

Daily routines are a way to invest in yourself and the life you want to create.



# Keys to Building a Routine

Routines can help you push through resistance and complete your most important tasks

### DANAE SMITH

Anyone who has tried to improve themselves will encounter the "routine problem." If you have, you may have asked yourself, "How do I start building a routine, one that actually works for me?

First, I want you to note the key phrase "for me." Daily routines aren't generic or universal. A daily routine that works for me will likely not work for you because we have different intentions, needs, capacities, and so on.

Continued on Page 7



researched and true."

shall set us free. This should be on this country's academia's list of required reading."

# **HOW THE SPECTER OF COMMUNISM** IS RULING OUR WORLD

The specter of communism did not disappear with the disintegration of the Communist Party in Eastern Europe

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**NAVIGATING AGING** 

# Preventing Bone Fractures as We Age

Healthy habits and essential aids can help keep us bone strong and mobile

**IAN KANE** 

s we age, we tend to become more sedentary. Too much sitting can result in a loss of pressure being applied to your bones. When bones don't get as much of a workout, they can become less dense, more brittle, and susceptible to breaks.

Many older people also don't think about breaking bones as a significant issue. It's younger folks who are always bounding about and breaking arms and legs after all. While it's true that many children and adults do experience broken bones, according to a National Institute of Health study, people who are 50 years and older are more at risk than their younger counterparts.

But bone strength, not just a person's level of activity, can play a crucial role in the risk of sustaining fractures. People with stronger bones are more likely to withstand impacts, such as from falls, without injury. On the other side—even minor bumps can shatter fragile bones.

Even if you're an older person who takes a bad fall but doesn't suffer any severe injuries (such as cranial injuries and hip fractures), these incidents can take a toll on your self-confidence. A fear of falling can sometimes deter older folks from going through their normal daily routines and prevent them from enjoying their usual pastimes. This can result in an overall decline in their physical and mental health, as well as their overall quality of life.

If you suffer from osteoporosis, which according to the National Library of Medicine is a major concern for older folks, that doesn't necessarily mean you'll inevitably injure yourself.

Make bone health a priority to prevent broken bones. Even if vour physician prescribes some medicine meant to help your bones, you should still take proactive steps to lessen the chance of sustaining injury-causing accidents.

Many people don't live bone-healthy lifestyles—they don't engage in regular exercise or get enough vitamin D, vitamin K, calcium, magnesium, and other bone-strengthening nutrients. So here are some tips on building up bone strength and minimizing the possibility of bone-breaking accidents.

**Get Regular Exercise** 

Many older adults—especially those with osteoporosis-worry about the risks associated with working out. And that's understandable since sitting for lengthy periods of time would seem to make one less susceptible to falling, as opposed to walking or jogging down the street.

However, regular exercise can drastically reduce your chance of falling. Exercise keeps your body stronger, your reflexes sharper, and your body more stabilized and balanced. That makes a big difference in your long-term ability to get up from sitting or get out of the bath. Your bones are living tissue. If you engage in regular exercise, you'll strengthen

your muscles and make your bones more resilient. And with better balance and flexibility, you'll be less likely to fall down.

An effective exercise routine includes resistance training (such as lifting weights or using resistance bands), and engaging in bodyweight exercises and other activities that involve balance, coordination, and flexibility (such as yoga, barre, and tai chi).

And since your core and lower body muscles greatly help with your balance and hold your body up, injuring any of the bones in these areas can have more severe consequences than a broken arm. Therefore, dancing, or simply walking, are great options to start with if you've not kept up your physical fitness. And if you have, they are complementary to any of the exercises above.

Just be sure to talk to your doctor before you start an exercise routine. And be aware that some exercises are better than others, in terms of bone health. For example, workouts that involve high impact movements, (such as running or basketball), and non-weight activities (like biking or swimming) are both linked to lower bone mineral density.

### **Make Your Home Fall Safe**

Many people treat their homes as safety areas where they don't have to be as concerned about sustaining falls and other accidents, as compared to when they are out and about. But that is a false assumption. To minimize the risk of falling down at home, consider the following:

 Always check that your carpets and rugs have skid-proof backings or are firmly attached to the solid flooring underneath them. Especially on stairs. • Ensure that you use non-slip sprays or permanent non-slip surfaces, to pro-

of showers and bathtubs.

- Keep every room in your home free of clutter, especially the floors. Furniture should never block walkways and should be easy to maneuver around. Major trip hazards include unsecured or exposed electrical cords and children's toys (since they can pop up anywhere at any time).
- · Be sure to wait until floors are completely dry after mopping them.
- Stairways should be adequately lit and have sturdy handrails on both sides.
- · Consider installing grab bars on bathroom walls inside of bathtubs, showers, and next to toilets. For those who have fatigue issues or are unstable on their feet, consider using shower chairs or transfer benches while bathing.
- Make sure that all light switches are located near the entry points of every room in your home to prevent searching for them in the dark. You can also install voice-based (or sound-recognition) lighting systems.
- Post nightlights in areas you tend to visit during nocturnal hours, such as bedrooms, bathrooms, and any hallways in-between.
- Keep a flashlight by your bed.



Regular exercise can drastically reduce your chance of falling.



• Keep your cellphone by your bed in case of any emergencies. This is also good for being able to call 911 in case of any potential security concerns.

### **Treat Existing Health Conditions**

Many people don't consider simple things such as vision issues, or mild circulation issues such as low blood pressure (which can cause occasional dizziness and balance concerns), to be risk factors for falls.

But these and other long-term medical Get the Right Shoes problems can affect your strength and raise The right shoes are more about function the chances of a bad fall. For example—ar-

thritis can make it hard to move around and vision problems can make it more likely you'll trip.

If you have any existing health concerns or conditions, ask your doctor if they could raise your risk of a fall. If they do, find out what kind of treatment options are available to you. And always make sure to get regular checkups with your primary care doctor and any other specialists you require.

than fashion. If you wear an improper pair

**Simply** walking is a great option to start with if you've not kept up your physical fitness.

of shoes, the chances of having a bad fall

Shoes that have low heels offer more support. Also, consider a pair that have rubber soles since they are less likely to slip on slick

MIND & BODY | 3

surfaces, as opposed to leather-soled shoes. When outdoors, try to stick to walking on rougher surfaces such as dirt or grass you're less likely to slip than when attempting to traverse over wood or paved surfaces. Snowy or icy areas should be inundated

When indoors, it's a good idea to wear a pair of non-slip shoes inside. Your chance of slipping and falling increases if you're wearing slippers or socks—especially on hard surfaces such as polished wood.

with salt or sand before being trod upon.

If you have any existing medical conditions, such as arthritis, utilize whatever mobility aid you've been prescribed by your physical therapist or doctor in conjunction with the right shoes. Being healthy and injury-free always trumps trying to look "cool." This brings us to our final tip.

### Yes, Use Mobility Aids

Generally speaking, many folks can be reluctant to accept the use of medically prescribed mobility aids, let alone use them consistently. For older folks, these devices can play a crucial role in helping them to lead safely active lives and continue to enjoy their favorite pastimes. Therefore, it's of utmost importance to properly utilize any mobility aid you've been assigned (whether that be a walker, cane, etc).

Certified occupational therapists and physical therapists can (after an assessment) recommend the type of mobility aid that suits each individual and their needs. A key factor here is to learn how to properly use these aids and use them consistently.

Ian Kane is an U.S. Army veteran, author, filmmaker, and actor. He is dedicated to the development and production of innovative, thought-provoking, characterdriven films and books of the highest quality. You can check out his health blog at IanKaneHealthNut.com

### **MEDICALLY CORRECT**

# How to Get the Most From a Hospital Stay

Treating the nurses well is one of the best things you can do for yourself

### **PETER WEISS**

August tends to be a busy month for labor and deliveries across the country. This past August was no exception. Our hospital covers overflow from the Kaiser system, and this one couple stood out from the rest.

I was called around midnight to evaluate this first-time mom in early labor. She was turned away from her hospital because they were on overflow (no room in the inn), and here she was. The couple had no idea who anyone was, and had never stepped foot in this hospital before. It truly was an uncomfortable position to be in, but the couple was smart. They were very pleasant to the nurses and to me as well. After we explained who we were and what to expect, they felt a little better. She was 4 centimeters dilated and would deliver her baby with us. We received all the records, and there didn't seem to be any problems.

At this time, I noticed they had several suitcases with them. I asked how long they planned to stay with us. The husband walked over and opened a large suitcase and showed me all sorts of goodies that were inside. He said they wanted to give them to the nursing staff and doctors as a token of appreciation, before we even did anvthing. Like I said, this couple was smart! I had him wheel out the suitcase and present his gifts to the staff. This couple was treated like royalty, not because of the goodies, although that did help. They were treated like royalty because they showed respect for the nurses who would be taking care of them.

This may seem strange for people in other countries, but the U.S. health system can be strange. This type of gesture is a sign of respect for the nurses providing care for a loved one; it's no means an attempt to bribe good care. I have yet to see a nurse bribed by a pepperoni pizza, but I have seen a nurse be grateful and feel appreciated. Kindness goes a long way.

There are a number of rules to follow when either receiving care or visiting someone in the hospital, such as respecting visiting hours and talking quietly. The most important rule is to be respectful. Attitudes need to be checked at the entrance. For those visiting patients, there's a whole

other set of do's and don'ts. First and foremost, don't visit anyone if you're sick.

Limit the time you visit someone. They may not want your company as much as you want theirs.

Don't touch the equipment. simple, but you'd be surprised.

I always suggest to friends that they buy pizza or cookies for the nursing staff when they have a loved one in the hospital. Not only is it a kind and appreciative gesture, but you're also letting everyone know that the patient in room x has someone who loves and cares about them. We're all human, and kindness really empowers even An old professor of mine used to teach

us that the patients who have loved ones around do better, heal better, and get out of the hospital guicker than the ones who are alone. It's true. Believe it or not, there was even a scien-

tific article showing "good patients" promote positive outcomes, published in BMC Infectious Diseases in 2015. There are also some proactive things we

as patients can do to improve our stay and care while in the hospital. The first is choosing which hospital to

This can be critical, depending on what you're in for. University or academic hos-

pitals are usually better equipped for more

difficult illnesses or surgeries, such as car-

diac bypass or neurosurgery. Questions are great and very important, but ask them at one time so the same questions aren't repeated. This will also allow for everyone to hear the same answer and reduces confusion about what the doctor or nurse said. Have the family members you want to be in the loop present when

you ask those questions. Both physicians

and nurses can only speak with the patient or designated family or friends. Don't distract the nurse when they're preparing your medications. Interruptions increase the chance for errors. Let the doctors and nurses concentrate on their duties.

I've had several patients try to get into a discussion with me during a C section. The majority of women have C sections using spinal anesthesia, which allows for easy conversation. Some have even tried to talk about politics. Why someone would argue with a person literally holding a knife inside their belly is beyond me, but they do.



People with

to withstand

falls without

How a patient and their family engages with hospital staff will inevitably affect the quality of care.

The most important rule is to be respectful. **Attitudes** need to be checked at the entrance to the hospital.

Dr. Peter Weiss has been a frequent guest on local and national TV, newspapers, and radio. He was an assistant clinical professor of OB/GYN at the David Geffen School of Medicine at UCLA for 30 years, stepping down so he could provide his clinical services to those in need when the COVID-19 pandemic hit. He was also a national health care adviser for Sen. John McCain's 2008 presidential campaign.

One patient even wanted me to stop the surgery so a nurse could move a mirror for her to watch—and this was after the baby was born!

Many hospitals will allow you to bring your own regular medications, as this can save you a lot of money. Make sure you bring them in the original pharmacy container, otherwise you may have a problem. Always check your bill. While your in-

surance company will be billed, you will probably owe a fair amount out of deductibles and copays. Hospitals tend to overcharge and be redundant in billing. Read it thoroughly; go through the charges with a fine-toothed comb.

Be patient with the use of electronic medical records (EMR). Doctors and nurses hate them even more than most patients do. If we're typing information instead of looking at you, please understand that we weren't trained as data entry clerks and are doing our best.

I also have another small simple piece of advice for patients being admitted to the hospital. Bring your own toiletries. You'll feel a lot better.

Finally, sadly, spiritual care isn't profitable for hospitals. If your hospital doesn't have a chaplain available, you can invite someone who will provide such services for you as a visitor.

There is a great quote by an unknown author: "Be nice to nurses. They keep the doctors from accidentally killing you."

Bottom line, nurses give you the care you need when you're in the hospital.



**FOOD AS MEDICINE** 

# What to Eat for Weight Problems

These 7 natural compounds will nourish your body and slim your waistline

life and even extend your "expiration date," you have to maintain a healthy body weight. Fortunately, there are plant-based compounds can help you get your weight down and your energy up,

That's good news since, according to the latest CDC data, 42.4 percent of U.S. adults are medically obese, an alarming public health trend that has seen weight problems rising since the mid-20th century. Factors such as the proliferation of processed foods, an increasingly sedentary lifestyle, environmental chemicals, and larger portions on bigger plates have colluded in a perfect storm to cause obesity rates to more than triple in the last six decades.

Obesity is not a mere cosmetic concern; it's a complex medical problem that increases your risks for serious health issues like diabetes, heart disease, high blood pressure, and certain cancers.

While some weight problems are linked to medical causes, many people can affect significant weight loss through lifestyle and behavioral changes that include different foods, increasing physical activity, and adding the right supplements to your daily

### 7 Natural Compounds for Weight Loss

Obesity and overweight problems require a multi-pronged approach to create lasting, sustainable results. Becoming aware of how you feel about food is important when seeking to understand triggers for self-sabotaging choices. Issues like food addiction may require psychotherapeutic interventions to get to the root of unhealthy behaviors.

In addition to long-term behavioral modification, supplementing with foods and plant compounds that are clinically shown to support healthy weight may give your body the boost it needs to shed excess pounds. We've identified seven of the most studied and effective natural compounds to help you achieve and sustain lasting weight loss.

### 1. Vitamin D

Vitamin D is an important micronutrient that has been scientifically linked to weight loss and improved body mass index (BMI) when present in adequate levels. Conversely, being deficient in vitamin D has been linked to obesity, irrespective of age or geographic

In a 2015 study that evaluated the association between obesity and vitamin D deficiency in a meta-analysis of 23 studies that met inclusion criteria, the prevalence of vitamin D deficiency was 35 percent higher in obese subjects and 24 percent higher than in subjects considered overweight but not obese across all age groups.

A study of morbidly obese patients prior to bariatric weight-loss surgery found a whopping 96 percent were vitamin D deficient. There is some evidence to suggest that the deficits in vitamin D may be related to poor carbohydrate metabolism consistent with being diabetic and prediabetic.

### 2. Green tea

When you want to reduce pounds but maintain energy, there is no better beverage to boost your day—and your metabolism than green tea. Green tea leaves possess an abundance of antioxidants called catechins,

f you want to add more vigor to your natural plant flavonoids that fight damaging free radicals in the bloodstream. Catechins also increase fat burning, both during exer-

> A study on supplementing with green tea extract tablets combined with a low-calorie diet found that, after 90 days, subjects taking green tea experienced significant weight loss, with an average loss of nearly 31 pounds, compared to the diet-only group, which averaged 11 pounds lost.

> A 2020 study on the amount of green tea extract needed to achieve weight loss found that subjects taking less than 500 milligrams (mg) a day for 12 weeks experienced the most significant reduction in body weight.

Dietary fiber is an important part of a healthy diet and weight-loss plan. Fiber is found mainly in fruits, vegetables, legumes, and whole grains; highly processed foods are generally devoid of fiber, leaving many people deficient in healthy roughage. If you don't get enough fiber in your diet, problems like constipation, unbalanced cholesterol, and bowel diseases like diverticulosis and colon cancer may result.

Adequate fiber intake is also part of a sound weight-loss strategy since high-fiber foods normalize bowel movements and keep you feeling full and satisfied. There are two types of dietary fiber: soluble and insoluble. Soluble fiber dissolves in water and can help lower blood sugar and cholesterol.

Examples of soluble fiber include fruits, nuts, oatmeal, beans and lentils

Insoluble fiber does not dissolve in water and helps move food through the digestive tract, preventing constipation. Insoluble fiber is found in most vegetables and in whole grain foods like whole wheat bread and brown rice.

Studies on dietary fiber have shown that insufficient fiber intake can lead to overweight and abdominal obesity. Conversely, increased soluble fiber intake coupled with increased physical activity is associated with decreased abdominal fat accumulation over time.

Polyphenols are one reason why fruits and vegetables pack such a healthy punch. These micronutrients found in plant foods are also what is extracted and concentrated into most plant-based supplements. Polyphenols are antioxidant powerhouses, helping prevent the free-radical damage to cells that causes aging and can lead to diseases over time.

When it comes to maintaining a healthy weight, foods that are high in polyphenols bath your body in nutrients and not only protect you from weight-related diseases, they are considered "lifespan essentials" that may extend your years.

Citrus fruits are an exceptional source of polyphenols that are commonly associated with weight loss—remember eating half a grapefruit for breakfast when dieting? A study involving citrus polyphenol extract and overweight men found that after 12 weeks, men consuming 900 mg of the extract each day lost weight, significantly improved metabolic parameters, and had less skeletal muscle breakdown than men not consum-

Curcumin is one of the most heavily researched healing compounds. This potent plant polyphenol imbues the spice turmeric



When you want to reduce pounds but maintain energy, there is no better beverage to boost your day—and your metabolismthan green

> For links to tudies mentione in this article, please see the article online at TheEpochTimes

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with its distinctive orange color. Known for powerful antioxidant properties, curcumin extract has been clinically shown to help regulate blood sugar and has been explored as a therapy for preventing Type 2 diabetes mellitus. These properties can also help regulate weight by turning bad fat into good fat.

Brown fat is a darkly colored adipose tissue that protects organs and plays a key role in regulating energy. Unlike white fat, aka "bad fat," brown fat is associated with a healthy metabolism by effectively breaking down blood glucose and fat molecules to create heat and help you maintain a healthy body temperature.

A 2020 study of curcumin found that young, overweight females receiving a 2-gram daily curcumin supplement for 90 days had significantly reduced body weight, BMI, waist circumference, body fat percentage, systolic blood pressure, and lower anxiety scores than baseline.

Curcumin, rather than turmeric, has a higher concentration of curcuminoids, one of the active polyphenols that have been isolated in the Curcuma longa plant. Be sure to source an organic supplement to receive the highest quality herbs.

### 6. Alpha-lipoic acid

Alpha-lipoic acid is a natural antioxidant compound found in yeast, organ meats, spinach, potatoes and broccoli, among other foods. It is also produced for medicinal use and is commonly prescribed for nerve pain in people with diabetes. It may also be helpful to individuals interested in losing weight and maintaining a healthy weight, as studies increasingly show.

A 2020 meta-analysis of randomized placebo-controlled clinical trials on alpha-lipoic acid (ALA) found that supplementation significantly reduced the risk of obesity. Other studies support using ALA supplements to reduce obesity in children and to modulate the inflammatory response in overweight and obese women.

Alpha-lipoic acid is sold as an herbal supplement and is therapeutically available in oill and cream forms, and via intravenous drips through a physician or health care provider.

Resveratrol is another plant polyphenol that is found in the highest concentration in red and purple plants, particularly in the skin and seeds of grapes and in red wine. Resveratrol has been linked to anti-inflammatory and antioxidant properties, and may help regulate blood sugar, contributing to healthy carbohydrate metabolism and regulated

Studies on resveratrol have shown that it has the potential to help turn toxic white fat into fat-burning brown fat, in a healthy remodeling effect. Daily supplementation with resveratrol may also help to curb the risks of cardiovascular disease, a serious risk factor for obese and overweight individuals.

### Losing Weight for Life

Obesity and overweight problems are often complex, requiring comprehensive lifestyle changes, not just supplements and certain foods. To learn more about the healthy lifestyle changes that can add years to your life as well as vigor to your years, consult GreenMedInfo.com, the world's most widely referenced, evidence-based natural medi-

# Do You Have Upper Crossed Syndrome?

Don't let 'iHunch' take a toll on your health and mobility as you age

### **LYNN JAFFEE**

If you're like me, chances are you're sitting in front of your computer or looking down at your phone right now. Not only that, but you're likely also slouching.

All of this slouching and looking down really messes up your posture and can cause something called upper crossed syndrome, or UCS. It happens when the muscles of your upper back, shoulders, neck, and chest become out of balance.

What's happening is that the muscles in your upper back-your trapezius and levator scapulae—become strained. At the same time, the muscles in your chest—your pectoralis major and minor—get tight and become shortened. From the side, these muscle groups tend to form an X shape, leading to the condition's name—upper crossed syndrome.

The main cause of UCS is poor posture, mostly caused by our use of technology, which demands that workers sit in front of a computer and that people spend hours hunched over their phones. Due to the role of prolonged screen time as a cause of UCS, it's been dubbed iHunch. However, Upper Crossed Syndrome can also occur from long hours spent reading, watching TV, biking, driving for long periods of time, and any kind of extended work that causes you to bend, look down, slouch, or hunch over.

How do you know if you have UCS? Here are a few common signs: discomfort or tightness in your neck or shoulders; fidgeting and repositioning to get more comfortable when sitting at the computer or watching TV; pain, a stiff neck, and tight neck and shoulder muscles when driving; pain in your lower back; sore, tight, or achy shoulder blades; stiff, tight, or painful neck and improve your range of motion. A physi-



Sitting at your computer and looking down at your phone often lead to slouching and slouching

muscles; rounded shoulders; your head or neck is slouched forward; your spine curves inward at the neck.

### **Treating UCS**

Here's the good news: upper crossed syndrome is treatable. If you let it go, it can get worse and impact your breathing, cause problems with your spine, and reduce your range of motion and function. Certainly working to improve your posture is a good place to start, but it may not be enough. Research has found that physical therapy is beneficial in helping to align your spine cal therapist will work with you to provide stretches and exercises to strengthen weakened muscles and relax muscles that are tight and reactive.

Typically, exercises for UCS involve opening up your chest and working to stretch and engage your back muscles. You can do this by leaning into a doorway with your elbows and hands on the door jamb or lying on a large training ball. Your physical therapist may also recommend exercises with large rubber bands, called Thera-bands, or have you work with weights.

helpful in treating UCS. Acupuncture can AcupunctureTwinCities.com

help relieve any pain associated with the condition, reduce inflammation, loosen muscle knots, and release trigger points. A massage therapist can work on loosening and releasing tight muscles.

It's important to know that while UCS can be treated, it can also be prevented. One of the best ways to avoid UCS is to take care of your posture. For example:

Raise any screen you're working with to eye level, so you're not looking down to

Practice good ergonomics. Set your chair height so that your feet can rest flat on

Take a break and stretch every hour or so when you're sitting for a long period of time. When you're lying down, support your neck with a rolled towel or small pillow.

Stretch your upper back and open up your chest often each day, and do strengthening exercises for these muscles two or three times per week.

To support your posture, strengthen your core muscles—those of your abdomen, hips, butt, and lower back.

Wear good shoes that support the arches in your feet, and replace them when they become worn.

The bottom line is that UCS is an epidemic that no one talks about. It can be painful, uncomfortable, and ultimately limit your ability to do the activities that you like to do. Fortunately, it can be prevented and treated—and the first place to start is with your posture.

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

# Exercise Helps With Postpartum Struggles: Study

### Continued from Page 1

Physical activity is an effective therapy for anxiety and depression and may be beneficial to new mothers. As little as a single group exercise session of 45 minutes can improve anxiety levels in women without a history of mental illness. Women who engage in physical activity in the postnatal period report better mental well-being than those who are less physically active.

However, physical activity levels are lower in the postpartum period than prior to pregnancy. This is despite the American College of Obstetrics and Gynecologists recommending that women slowly return to physical activity four to six weeks after giving birth and work their way up to the general physical activity guidelines of 150 minutes of moderate to vigorous physical activity per week. Barriers in the postnatal period include a reduced motivation due to the lack of social support and child care responsibilities.

### **Pandemic-Safe Exercise Solutions** At 18 months into the pandemic with no end in sight and safe indoor opportunities

In addition to a dedicated exercise block each

day, try to increase overall activity throughout

for exercise less accessible, moms are in need of innovation. An outdoor environment has the advantage of being easily accessible and COVID-19 safe, as well as having additional beneficial effects. Exercising in nature, known as "green exercise" has been associated with reductions in anxiety and stress, while being outside has been shown to increase the enjoyment

With the high degree of safety in an outdoor environment, could we support new moms with safe physical activity programming outdoors? We were interested in providing moms with the tools they need to return to physical activity safely and to ensure that they have the added competence to engage in physical activity with a new baby. If we want moms to thrive in this new normal, we need to help them find their way back to movement and optimal mental well-being.

Working with a team at the University of the Fraser Valley in the spring, we enrolled 21 women who were less than nine months postpartum in an eight-week, biweekly outdoor group exercise program. As a mother of two (including one born in the midst of the pandemic), Iris (one of the co-authors of this article) had both personal and professional interests in finding ways to meet the physical activity needs of new mothers. Engaging in the program in an outdoor

location with physical distancing allowed women to fully participate without the risk of exposure to COVID-19. Mothers reported a decrease in depression after the program, along with an improvement in motivation and in meeting basic psychological needs. Perceived stress and anxiety also were reduced, but not significantly.

### **Ongoing Research**

These findings suggest that new mothers may experience an improvement in overall well-being after engaging in group exercise. This form of group exercise addressed a number of the common barriers to exercise participation during the postnatal phase. This includes the opportunity to bring their child to the program, engaging

follow-up study at six months. Supporting postpartum women with physical activity opportunities may help them exercise more in the postpartum period. This may further improve mental

with other new mothers, and the program

being designed specifically for postpartum

fitness. To determine the long-term effects

on physical activity, we plan to conduct a

well-being in this at-risk population. However, there's still a large gap in the tal physical activity experiences. We're currently recruiting women less than 12 months postpartum to complete an online survey to help us learn more.

Iris Lesser is an assistant professor in kinesiology at the University of the Fraser Valley in Canada, and Scott Lear is a professor of health sciences at Simon Fraser University. This article was first published on The Conversation.



conditions

a dramatic rise

in postpartum

and anxiety.

Fortunately,

supports

exercise as

treatment.

# Set Up a Good Night's Sleep During the Day

**SARAH COWNLEY** 

Getting a good night's sleep is about more than the time directly before bed or when your head hits the pillow. It starts almost as soon as you wake up.

How you spend your day can play a big role in how you spend your night. If your nights are long and filled with tossing and turning, looking at what you do during the day may offer a potential fix.

If you're up and moving during the day and getting plenty of activity, you're likely going to feel tired and ready for recovery and sleep when evening rolls in.

On the other hand, if the bulk of your day is spent sitting around, whether you're working or relaxing, you may have a harder time feeling tired. Or even if you feel like

Finding ways to burn some energy every day can bolster sleep quality. It gives your body that little push it might need to seek

recovery and send you to bed. Of course, you have to break the cycle of poor sleep. If you don't sleep well, you're may help you sleep a little more surely unlikely to feel energized enough to get up and do some exercise.

But at some point, you'll just have to push through. Turn up the music and dance in your living room. Get outside for a walk. Do a few rounds of stairs in your home, or even lift some weights. Just find

to 45 minutes. In addition to a dedicated exercise block each day, try to increase overall activity

something to get you moving for about 30

your brain is tired, your body may have a throughout the day. That could mean doing some chores, getting up for a walk around the house to take a break from work, or walking on the spot during television commercials or in between shows.

> Doing some activity every day, along with improving sleep hygiene practices,

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

### This toxic relationship dynamic can undermine a healthy connection

### **DONNA MARTELLI**

Codependency was a popular topic of discussion not so many years ago, and although out of the spotlight today, it hasn't gone any-

Codependency refers to an excessive emotional or psychological reliance on a partner. And while spoken of infrequently today, it's still here. It's a sneaky and deceptive quirk that can affect marriages and any relationships in which we humans find ourselves.

Codependency works behind the scenes and often goes unnoticed as the source of a relationship malfunction. If not stopped in its tracks, it can destroy a relationship. Fortunately, it can't exist within a healthy relationship. It runs counter to the healthy interdependence two mature people create with each other. And if we want healthy relationships, we owe it to ourselves to understand how codependency works and how to remove ourselves far from it.

### A Hard Lesson

instead of time scarcity

it. But if you'd like a sense of spaciousness,

The first thing we do is to try to stuff a thou-

sand things into the space of 24 hours. Lots

and lots of little things, and often quite a

When we try to squish a bunch of things

into a container, of course it will feel over-

full. So then the question is: What fear

is driving us to try to do everything in

**LEO BABAUTA** 

few big things.

one day?

Most people experience

stress in this way of living.

**How We Create Time Scarcity** 

Marriage and all other relationships are renewed when you stop being a codependent person. I didn't accomplish this teat until my husband stopped berating me, and I stopped letting him—because marriage is a two-way street.

Everyone said it was a "match made in heaven," and indeed it seemed to be. I was an innocent 19-year-old maiden when I first laid eyes on him: a dashing young European gentleman standing across the room from me. His name was Brian, and I loved him at first sight. I know he loved me too. We immediately began a storybook romance, and



Codependency is the precarious dynamic that puts both partners at risk.

we were married six months later. I settled in to live happily ever after with him, a perfect husband, an ideal life—naturally complete with a white picket fence and 2.5 kids.

Soon after we married, Brian's deep-seated anger began to erupt. Seething with wrath, he lined up a series of demands for me, most of which were insignificant. What had just happened? What had I done to make him

When I failed to meet his demands like he thought I should, he exploded in a fit of rage. Even worse, when I did fulfill his requirements, he forgot he had even demanded them of me. I later learned that his anger was rooted in the unforgiven experiences of childhood, namely his dad treating him with the same anger that he was pouring on me. He told me that I never wanted to do the things he liked to do, and when I tried to learn about them, he sabotaged my efforts.

He said he liked nothing about the things that were dear to me. Consequently, I buried or severely camouflaged my God-given gifts and talents so that I could sit on my rear with him while he watched TV. Did this make him happy? No, he didn't even notice.

The things he demanded were so ridiculous that I hesitate to mention them, but so that you get the picture:

- I had to wear my waist-length hair down with no barrettes or scrunchies, even in the heat of summer, while he loved ponytails and braids on other women.
- If the expression on my face wasn't what he thought it should be, he would criticize me and say I didn't care or didn't believe whatever he had said.

 He would tell me what I was thinking and then be angry at what he thought I

ALL PHOTOS BY SHUTTERSTOCK

Enough about him; now about me: How could I react to that? How did I react? I did the only thing that I thought would help, the only thing I knew to do.

I tried to meet every demand, and I changed myself from the inside out, including my appearance and God-given personality, so that I might give him what he wanted. Surely that would make him happy, I thought. It didn't. Instead, I was dying a slow death because of what I was doing to myself.

### Marriage and all other relationships are renewed when you stop being a codependent person.

Ours had become the classic codependent relationship. I was addicted to Brian and psychologically dependent on him in an unhealthy way. He had become addicted to self-destructive behavior because of his unresolved anger and inability to forgive his father. I reinvented myself to be who he expressed he wanted me to be.

We were both about to crash and burn if something didn't change. Brian somehow had to forgive his father. He had to face what his anger was doing first of all to him, then to me, and ultimately to every relationship in his life. He had no close male friendships, and if one started to develop, he demolished it by finding all sorts of things wrong with the other person. I had to learn to stop responding to Brian's sarcasm and meanness in a way that was toxic to me. Although I sincerely wanted to help him be happy and peaceful, my reactions to his destructive behavior, far from helping him, were instead enabling him to keep it up.

Was this match made in heaven? I am blessed to say, "Yes, it was!" Once we got past the sickness of codependency, our marriage blossomed into something fresh and new, even better than in the beginning!

Please, take my story to heart and let it help you and, if necessary, change you. You are too precious to squelch or ignore the fantastic gifts that you possess. Don't feed into a codependent relationship, build a true and open connection. Forgive and be forgiven. We are all flawed individuals, and we mess up regularly. However, that deep-rooted anger and hurt from childhood must be forgiven. Our own anxieties and insecurities need to also be resolved. If we need counseling or any help, it's available for us. You must be your true self and live your life to the fullest.

Donna Martelli, formerly a professional dancer with the Harkness Ballet of New York, served on the dance faculty at Butler University in Indianapolis, and is now also a certified personal trainer, and certified Pilates instructor in Indianapolis, Ind. She conducts classes, seminars, and workshops in the United States and Europe. She is the author of "When God Says Drop It" and "Why the Dance," available on Amazon and wherever books are sold.

### The day is actually quite spacious if we Unrushed: don't try to overfill it. The second thing is we want to do everything at once. We look at the long list of

A Practice tasks, and feel overwhelmed, because that's too many! Of course it is—we can't do all of these things right now. And we feel pulled in How to feel more all directions by the need to do everything. spaciousness in your day, What fear is driving us to do everything

The day can be beautifully spacious, if we just focus on one thing right now, and enjoy it.

The third thing is that as we move through the day, we are often very tense. That's betheir day as busy, overwhelming, scatcause of the two things above, but also betered, and rushed. There isn't enough time cause we're worried we're going to mess to do everything. There's pressure and up, fail, look bad, be judged, be wrong, and so on and so on. So often we're constantly There's nothing wrong with experiencing tense from fears like that. life in this way. As I said, most people do

What if we could relax and feel the spaciousness of a particular moment?

### Let's talk about how we create the sense of **How to Create Spaciousness** not enough time, and how we might create Looking at the reasons we create time

scarcity, most often, we can see that it's fear. Fear of not getting everything done, fear of messing up, or failing, or being wrong, and so on. This fear drives us to try to cram too many things into a day, to want to do everything at once, and to constantly tense up.

How might we create something different? Put less stuff into the day, and trust that we'll get the important things done.

Focus on one beautiful task at a time, and



The question is: what fear is driving us to try to do everything in one day?

Relax and feel spaciousness in this very

For me, the process has been a practice of trusting myself. I'm OK, just as I am. I

And I've been learning to relax as I trust my unfolding life. This has allowed me to feel spaciousness more and more. What would that be like for you?

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

# Keys to Building a Routine

Routines can help you push through resistance and complete your most important tasks

Continued from Page 1

In starting a daily routine, we first have to give ourselves permission to create the routine that works for us. We need to accept that it can look different and that's beyond OK.

With that out of the way, let's really get into the practicalities of it all. When I approach starting or building a routine, there are three keys I like to keep in mind:

- 1. Why am I doing this? What's the point or intention? What's my endgame with this
- 2. Remember to extend grace to myself 3. Set realistic expectations for my routine

I've fallen prey to diving head first into building a daily routine. In doing so, I didn't get clear on why I was doing it and what I ulti mately wanted to feel and experience during the routine. I didn't extend grace to myself when it didn't go as planned or life happened. Lastly, I expected to have it flow and be perfect on day 1, not realizing it's a journey and process. Sitting with these key reminders helped me realize that, over time, the daily routine will become habitual and flow seamlessly into your day to day, but in the beginning, it's a lot of learning and discovery.

### **Step 1: Get Clear on Why**

The first step is to get clear on why you're creating a daily routine. This connects with key No. 1. Identify and define the intention of your routine. A great question to askyourself is "What do I want to feel/experience/gain from my daily routine?"

Maybe you're wanting to feel more grounded as you start or day; or relaxed as you end the day. Maybe you want to feel energized as you move through your day or experience joy in its simplest form. Whatever it is for you, get clear on why you're starting and what the intention is for your daily routine.

**Bonus tip:** Write your "why" down somewhere visible so you're able to reflect back on it whenever you feel off balanced or struggle to get into a rhythm with your daily routine.

### Step 2: Decide What Kind of

The next step would be decide what daily routine you want to work on first. You can have a routine for just about anything, but for the sake of this post, we will focus on the routines by time of day. So, do you want a morning routine to kick off your day or a mid-day routine to help reconnect and take a breather as your day unfolds? Maybe you want or need an evening routine

to help set you up for success in the morning or decompress. I would advise picking one and getting solid with that routine before implementing others.

**Bonus tip:** This step can be applied to any routine you wish to implement in your daily life. You may have a "time-of-day" routine that's solid but not a routine for your productivity or content creation process. All this to say, apply this as it fits for you.

### **Step 3: Brainstorm Your Routine** After you've identified your why and defined

your intention for your daily routine, and you've decided which kind of routine you

want to implement, it's time to brainstorm and map out your routine. This step is meant to be fun. You get to de-

cide what you want to encompass your routine. For me, this step is all about listing out all the things. So, set a timer for 2 to 5 mins and just write down all the habits, rituals, practices, or activities you wish to include in your daily routine.

You aren't deciding just yet what will be in your routine. You're identifying the things you believe ground you, bring you joy, and

**Bonus tip:** Nothing is off the table in this step. List everything you can think of—even if it seems impractical or unrealistic. This is a moment of ideation and dreaming, no

**Extra bonus tip:** To help with this step, reflect on the routine you have now. Believe it or not, we all have routines, whether they're intentional or not. Take note of what you do in the morning before the day gets moving. Take note of what you do in the evening when you clock out of work or wrap up dinner. Sometimes we don't need to start from scratch. We can work with the blocks of our existing routines.

### **Step 4: Map Your Routine**

Now, we get practical and realistic if you will. Going back to step 3—to that lovely list of yours—select one to three of the ideas you've brainstormed to put in your daily routine. Two questions to ask yourself as you make your selection:

- Does this ritual/practice/habit align with the why and intention for this daily rou-
- How much time can I realistically give to this ritual/practice/habit?

Remember, having a daily routine isn't about doing everything. It's about doing what matters. It's important to set realistic expectations as you map your routine. You may want to spend 30 minutes every morning alone in the stillness, but if you have young children or a iod that takes away irom youi morning flow, 30 minutes alone probably isn't realistic in this season. It doesn't mean it'll

never happen, but maybe you can only spare 5 to 15 minutes in the morning. Knowing this, you can review your dream ritual/ practice/habit list and pick what actually aligns with the time you have and your intention with the

**Bonus tip:** Similar to bonus tip No. 1, write your routine down somewhere easily visible and accessible. Right now, it isn't habit yet so it's helpful to keep what you've said you'll do in front of you so you remember and lean in.

**Extra bonus tip:** Remember, it's not about doing everything but doing what matters.

### **Step 5: Start the Routine**

Remember.

having a daily

routine isn't about

doing everything

but doing what

Easier said than done. I know for me it took awhile to actually do what I said I was going to do, routine wise. It required unlearning unhealthy habits. I would overthink it and fall back on what already existed for me routine-wise. It took just doing it, no frill or fluff, to get it stable

When you are clear on

why you want a daily

routine, it becomes

motivate yourself to

In starting

a daily

routine,

we first

have to give

permission

to create the

routine that

works for us.

ourselves

much easier to

maintain it.

We can set intentions, brainstorm, and map out all the routines we want but it won't mean anything if we don't actually do them. This is your notice to not overthink starting. Just do it. Wake up tomorrow and do that routine you mapped out. Close out your work day and do that post-work routine you brainstormed.

At some point, we have to lay down the planning and organizing and just do. It won't be perfect. It will feel awkward and messy at first. It might even feel impossible. You may only do it twice your first week. But twice is better than not doing it at all. As the popular phrase goes, "better done than perfect."

Bonus tip: Remember to extend grace to yourself. You're starting something new and it may be unfamiliar. It might feel messy or awkward. Keep going.

you lean into your life, purposefully.

Danae Smith is the founder of This Wondrous Life, a lifestyle blog rooted in pursuing a life lived simply, slowly, and with community. She believes there is more to the mundane than meets the eye. This article was originally published on This Wondrous Life.

### Get Focused and Improve Your Memory

### **MAT LECOMPTE**

Normal aging can play tricks on your brain. You may have a harder time focusing or absorbing new information. This is normal but it can make it more difficult to learn and retain new things.

But you don't necessarily have to resign yourself to an "it is what it is" position. By employing a few strategies, you may be able to boost attention and information retention.

The first is to look and listen closely when a person is speaking to you. Making eye contact will help, as will diverting your attention from a book, television set, or activity you're engaged with. If you missed what they said, ask them to repeat it or speak more slowly.

### Attempt to paraphrase what was just said to make sure you understand.

Next, attempt to paraphrase what was just said to make sure you understand; doing this can also help to reinforce the information in your memory.

So let's say your daughter asks if you want to come to see the grandkids on Thursday at 4 p.m. or Sunday at 10 a.m., you can respond with, "What do you like better, Thursday at 4 or Sunday at 10?"

Quiet environments can also help be-

cause there's less going on. If you meet people at a noisy restaurant, it can be harder to stay focused and absorb information. Instead, try meeting people in smaller groups at quieter locations, like homes

or parks. If you go to a restaurant, try sitting with your back to the action. When your friend is sitting with their back to the wall, it might be easier to focus on what they're saying.

Screening out distractions and concentrat-

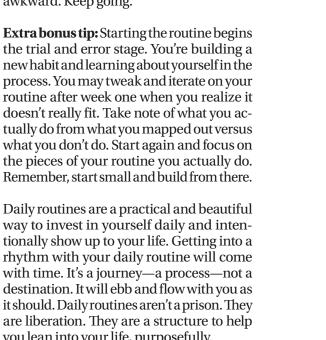
focus and retain information as your brain ages, but if you put in the effort, you can combat forgetfulness and distraction. PRESSMASTER/SHUTTERSTOCK

It can take more work to

ing on one thing at a time

is another way to improve retention. Avoiding interruptions by asking people to come back later or by not picking up your phone can also help you stay engaged and hold onto information.

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



Instead of

an impos-

sible to-do

list, focus on

one beauti-

ful task at

a time.

THE EPOCH TIMES Week 41, 202

### Getting quicker with decisions can help you crush procrastination

### **MIKE DONGHIA**

For the past three months, I've had an unopened corkboard sitting on the floor next

I bought it with a plan, but then my plan changed, and I procrastinated on returning it. Then, I entered into a period of indecision about what to do with it.

Put it in the attic? No, I would never see

Hang it? Why go through the effort if I didn't need it.

Sell it? It's barely worth it. It became just another one of those small,

but irritating items that never left my to-

Until today

Today, I finally just decided. I took three minutes and posted it on Facebook Marketplace for less than half of what I paid (something is better than nothing, right?). And if it doesn't sell in two weeks, I'll donate it. For such a small, insignificant event in

my life, I can't tell you how good it feels to have finally made a decision about what to do with that corkboard.

Deciding almost always brings relief, so why do we often avoid it?

### Why We Don't Decide

Indecision is a very common problem. Most people experience it from time to time. But for some of us, it can be a very serious issue.

I've noticed that it's often tied to an emotion that I'm experiencing: Fear over possibly making a bad decision. Let's face it, there's very little that's fun about making a choice in the face of uncertainty. Life is often messier in reality than it is in our daydreams, so it's natural that we try to avoid these situations when we think we can get away with it.

Then there's guilt or regret about a past choice. Part of the reason I avoided making a decision about my corkboard was because thinking about the corkboard made me feel guilty for wasting \$25 on what was probably an impulse purchase.

Sometimes there's also a lack of pressure to decide. Have you ever noticed that it's the small decisions that you procrastinate on the most? The big ones tend to have their own natural deadlines or pressures to decide. But the small choices don't have those deadlines, and for some of us, that allows them to expand far beyond the amount of

### The Cost of Indecision

Of course, avoiding a decision doesn't make anything better. All it does is add compilations to your life and make the future decision (that you'll eventually have to make) even harder.

Sometimes we spend hours "researching" about a minor decision. There are few decisions in life that require more than a few minutes of thought. Sometimes when you're "researching," you're really procrastinating, and this is time you don't get back for more meaningful or enjoyable pursuits in your life. The solution is simple: Do the real thing.

But that's not all—indecision isn't even fun. In fact, it's kind of miserable. When we're avoiding decisions in life, we often walk around feeling "scattered" because



Most of life's decisions are not nearly as important as they feel in the moment.

When we're avoiding decisions in life, we often walk around feeling so many open loops.



of so many open loops. Or we feel guilty because we know we're avoiding decisions and making things worse, but a small step seems insignificant, so we don't even bother.

### The Power of Choosing

Every single time I've climbed out of a hole that I dug from indecision, I've been amazed at how good I felt after just the smallest bit of progress.

Making just two or three small, quick decisions fuels me to want to make more. Pretty soon, after getting back into the groove of being decisive, I begin to feel good about myself. I'm not talking egotistical pride, but rather the good kind of pride that comes when your actions are aligning with your values.

There's another thing that I've discovered about making decisions: I learn so much more by simply making a decision than I do by analyzing it from a million angles. I've become convinced that knowledge gained from experience is massively underrated, especially compared to knowledge gained from "researching." Making more and faster decisions is the way to supercharge your

### **Simple Rules for Deciding**

The process of becoming a decisive person isn't magic. As with any challenge in life, you just need a good system and a commitment to stick with the process until it becomes second nature. I think a lot of people assume that change is more complicated than that. Sure, it can be hard, but the difficulty comes from slugging it out day after day, not in trying to discover some unknown secret.

OK, fine, if you're looking for a secret

it's this: Decide right now to follow the system described below for three months and not "research" anything else. You'll be amazed at how much progress you can make in just 12 weeks.

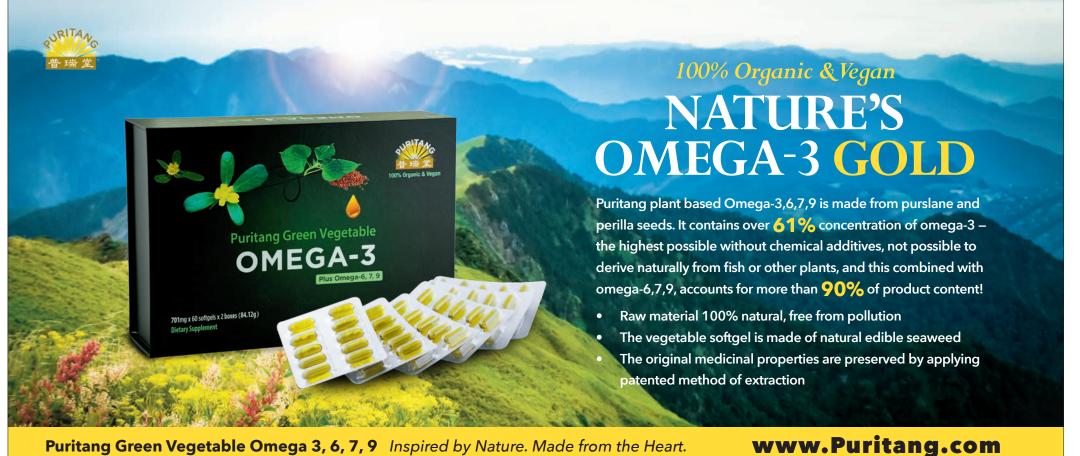
My simple system with just three rules: Decide once. When you make a decision, stick with it. An OK decision with firm resolve is much more powerful than a great decision that you're wishy-washy about. Just decide and don't look back unless the facts on the ground change significantly.

Decide fast. When faced with a decision, your goal is to decide as quickly as is reasonably possible. Obviously there's some nuance that I can't get into here, but my main suggestion is that most decisions can be made much faster than we usually make them.

Learn as you go. The reason the first two rules work is that most of life's decisions aren't nearly as important as they feel in the moment. Deciding what to do with my corkboard is a perfect case in point. The best way to get better at making decisions is simply to make more decisions and learn from them—not by overanalyzing and tormenting yourself to make the perfect one.

"In any moment of decision, the best thing you can do is the right thing. The worst thing you can do is nothing."—Teddy

Mike (and his wife, Mollie) blog at This Evergreen Home where they share their experience with living simply, intentionally, and relationally in this modern world. You can follow along by subscribing to their twice-weekly newsletter. This article was originally published on This Evergreen





### **JUDITH GRAHAM**

disease, Aduhelm, is shining a spotlight on mild cognitive impairment—problems with memory, attention, language, or other cognitive tasks that exceed changes expected with normal aging.

After initially indicating that Aduhelm could be prescribed to anyone with dementia, the Food and Drug Administration now specifies that the prescription drug be given to individuals with mild cognitive impairment or early-stage Alzheimer's, the groups in which the medication was studied.

Yet this narrower recommendation raises questions. What does a diagnosis of mild cognitive impairment mean? Is Aduhelm appropriate for all people with mild cognitive impairment, or only some? And who should decide which patients qualify for treatment: dementia specialists or primary care physicians?

Controversy surrounds Aduhelm because its effectiveness hasn't been proved, its cost is high (an estimated \$56,000 a

year, not including expenses for imaging and monthly infusions), and its potential side effects are significant (41 percent of sial new drug for Alzheimer's patients in the drug's clinical trials experienced brain swelling and bleeding).

Furthermore, an FDA advisory committee strongly recommended against Aduhelm's approval, and Congress is investigating the process leading to the FDA's decision Medicare is studying whether it should cover the medication, and the Department of Veterans Affairs has declined to do so under most circumstances.

Clinical trials for Aduhelm excluded people over age 85; those taking blood thinners; those who had experienced a stroke; and those with cardiovascular disease or impaired kidney or liver function, among other conditions. If those criteria were broadly applied, 85 percent of people with mild cognitive impairment wouldn't qualify to take the medication, according to a new research letter in the Journal of the American Medical Association.

Given these considerations, carefully selecting patients with mild cognitive impairment who might respond to Aduhelm is "becoming a priority," said Dr. Kenneth Langa, a professor of medicine, health

management, and policy at the University of Michigan. Only people Dr. Ronald Petersen, who directs the with mild Mayo Clinic's Alzheimer's Disease Research Center, said, "One of the biggest

> approval is, 'Are appropriate patients going to be given this drug?" Here's what people should know about mild cognitive impairment, based on a

> issues we're dealing with since Aduhelm's

review of research studies and conversations with leading experts.

### **Basics**

cognitive

impairment

Alzheimer's

should be

considered

Aduhelm,

**experts** 

agreed.

for treatment

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Mild cognitive impairment is often referred to as a borderline state between normal cognition and dementia. But this can be misleading. Although a significant number of people with mild cognitive impairment eventually develop dementia—usually Alzheimer's disease—many

Cognitive symptoms—for instance, difficulties with short-term memory or planning—are often subtle but they persist and represent a decline from previous functioning.

Continued on Page 13

## Unexpected Side Effects of Ultrasound Gel

This widely used endocrine disruptor may be harming your unborn baby

### **JENNIFER MARGULIS**

In 2017, Emalee Morem was 40 weeks pregnant with her first child. At the urging of her providers, she had an extra ultrasound, just to make sure the baby was OK. After the scan, Morem and her husband went out for lunch. But sitting in the sunshine on the patio at the restaurant in Minneapolis, Minnesota, Morem started to feel uncomfortable.

"My belly felt very hot while we were eating," Morem says, "and when I got home, I lived looked at my belly and saw this horrible red, patchy rash."

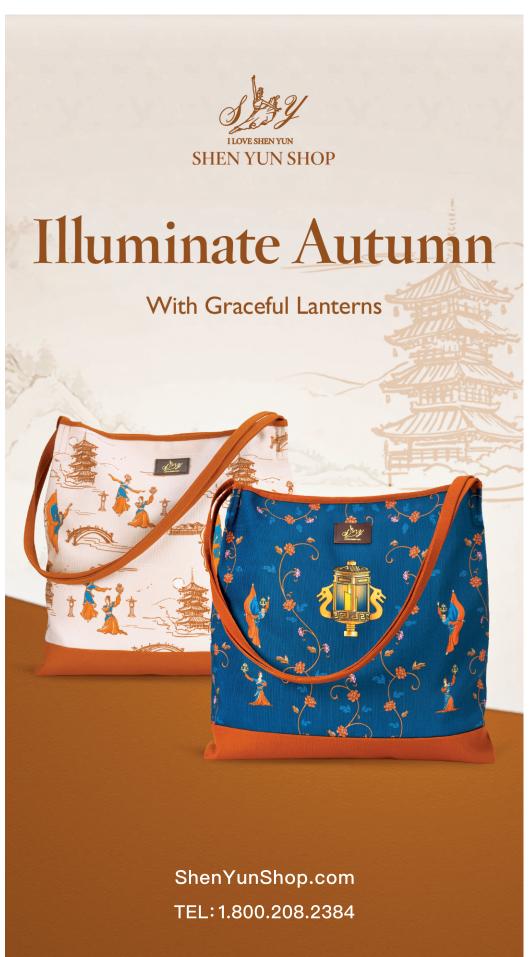
Though the rash wasn't painful, Morem

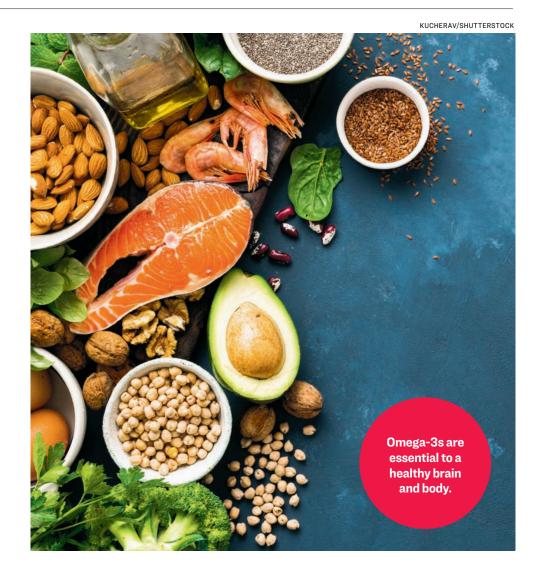
"It didn't hurt, but it obviously wasn't normal," she says. "And I'm sure it was from the ultrasound gel. After the ultrasound they just wiped my belly with a dry paper towel or cloth, so my belly didn't get washed off well, I could still smell the gel on my skin, and the rash was exactly where they'd had

the gel and doppler." The discomfort, Morem says, was short-

Continued on Page 11







# Omega-3 Levels Linked to Longevity: Studies

Being low on omega-3s could be as serious a risk for early death as smoking

### **JOEL FUHRMAN**

A recent study published in The American Journal of Clinical Nutrition spanning 11 years and more than 2,000 participants yielded a startling finding: When comparing omega-3 index to conventional cardiovascular risk factors in older adults, it shows that having a low blood omega-3 index is as strong a predictor of mortality as smoking.

The average age of the participants at the beginning of the study was 65. Their blood fatty acids were measured, and they were followed for 11 years. There were 2,240 participants and 384 deaths over that time.

### **Comparing Omega-3s** and Smoking

The omega-3 index is a measurement of the two types of omega-3s—eicosapentaenoic acid (EPA) and docosahexaenoic acid (DHA)—as a percentage of the total fatty acids in red blood cell membranes. The higher the index, the more omega-3 there is in a person's blood.

The average omega-3 index in the study was 5.8 percent, the lowest fifth had an omega-3 index of less than 4.2 percent, and the highest fifth had levels greater than 6.8 percent.

Using mathematical modeling, the researchers estimated that the participants who were in the highest fifth of the omega-3 index at age 65 gained 4.74 years of life compared to those in the lowest fifth. This was similar to the difference between smokers and nonsmokers at age 65, where the smokers lost 4.73 years of life, according to

Over the 11-year follow-up, of participants in both of the low-risk categories—non-smokers who had a high omega-3 index—85 percent survived. This is compared to only 47 percent of those in the high-risk categories smokers with a low omega-3 index. The loss of years of life was similar between low-omega-3 plus non-smoking and high-omega-3 plus smoking.

The study, "Using an erythrocyte fatty acid fingerprint to predict risk of all-cause mortality: the Framingham Offspring Cohort," was published

### **More Evidence Connecting Omega-3 Levels With Longevity**

This research comes a few months after a meta-analysis of 17 prospective cohort studies was published in Nature Communications. The analysis linked higher circulating omega-3 fatty acid levels to longevity. In a pooled analysis of the studies, participants in the highest fifth of combined blood DHA and EPA were 15 to 18 percent less likely to die from any cause over the follow-up

period (median follow-up time is 16 years in these studies). Higher blood omega-3s were also associated with a reduced risk for death from cardiovascular disease and cancer.

### The Importance of DHA and EPA

DHA and EPA are important structural and functional components of brain and retinal cell membranes. They also have triglyceride-lowering, anti-inflammatory, anti-platelet, and anti-hypertensive properties, plus beneficial effects on cell membranes that may also contribute to better health and

Previous studies have linked a low omega-3 index (below approximately 5 percent) with an increased risk of cognitive decline in older adults. All the above studies corroborate the prior studies linking a low omega index to brain shrinkage and cognitive impairment, and they reinforce how critical it is to properly address this issue.

### **Previous studies** have linked a low omega–3 index (below approximately 5 percent) with an increased risk of cognitive decline in older adults.

### The Bottom Line

DHA and EPA supplementation is important for anyone who doesn't eat fatty fish frequently. These appear to be more crucial forms of omega-3s compared to the plant-based omega-3 alpha-linolenic acid (ALA).

Omega-3 index is low in vegans approximately 4 percent when measured in studies—and the research suggests that adding ALA from flax seeds and walnuts doesn't significantly raise the omega-3 index in most people. Most of the ALA in our diet is burned for energy, not converted to EPA and DHA. Consuming pre-formed DHA and EPA is the most reliable way to increase omega-3 levels in the blood.

I recommend checking the omega-3 index with a blood test if you have a concern that your levels are low. A good way vegans and others can make sure to get enough DHA and EPA is by taking an algae-based supplement (refrigerated if possible).

Joel Fuhrman, M.D., is a boardcertified family physician, best-selling author, and nutritional researcher specializing in preventing and reversing disease through nutritional and natural methods. This article was originally published on DrFuhrman.com

For links to studies mentioned in this article, please see the article online at

# Unexpected Side Effects of Ultrasound Gel

### This widely used endocrine disruptor may be harming your unborn baby

Continued from Page 9

"It went away after a few hours, but it freaked me out at the time. I was afraid of getting more ultrasounds, too." Two weeks later, Morem gave birth to a healthy 7-pound 14-ounce baby girl.

### **An Endocrine Disruptor?**

Could the gel that caused a topical rash on Morem's abdomen be problematic for another reason? Our bodies use hormones chemical signals—to regulate many different processes. Endocrine disruptors are chemicals that alter our normal hormone levels. Phthalates and certain phenols—including parabens and triclosan—are considered endocrine-disrupting chemicals.

Because pregnancy, like puberty and menopause, is a time of enormous hormonal changes, it's especially important to steer clear of hormone disruptors. Indeed, studies have shown that unnatural changes in hormone levels can contribute to many negative health effects—especially when it comes to reproduction and fetal development.

While each formulation varies by brand, research suggests that some of the gels used to conduct prenatal ultrasound scans may be causing hormone disruption. These thick gels are slathered over a woman's abdomen to provide a continuous liquid medium for the sound to pass through, without air bubbles that would disrupt the signal. They contain a variety of fragrances and dyes, as well as a chemical called propylparaben, which is a phenol—a chemical compound extracted from coal tar. Ultrasound gels may also contain phthalates, used to bind the fragrance and the color.

Dr. Carmen Messerlian and her colleagues in the Department of Environmental Health at Harvard University sought to uncover whether exposure to ultrasound gel disrupts the endocrine system. They published their results, "Ultrasound gel as an unrecognized source of exposure to phthalates and phenols among pregnant women undergoing routine scan, in the International Journal of Environmental Health in 2017.

Teaming up with clinicians from Massachusetts General Hospital, Messerlian's team analyzed the urine of a dozen pregnant women who were already participating in a fertility study. As part of the fertility study, the women were all undergoing one routine ultrasound in the second trimester.

So the Harvard scientists took three urine samples from each woman: One before the scan, a second sample one to two hours after the scan, and a third urine sample 7 to 12 hours later.

Each urine sample was then sent to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention where CDC scientists then analyzed them for the presence and quantity of 19 different phthalates and 11 different phenols.

### Phthalates Peak 7 to 12 Hours **After Ultrasound Scans**

The analysis found that phthalates reached peak concentrations in the pregnant women's urine at approximately 7 to 12 hours after exposure to ultrasound gel. In addition, the concentration of almost all the

chemicals tested in the women's urine was highest in the third urine samples, nearly eight hours after the scans. Since all of the pregnant women tested reportedly ate something or used some kind of personal care products (which of-

ten contain endocrine-disrupting chemi-

cals), this may have affected the results.

However, the consistency in timing across all 12 study participants suggests that high phthalate concentrations in the women's urine were due to ultrasound gel

"While additional research is needed, this pilot study potentially identifies a previously unknown source of phthalate and paraben exposure among pregnant women undergoing routine ultrasound examination," the researchers concluded.

### **How Does Ultrasound Work?**

Prenatal ultrasound uses sound waves to create an image of a pregnant woman's



If concerned about the risks of a needed ultrasound, you can ask your doctor or technician to have the ultrasound done at the least possible exposure for the shortest amount of time, which are actually the current guidelines.

Once used

sparingly,

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standard

medical

ultrasound

growing baby while the baby is still inside

"Ultrasound is super high-frequency sound waves we cannot actually hear; it's basically based on the same principle as radar or echolocation," said Dr. Lise Eliot, a neuroscientist at Rosalind Franklin University of Medicine and Science, when I interviewed her several years ago.

"You put out a sound and if there's something in the environment, it will reflect back on that. They reflect the sound waves through the mother's abdomen and the baby is the structure that reflects the sound waves. With the technology, you can take the reflected sound waves and create a two- or three-dimensional image of the child."

### A Routine Part of Prenatal Care

Ultrasounds are used to find out the baby's gender and positioning and to look for any anomalies, some of which can sometimes be surgically repaired before the baby is born. The most severe form of spina bifida, myelomeningocele, can be operated on during gestation, for example. At the same time, if an ultrasound uncovers that a fetus has a severe medical condition or a genetic anomaly that is not compatible with life, doctors will often recommend terminating the pregnancy.

Once used sparingly, ultrasound has now become a routine, unquestioned part of standard medical prenatal care. In fact, ultrasounds during pregnancy are considered such an essential component of modern maternity care that the majority of obstetricians believe it would be "impossible" to provide high-quality maternity care without doing them.

A woman who chooses not to get any ultrasounds—either because she would never choose abortion or because she has concerns over the safety, necessity, and reliability of the procedure—is often met with unabashed astonishment and pushback from her providers.

American women enjoying healthy pregnancies will routinely have four to five ultrasounds per pregnancy, regardless of risk. Pregnant women who are considered "high risk," can expect to be told they need an ultrasound scan at every appointment.

I interviewed one New Jersey mom, Jen Simon, who had 30 ultrasounds during her first pregnancy. Even though she was only 5 feet 3 inches tall and her husband just 5 feet 6 inches, their New York City-based doctors told the Simons they needed so many ultrasounds because the baby was too small. "I was told I was lucky I wasn't getting three a week," Simon said.

But are these scans even necessary in the first place? Consider this: One study, published in 1993, of more than 15,000 pregnant women revealed that ultra-

> comes. Another study, of more than 2,800 women, showed that pregnant women who received five ultrasound scans were more likely to have growth-restricted babies than preg-

> > nant women who received

the ultrasound scan itself

may be partially causing the very condition it is seeking to monitor.

"If you're low-risk, there's honestly very little justification for doing more than one," says my colleague and co-author, Dr. Paul Thomas, a pediatrician based in Portland, Oregon. "Even one ultrasound may not be necessary, unless your plan would be to abort a non-viable fetus.'

### **Reasons to Be Cautious**

At the same time, there is a growing body of scientific evidence linking exposure to ultrasounds in utero to brain challenges and other health problems in young chil-

For example, a 2016 study published in the journal Autism Research by scientists from the University of Washington examined the records of 2,644 children with autism. These scientists found that boys exposed to ultrasound in the first trimester had more severe autism symptoms, including decreased IO and increased repetitive behaviors, than babies who hadn't been exposed.

Research conducted by Dr. Manuel Casanova, professor of biomedical sciences at the University of South Carolina, has also shown that early exposure to ultrasounds can trigger ill-timed migration of brain cells that can lead to brain disruption and

### **Alternatives to Ultrasound Gel**

One way to avoid exposure to endocrinedisrupting ultrasound gel is to tell the ultrasound technician that you don't want to use the standard ultrasound gel. Bring some organic coconut oil with you to your appointment and ask the technician to use that instead. Some technicians will also simply use water to make the transducer move more easily instead of the gel provided. Problem solved.

And Thomas says you can take some simple steps to make an ultrasound scan less risky for your growing baby. Many technicians may not be aware that obstetric guidelines stipulate that ultrasounds should be done for the least amount of time at the lowest possible setting. This is called "ALARA" or "As Low As Reasonably Achievable."

"If you want to have an ultrasound or your doctor's really insistent, make sure you ask the technician to check that their machine is set as low as it can be to get the needed image," Thomas suggests. "Tell your doctor and the tech that you want the ultrasound done at the least possible exposure for the shortest amount of time. These are actually the current guidelines, but most doctors don't follow them."

Jennifer Margulis, Ph.D., is an investigative health journalist and science writer and a frequent contributor to The Epoch Times. She is also the author of "Your Baby, Your Way: Taking Charge of Your Pregnancy, Childbirth, and Parenting Decisions for a Happier, Healthier Family" (Scribner 2015), which includes a chapter on ultrasounds. Find out more at JenniferMargulis.net

For links to studies mentioned in this only one, suggesting that article, please see the article online at TheEpochTimes.com

You can bring some organic coconut oil with you to your ultrasound appointment and ask the technician to use that instead.



These 20 tips can help you gain control over your urges for the sweet stuff

### **FRANK LIPMAN**

s the saying goes—everyone is talking about sugar, but what are they doing about it? It's my fervent wish that they are working on quitting the stuff.

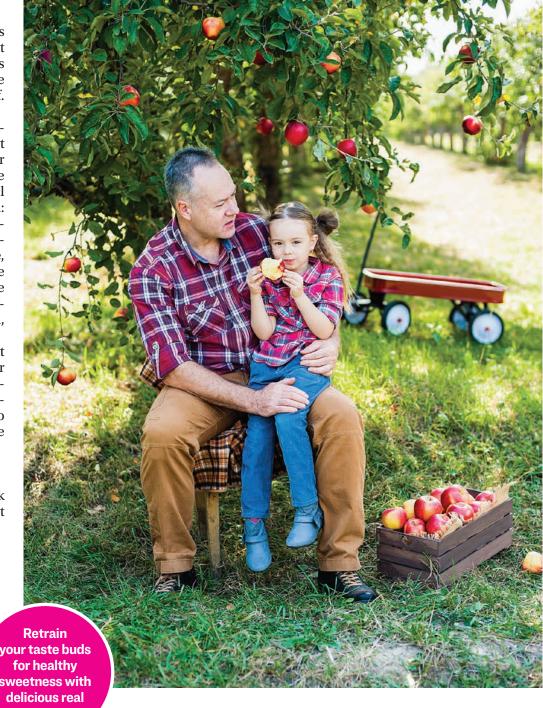
The short answer is that sugar is an extraordinarily destructive substance that most people eat far too much of. The longer answer is that virtually every day, more studies are proving what we in the optimal health community have always believed: that sugar plays a pivotal role in the development of many of the devastating illnesses we fear most, namely heart disease, cancer, diabetes, and Alzheimer's, to name a few. Granted, the body does need trace amounts of sugar to function, but the average American is eating sugar by the pound, not the molecule.

Some estimates put the average adult intake at close to 130 pounds of sugar per year—an astonishing amount of any substance, much less one which has such disastrous health implications. So what do we do now? In a nutshell: kick sugar to the curb—your life absolutely depends on it.

### Tips to Kick the Sugar Habit Here are a few thoughts on how to break

free from sugar so you can live the sweet life for years to come.

- 1. Eat regularly. Eat three meals and two snacks or five small meals a day. For many people, if they don't eat regularly, their blood sugar levels drop, they feel hungry, and are more likely to crave sweet sugary snacks.
- 2. Choose whole foods. The closer a food is to its original form, the less processed sugar it will contain. Food in its natural form, including fruits and vegetables, usually presents no metabolic problems for a normal body, especially when consumed in variety.
- 3. Have a breakfast of protein, fat, and phytonutrients to start your day off **right.** Breakfast smoothies are ideal for this. The typical breakfast is full of carbs and sugary or starchy foods. This is the worst option, since you'll trigger sugar cravings for the rest of the day. Eating a good breakfast is essential to prevent sugar cravings.
- 4. Try to incorporate protein and/or **fat with each meal.** This helps control blood sugar levels. Make sure they are healthy sources of each.
- **5.** Add spices. Coriander, cinnamon,



nutmeg, cloves, and cardamom will naturally sweeten your foods and re-

6. Take a good-quality multivitamin and mineral supplement, omega 3 fatty acids, and vitamin D3. Nutrient deficiencies can make cravings worse, and the fewer nutrient deficiencies, the fewer cravings. Certain nutrients seem to improve blood sugar control, including chromium, vitamin B3, and magnesium.

fruit.

**7. Move your body.** Exercise, dance, do some yoga, or rake some leaves. Whatever movement you enjoy will help reduce tension, boost your energy, and decrease your need for a

**8. Get enough sleep.** When we are tired, we often use sugar for energy to counteract the exhaustion.

**9. Do a detox.** My experience has been that when people do a detox, not only does it reset their appetites, but it often decreases their sugar cravings. After the initial sugar cravings pass, our bodies adjust and we won't even want the sugar anymore.

10.Be open to explore the emotional issues around your sugar addiction. Many times our craving for sugar is more for an emotional need that isn't being met.

11. Keep sugary snacks out of your **house and office.** It's difficult to snack on things that aren't there. You'll reduce impromptu indulgences if they

require a trip to the store. 12.Don't substitute artificial sweeten-

ers for sugar. This will do little to alter your desire for sweets. If you do need a sweetener, try Stevia, it's the

13.Learn to read labels. Educate yourself about what you're putting into your body-though I would encourage you to eat as few foods as possible that have labels. The longer the list of ingredients, the more likely sugar is going to be included on that list.

Check the grams of sugar, and choose products with the least sugar per serving (1 teaspoon of sugar is roughly equivalent to 4 grams). Become familiar with sugar terminology and recognize that all of these are sweeteners: agave, corn syrup, corn sugar, high fructose corn syrup, sucrose, dextrose, honey, cane sugar, cane crystals, fruit juice concentrates, molasses, lactose, dextrin, and many more.

4.Avoid sugar in disguise. Remember that most of the "complex" carbohydrates we consume like bread (including whole wheat), bagels, and pasta aren't really complex at all. They are usually highly refined or act just like sugars in the body and are to be

**15.Scare yourself straight.** Our national love affair with sugar isn't all in the mind, since there is a strong physical component to sugar addiction. That said, one way to kick off your sugarfree journey is to reframe the way you think about sugar. Treat it like an illicit drug, a kind of legal form of heroin, a dark force to be avoided, and a substance whose use leads to physical ruin. Next, take a look at CBS's 60 Minutes "Is Sugar Toxic?" story—it's a potentially life-changing report for anyone who needs just a bit more inspiration to help them kick sugar.

### For Acute Cravings, Try One of These

6. Take L-Glutamine, 1000-2000 mg every couple of hours as necessary. This amino acid is found naturally in the body. It often relieves sugar crav-

ings as the brain uses it for fuel. 17. Take a "breathing break." Find a quiet spot, get comfortable, and sit for a few minutes and focus on your breath. After a few minutes of this, the craving will pass.

**8.Distract yourself.** Go for a walk, if possible, in nature. Cravings usually last for 10 to 20 minutes maximum. If you can distract yourself with something else, it often passes. The more you do this, the easier it gets and the cravings get easier to deal with.

19. Drink lots of water. Sometime drinking water or seltzer water can help with sugar cravings. Also, sometimes what we perceive as a food craving is really thirst.

**20.**Have a piece of fruit. If you give in to your cravings, have a piece of fruit; it should satisfy a sweet craving and is much healthier.

Dr. Frank Lipman is the founder and director of the Eleven Eleven Wellness Center in New York City. This article was originally published on NaturallySavvy.com



Cognitive symptoms can be caused by resolvable factors unrelated to Alzheimer's disease, including small strokes; poorly managed conditions such as diabetes, depression, and sleep apnea; responses to medications; thyroid disease; and unrecognized hearing loss.

# How to Prescribe Controversial Alzheimer's Drug?

New drug raises challenge of targeting those with mild cognitive impairment

### Continued from Page 9

Yet a person with the condition may still be working or driving and appear entirely normal. By definition, mild cognitive impairment leaves intact a person's ability to perform daily activities independently

According to an American Academy of Neurology review of dozens of studies published in 2018, mild cognitive impairment affects nearly 7 percent of people ages 60 to 64, 10 percent of those 70 to 74, and 25 percent of 80- to 84-year-olds.

Mild cognitive impairment can be caused by biological processes (the accumulation of amyloid beta and tau proteins and changes in the brain's structure) linked to Alzheimer's disease. Between 40 percent and 60 percent of people with mild cognitive impairment have evidence of Alzheimer's-related brain pathology, according to a 2019 review.

But cognitive symptoms can also be caused by other factors, including small strokes; poorly managed conditions such as diabetes, depression, and sleep apnea; responses to medications; thyroid disease; and unrecognized hearing loss. When these issues are treated, normal cognition may be restored or further decline forestalled.

During the past decade, experts have iden-

The question you want to ask your doctor is, **Do I have** MCI mild cognitive impairment due to Alzheimer's disease?

Dr. Howard Chertkow, chairperson for cognitive neurology and innovation, Baycrest

tified four subtypes of mild cognitive impairment. Each subtype appears to carry a different risk of progressing to Alzheimer's disease, but precise estimates haven't been

ALL PHOTOS BY SHUTTERSTOCK

People with memory problems and multiple medical issues who are found to have changes in their brain through imaging tests are thought to be at the greatest risk.

"If biomarker tests converge and show abnormalities in amyloid, tau, and neurodegeneration, you can be pretty certain a person with MCI [mild cognitive impairment] has the beginnings of Alzheimer's in their brain and that disease will continue to evolve," said Dr. Howard Chertkow, chairperson for cognitive neurology and innovation at Baycrest, an academic health sciences center in Toronto that specializes in care for older adults.

**Diagnosis.** Usually, this process begins when older adults tell their doctors that "something isn't right with my memory or my thinking"—a so-called subjective cognitive complaint. Short cognitive tests can confirm whether objective evidence of impairment exists. Other tests can determine whether a person is still able to perform daily activities successfully.

More sophisticated neuropsychological tests can be helpful if there is uncertainty about findings or a need to better assess the extent of impairment. But "there is a shortage of physicians with expertise in dementia: neurologists, geriatricians,

geriatric psychiatrists" who can undertake comprehensive evaluations, said Kathryn Phillips, director of health services research and health economics at the University of California-San Francisco School of Pharmacy.

The most important step is taking a careful medical history that documents whether a decline in functioning from an individual's baseline has occurred and investigating possible causes such as sleep patterns, mental health concerns, or inadequate management of chronic conditions that need attention.

Mild cognitive impairment "isn't necessarily straightfor-

ward to recognize, because people's thinking and memory changes over time [with advancing age and the question becomes 'Is this something more than that?'" said Dr. Zoe Arvanitakis, a neurologist and director of Rush University's Rush Memory Clinic in Chicago.

More than one set of tests is needed to really specializes in cognition," she said. rule out the possibility that someone performed poorly because they were nervous or sleep-deprived or had a bad day.

"Administering tests to people over time can do a pretty good job of identifying who's actually declining and who's not," Langa said.

### **Progression**

Mild cognitive impairment doesn't always progress to dementia, nor does it usually do so quickly. But this isn't well understood. And estimates of progression vary, based on whether patients are seen in specialty dementia clinics or in community medical clinics and how long patients are followed. A review of 41 studies found that 5 percent of patients treated in community settings each year went on to develop dementia. For those seen in dementia clinics—typically, patients with more serious symptoms—the rate was 10 percent. The American Academy of Neurology's review found that after two years, 15 percent of patients were ob-

served to have dementia. Progression to dementia isn't the only path people follow. A sizable portion of patients with mild cognitive impairment from 14 percent to 38 percent—are discovered to have normal cognition upon further testing. Another portion remains stable over time. (In both cases, this may be because underlying risk factors—poor sleep, for instance, or poorly controlled diabetes or thyroid disease—have been addressed.) Still another group of patients fluctuate, sometimes improving and sometimes declining, with periods of stability

"You really need to follow people over time—for up to 10 years—to have an idea of what is going on with them," said Dr. Oscar Lopez, director of the Alzheimer's Disease Research Center at the University of Pittsburgh.

### **Specialists Versus Generalists**

Aduhelm.

NOW FDA APPROVED

Aduhelm is expen-

sive and controver-

sial. The fact that it

even got approved

has raised questions

about the internal

Only people with mild cognitive impairment associated with Alzheimer's should be considered for treatment with Aduhelm, experts agreed.

'The question you want to ask your doctor is, 'Do I have MCI [mild cognitive impairment] due to Alzheimer's disease?" Chertkow said.

tion targets amyloid, a sticky protein that is a hallmark of Alzheimer's, confirmation of amyloid accumulation through a PET scan or spinal tap should be a prerequisite. But the presence of amyloid isn't determinative: One-third of older adults with

Because this medica-

normal cognition have been found to have amyloid deposits in their brains. Because of these complexities, "I think, for the early roll-

workings of the FDA. out of a complex drug like this, treatment should be overseen

by specialists, at least initially," said Petersen of the Mayo Clinic. Arvanitakis of Rush University agreed.

"If someone is really and truly interested in trying this medication, at this point I would recommend it be done under the care of a psychiatrist or neurologist or someone who

We're eager to hear from readers about questions you'd like answered, problems you've been having with your care, and advice you need in dealing with the health care system. Visit khn.org/columnists to submit your requests or tips.

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

TRADITIONAL CHINESE MEDICINE

# Why Do I Always Wake Between 3 AM and 5 AM?

Manage your metabolism by feeding your liver what it needs to do its work-without waking you up



If your body is too dependent on sugar for energy, it can wreak havoc with your metabolism and wake you up at night.

### **BRANDON LAGRECA**

There is a frustrating and all-too-common phenomenon that plagues many a sleeper. It goes something like this: Falling asleep is no problem, but in the early morning hours, one wakes up agitated and restless. This can last up to an hour or two before finally falling back asleep. Upon rising is the feeling of being unrested, what we call "nonrestorative sleep" in integrative medicine. If this describes your sleep cycle, here are two related explanations that directly lead to actionable strategies to help you sleep through the night. The first is the traditional Chinese medicine (TCM) theory that posits that the body's vital energy peaks in two-hour timeframes as it circulates through the body. The 3 a.m. to 5 a.m. segment is when Liver function is most active. This concurs with Western biomedical physiology that understands that the body performs much of its repair and detoxification while asleep.

This brings up an important distinction that must be made at this juncture. TCM capitalizes an organ name when we're

Waking between 3 a.m. and 5 a.m. during peak Liver time suggests that the body is working hard processing environmental and emotional stressors.

referring to it in Eastern medicine. This delineates the TCM organ and its holistic relationship with body, mind, emotions, and spirit. Thus, lowercase "liver" is the organ as we think of it in Western terms and our understanding of its physiology. There is overlap between the two medical paradigms. Both recognize the liver's capacity to cleanse the body of toxicants, but the Eastern model upholds that the Liver is also responsible for cleansing our system of toxic thoughts and emotions.

Waking between 3 a.m. and 5 a.m. during peak Liver time suggests that the body is working hard processing environmental and emotional stressors. Dreams are more pronounced during the early morning hours as unresolved issues from the days and weeks prior play out in bizarre and disturbing dreamscapes. This alone can wake us up with a racing heart and mind, but a Western understanding of liver function grants another perspective to connect

The liver stores glycogen as a quick fuel source to tide metabolism over in between meals. This will provide about 12 hours of accessible glucose (sugar) after which the body breaks down adipose tissue (body fat) and liberates ketones for fuel. With a healthy and flexible metabolism, this shift is seamless, and fasting for several hours is uneventful. If metabolism depends on

sugar for fuel, the transition elicits a stress response by the body whereby the adrenal glands release the hormone cortisol to raise blood sugar. A drop in blood sugar is a root cause of

waking in the night, stemming from Liver's increased need for energy to metabolize life in the form of dreams as well as the liver's demand for fuel to detoxify pollutants. Whether the stress is physiological or emotional, metabolism is taxed and waking ensues as the elevation of cortisol from the adrenals is accompanied by a release of catecholamine hormones epinephrine and norepinephrine. These potent stimulating hormones will assuredly wake even the most sound sleeper. Of course, these hormones need not be tapped if blood sugar is balanced. Becoming metabolically flexible is the key to staying asleep.

There's a simple way to see if unbalanced blood sugar is at the root of sleep disturbance. Eat an early dinner and don't snack until bedtime, when you will consume one of the following: a teaspoon of raw honey, a slice of lunch meat turkey, or a tablespoon of coconut oil. Try each separately and see which (if any) prevent waking at night. Which one(s) work is a clue to how efficient your metabolism is at burning fats for fuel instead of depending on sugar.

If metabolically inflexible, the raw honey will likely be the only thing that works. If

### A drop in blood sugar is a root cause of waking in the night.

Brandon LaGreca, LAc, MAcOM, is a licensed acupuncturist in the state of Wisconsin. He's the author of "Cancer and EMF Radiation: How to Protect Yourself From the Silent Carcinogen of Electropollution" and "Cancer, Stress & Mindset: Focusing the Mind to Empower Healing and Resilience." He shares his thoughts at Empowered Patient Blog.

coconut oil will work best. A protein such as a slice of turkey burns slower than the quick sugar of raw honey, but ultimately can be converted into sugar by the liver in a process called gluconeogenesis. Some people do best with a higher protein diet, and a slice of turkey will maintain their metabolic needs while providing a rich source of tryptophan, the precursor amino acid to melatonin.

metabolically efficient, ketones from the

This nightly dietary experiment can aid sleep in the short term, and clue you into the resilience of your metabolism, but the long-term goal is to not need a snack before bed every night. The solution is twofold: mitigating stress to prevent a nightly cortisol spike and shifting one's metabolism toward proteins and fats to become fat-adapted. The former strategy can be achieved by journaling before bed to vent the day's frustrations. The latter can be realized over time by having a regular diet of lower carb foods and practicing intermittent fasting or time-restricted eating to strengthen one's metabolism.

With both influences in place, stress hormones remain in check and sound sleep is restored. Understanding the different cultural interpretations of Liver/liver function is key to holistically addressing sleep as a metabolic disorder. Leverage the best of East and West and be rewarded with deep, restorative sleep.

If we sit around thinking of all the longterm outcomes, we'll miss the opportunity to be present in the moment. For me, this means not allowing myself to dwell on sce-

narios that may or may not ever happen. Instead, I remind myself of this simple question: "What can I do today to make healthier

When my mindset is focused on the pres-

ent, I'm less likely to feel overwhelmed and

fearful of future events and more likely to feel gratitude by focusing on today. My mind

isn't taken up with thoughts about results or

consequences down the road, but instead

with making conscious, well-thought-out

So how do we lessen our sights on the future

and focus more on the present? Planning has its place (mainly in finances, career, and

family planning), but I believe that placing

the majority of my thoughts on what I can

control today is a much healthier way to live.

The 90/10 rule is a common principle that

can be used in many areas of life. Consider

how you could use this rule to lessen your

Allow yourself to make plans and think

about the days/months/years ahead for just

10 percent of your time. That's roughly 1.5

hours during our normal waking time. Use

the other 14.5 hours thinking about and be-

Invest in relationships with those around

you, practice healthy eating habits, exercise

and stay active, enjoy life's free pleasures,

make wise choices with your money, laugh and embrace loved ones, slow down and

make time to reflect on what you're most

For me, instead of worrying about how my

kids will turn out when they're teenagers,

I'll spend more time laughing, playing, and

Instead of dreading future expenses or

what might break down the road, I'll spend

within my means and limit my desires for

running around a factory floor.

choices for tomorrow?"

decisions to live for today.

Focus on Today

control of the future.

ing proactive today.

teaching them each day.

grateful for.

# Correct Me, Please!

### Correction can elevate us if the words come with the right intent

### **DONNA MARTELLI**

her best in today's ballet class. tude and joy. Even so, she couldn't keep a warm tear from sliding down her cheek because she felt rejected and unnoticed among the twirling No, Not This Way!

She looked pale and troubled as she gathered her paraphernalia and rushed out the studio door. That one little tear led to a deluge of waterworks as she ran to catch up with Emilia, a fellow student, who was a few feet ahead of her. Between gasps and sobs, she wailed, "Oh no, Mr. Fokine didn't give me any corrections today!"

She felt her world was collapsing because she didn't get a correction in class! While that reaction is a bit extreme, it points out that correction is desirable when it is given too stupid to do what you for the right reasons.

Can you relate? Correction from an instructor or mentor indicates that they notice you and want you to do better next time. Indeed, proper correction is necessary for your growth. It keeps you on the

right path and helps you avoid distractions. are doing something wrong, they correct crushes you and causes you to withyou to help you get it right. You thrive on draw and stop trying.

those words of correction because they give you hope and encouragement to press ndrea believed she had done on. You receive such correction with grati-That being said, a correction can be con-

taminated.

There exists a perverted type of correction that accomplishes the absolute opposite effect. It's probably not right to call it a "correction," but perhaps rather a "crushing" (my word) as its goal isn't to build you up but to tear you down. Has anyone

ever told you that you aren't good strong enough, or are attempting? They can tell you all the reasons why your ideas won't work. When you hear this over and over, you begin to believe it.

Has anyone ever told you that you aren't good enough, not strong enough, or too stupid to do what you are attempting?



If you truly wish to give life-giving be done with a heart of patience, indness, and good

Even though you spend a great deal of energy trying not to internalize the Even when your teachers tell you that you rejection, if unchecked, it ultimately

Keep your correction free of anger, grievance, or disappointment so it does not produce unwanted "side effects."

People speak what is in their heart. When those crushing words are spoken, they defile both the speaker and the listener. The spewing of poison from one person onto another is verbal abuse. The person delivering the toxin is likely doing it because of some past hurt or unforgiven event lodged deeply in their heart. They may feel inferior and need to bring the other person down to their level. Harboring these hurts causes them to rot, and then frustration grows and expresses itself in verbal violence.

### Is It You?

If that describes you, it's imperative that you go back and deal with any underlying issues before attempting to correct someone else, such as your child or your spouse. Otherwise, you risk allowing your internal disquiet to amplify itself upon those around you. If you don't resolve this, you will infect them with the illness of your own heart.

If you truly wish to give life-giving correction, it must be done with a heart of patience, kindness, and good intentions. If there is anger, grievance, or disappointment, your correction is contaminated and will produce "side effects." Please take inventory of yourself. If you find any such issue, resolve to correct that before attempting to deliver correction to anyone. If you need counseling to do this, by all means, pursue it.

Donna Martelli, formerly a professional dancer with the Harkness Ballet of New York, served on the dance faculty at Butler University in Indianapolis, and is now also a certified personal trainer, and certified Pilates instructor in Indianapolis, Ind. She conducts classes, seminars, and workshops in the United States and Europe. She is the author of "When God Says Drop It" and "Why the Dance," available on Amazon and wherever books are sold.

Correcting	Crushing
Encourages	Discourages
Motivated by love/care	Motivated by wrath/ unforgiveness
Helps	Harms
Lifts up	Puts down
Builds confidence	Destroys self- esteem
Breeds respect	Breeds hatred
Builds bridges	Destroys connection

# The Science of Cold Showers

Several studies have documented the varied health benefits of cold showers

### **LINDSAY BOTTOMS**

A cold shower in the morning is a pretty unpleasant way to start the day. Yet many have been tempted to take up the habit because being immersed in cold water has many purported health benefits, both physical and mental.

Cold showers were first administered for health reasons in the early 19th century when doctors designed them for use on asylum and prison inmates to "cool hot, inflamed brains, and to instill fear to tame impetuous wills."

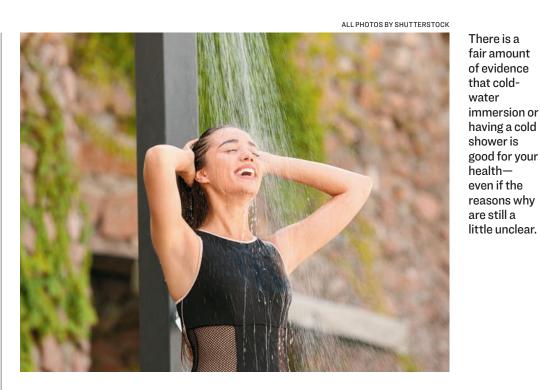
By the mid-19th century, the Victorians realized that the shower had other uses, namely washing people—and it would be better if the water was warm. So the shower went from being a device used to inflict unpleasantness for an hour and a half to one that was very pleasant and lasted about five minutes.

And yet the practice of taking a cold shower for health benefits never truly went away, and, indeed, seems to be enjoying a resurgence, especially among Silicon Valley types.

### What's the Evidence?

A large study from the Netherlands found

**Cold water** also appears to activate the sympathetic nervous system, the part of the nervous system that governs the fight-or-flight response.



that people who took a cold shower were less cold water, another with 60 seconds of likely than those who took a warm shower cold water, another with 90 seconds of to take time off work due to sickness.

A group of more than 3,000 people was split into four groups and asked to have pants were asked to follow this protocol a warm shower every day. But one group for a month. (Sixty-four percent continwas asked to end it with 30 seconds of ued with the cold-water regimen because

cold water, while the control group could merely enjoy a warm shower. The partici-



We can better navigate life's hardships by being realistically optimistic

### **MOLLIE DONGHIA**

THE EPOCH TIMES Week 41, 2021

Letting go of control over situations that are outside of my authority is a hard tightrope for me to balance. For decades, I've had a natural tendency toward anxiety. When things were beyond my control, my mind would automatically fear something un-

An uncertain health concern resulted in days of wondering whether it would turn into something difficult. An overwhelming season of motherhood resulted in me worrying my children might not be thriving. A big evaluation (backwhen I was an elementary teacher) resulted in me questioning whether I would disappoint my boss and have to undergo more guidance.

I had a fear of coming hardship. Many times when I expressed my difficulty with a situation to a friend or my husband, I was told "just let it go" or "don't worry about it." If you've ever been given those common words of guidance in an anxious situation, you know that it's easier said than done unfortunately.

If letting go means being indifferent and not caring as much, how was I supposed to do that? As a more sensitive human being, I consciously carried the weight of others' emotions. I felt deeply when those around me were sad or hurt. I became upset when I didn't get the approval of others. I'm a common "people pleaser."

So how was I supposed to just let it go? I didn't want to be disconnected from my powerless.

emotions, but instead, I craved a way to live life by letting go of my deeply rooted desire

### When Control Makes You Powerless

Fast forward to about six years ago, when my anxiety grew with each child, but also triggered growth, wisdom, and learning. Each postpartum season seemed to send me into a heightened state of anxiety. Hormonal changes, the addition of a new baby, and life's constant demands produced a formula for uncertainty, leading to anxiety.

As humans, we desire control. It feels easy to remain inside our comfort zone. It produces a sense of calm when our days are structured and routine.

### As a more sensitive human being, I consciously carried the weight of others' emotions.

In our minds, it goes something like this: We make a plan. The plan follows suit. We reap the benefits of success and enjoy the

However, that's not always the reality of life. When events happen that are outside my control (a sleepless baby, a health scare, an unexpected home repair), I often feel

the outcome? Sometimes, not much. But remind myself of each time my mind seeks

control over a situation.

things should turn out, I'll have a more realistic mindset. Life has abundant blessings, but also many struggles. I don't want to live with rose-colored glasses on, but instead, I want to prepare myself for the fact that in this life, we'll have troubles. It's up to me how I'll let those troubles affect my overall well-being each day.

If I live with an expectation and need for good outcomes, I'll constantly be disappointed and anxious when something goes wrong. When my expectations become a healthy balance of positivity and ity and realism—and focus on what you can realism, the hardships of life—and the control today—your days will be filled with circumstances I can't control—are easier more joy and less anxiety.

### Truth #2: Don't Over-Focus on the

I like to set goals. Both Mike and I are ideal-

impulse buying. Instead of fearing a health concern with a Truth #1: Adjust My Expectations If I adjust my expectations about the way family member, I'll make a 15-minute phone call to talk, make plans to visit them, or go out of my way to show that I care. Instead of wondering how anxiety will

### Long-Term

ists, so when we implement a new routine Mollie (and her husband, Mike) blog at or element of parenting, we look toward the long-term benefits it will produce. But the funny thing about making plans for the future is that they have a high likelihood of changing. That's the reality of life. After all, we're not a bunch of programmed robots *published on This Evergreen Home.* 

What can I do in this moment to control through these moments, I've discovered two powerful truths—truths that I have to

sneak up on me if hardships occur, I'll focus on what I can control today without letting

### my mind wander to the worst-case scenario.

### **Ride Life's Roller Coaster With Ease** Life will always come with the uphills and

downhills, the blessings and struggles of circumstance. But if you learn to adjust your expectations with a healthy dose of positiv-

This isn't a prescriptive way for everyone to live—what's worked for me may also benefit you, too, but do what makes you feel supported and able to thrive.

This Evergreen Home where they share their experience with living simply, intentionally, and relationally in this modern world. You can follow along by subscribing to their twiceweekly newsletter. This article was originally

they liked it so much.)

After a three-month follow-up period they found that the groups that had cold water had a 29 percent reduction of selfreported sick leave from work. Interestingly, the duration of the cold water didn't affect the sickness absence.

The reason that a blast of cold water might stop people from getting ill isn't clear, but some research suggests it may have something to do with boosting the immune system. A study from the Czech Republic showed that when "athletic young men" were immersed in cold water three times a week for six weeks, it gave a slight boost to their immune system. However, more and larger studies are needed to confirm these findings.

Cold water also appears to activate the sympathetic nervous system, the part of the nervous system that governs the fight-or-flight response (an automatic physiological reaction to an event that is perceived as dangerous, stressful, or frightening). When this is activated, such as during a cold shower, you get an increase in the hormone noradrenaline. That's what most likely causes the increase in heart rate and blood pressure observed when people are immersed in cold water, and is linked to the suggested health improvements.

Cold-water immersion also has been shown to improve circulation. When exposed to cold water, there is decreased blood flow to the skin. When the cold

up, so there is an increase in blood flow to the surface of the skin. Some scientists think that this could improve circulation. A study that looked at cold-water immersion after exercise found that, after four weeks, blood flow to and from muscles had improved.

There is also some evidence that a cold shower can help you lose weight. A study found that cold-water immersion at 14 degrees Celsius (57 degrees Fahrenheit) increased metabolism by 350 percent. Metabolism is the process by which your body converts what you eat and drink into energy, so a higher metabolism roughly equals more energy burned.

Aside from the physical benefits, cold showers also could have mental health benefits. There is a school of thought that cold-water immersion causes increased mental alertness due to the stimulation of the previously mentioned fight-or-flight response. In older adults, cold water applied to the face and neck has been shown to improve brain function.

A cold shower may also help relieve symptoms of depression. A proposed mechanism is that, due to the high density of cold receptors in the skin, a cold shower sends an overwhelming amount of electrical impulses from peripheral nerve endings to the brain, which may have an anti-depressive effect.

There is a fair amount of evidence that cold-water immersion or having a cold shower is good for your health—even if water stops, the body has to warm itself the reasons why are still a little unclear.

A cold shower sends an overwhelming amount of electrical impulses from peripheral nerve endings to the brain, which may have an antidepressive effect.

But before you start turning the cold tap on toward the end of your shower, you should know that there are some risks to a cold shower. Because a sudden gush of cold water shocks the body, it can be dangerous for people with heart disease and could precipitate a heart attack or heart-rhythm irregularities.

Lindsay Bottoms is a reader in exercise and health physiology at the University of Hertfordshire in the UK. This article was first published on The Conversation.

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



Warning: Cold showers can be dangerous for people with heart disease and could precipitate a heart attack or heart-rhythm irregularities.

MIND & BODY Week 41, 2021 THE EPOCH TIMES

# Helping Others to Help Ourselves

Old wisdom and new science affirm the benefits of altruism

### **IAN KANE**

Let's face it—we live in some pretty turbulent times. The world is going through some serious cultural, economic, and political upheavals, not to mention a pandemic (that we're constantly reminded about) that has introduced requirements for freedoms we once took for granted.

Understandably, people can feel a little overwhelmed, but there's something we can all do that's good for both our mental and physical well-being—be of service to others.

Whether those selfless actions entail helping a neighbor, donating some clothing, or giving your time to a worthy cause or charity, there can be many health benefits for those who choose to invest themselves in altruistic objectives. Some of these benefits include:

- Experiencing less depression
- Having lower levels of stress
- Living longer
- Having increased confidence and self-
- Having an increased sense of purpose and
- Experiencing more overall happiness and well-being

Sounds like a pretty good trade-off, doesn't it? As American religious leader and author, Gordon B. Hinckley (from his book "Standing for Something: 10 Neglected Virtues That Will Heal Our Hearts and Homes"), stated: "The best antidote I know for worry is work. The best cure for weariness is the challenge of helping someone who is even more tired. One of the great ironies of life is this: He or she who serves almost always benefits more than he or she who is served."

U.S. Army veteran and author John Holmes had a more succinct, but no less insightful, thing to say about helping others: "There is no exercise better for the heart than reaching down and lifting people up."

But as wise as these words are, and as much as some of us already know them to be true, it



will help some readers to hear some science to back them up.

### Giving Can Be Healthy for Your Heart

Hypertension (high blood pressure) is a widespread health problem that, according to the World Health Organization, affects 1.28 billion adults between 30 and 79 years of age globally. It's a serious condition and, if it isn't remedied, it can lead to a plethora of health problems—including brain, heart, and kidney disease—and a shorter life.

This insidious condition is widely regarded by the medical community as the "silent killer" because most people who have it aren't aware that they do. Symptoms of hypertension include frequent nosebleeds, headaches (especially in the morning), buzzing in the ears, and heartbeat fibrillations/spasms. Individuals who think they might have hypertension should seek professional medical assistance and have their blood pressure checked.

But there's also something you can do to prevent hypertension from becoming an issue in the first place (or lower it if already afflicted) and that's to provide social support for others.

He or she who serves almost always benefits more than he or she who is served.

American religious leader and author, Gordon B. Hinckley

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In a study conducted by Carnegie Mellon University (first published in the American Psychological Association journal Psychology and Aging), being of service to others was associated with a longer lifespan, as well as a decrease in blood pressure levels.

Being of

us feel more

Research has shown that volunteering and being of assistance to others actually helps those who invest their time to feel more socially connected, and therefore less susceptible to depression and lonelinessfactors that especially impact the older folks of our societies.

As psychologist and author Seth J. Gillihan points out in Psychology Today, purposeful activities such as helping others can improve a person's mood, overall outlook, and self-esteem, which are all invaluable intangibles that are crucial to mental health.

The benefits of such activities are particularly important for elderly people, who may be facing physical and mental decline. Activities such as volunteering keep them both mentally and physically busy. As a John Hopkins study indicates, elderly folks who volunteer benefit from moving and thinking simultaneously, which is great for their overall health.



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