

# MIND & BODY

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MINDSET MATTERS

## How Your Sense of Free Will

If you don't believe your life is in your own hands, you're likely to suffer consequences.

## Affects Your Health

In the lingo of modern science, self-efficacy is an overarching character trait with wide-ranging implications

MARTHA ROSENBERG

**D**o you feel that you have control over the events in your life? Or do you feel that you're buffeted by forces beyond your control? If you believe that your choices, actions, and behaviors are the deciding factor in how your life unfolds, you're said to have an "internal locus of control." But if you believe that your life is decided by factors outside your control, you're considered to have an "external locus of control."

Of course, most people have a combi-

nation of both perceptions—they see that they have free will and abilities, but also that "luck" and the actions of others have a great influence on their lives. One danger of believing too strongly that your life is run by outside factors is when things don't go well, you can attribute blame to others and abdicate responsibility, such as blaming a teacher for a bad grade on a paper.

Increasingly, medical research is linking an internal locus of control (LOC) to improved mental and physical health. A feeling of having some control over your life, sometimes called self-efficacy, has been shown to help people who are suffering from migraines, diabetes, kidney

disease, epilepsy, HIV, Parkinson's disease, cancers, depression, chronic pain, cocaine addiction, obesity, alcoholism, cigarette addiction, work burnout, shame, and even internet addiction.

An internal LOC, a belief in one's own ability to navigate life, has even been found to help people cope with living in high-crime neighborhoods. It has been correlated with the willingness to pursue preventive health care measures such as mammograms, participation in recycling behavior, and even with improved performance in college football.

*Continued on Page 6*

## Are You Yin or Yang?

This ancient insight into the nature of life and the universe applies to personalities as well

▶ The universe is marked by the complementary forces of yin and yang, which manifest in personality traits as well.

EMMA SUTTIE

Some of us have probably known this person.

He's the one whose charisma draws people to him like a magnet. His enthusiasm is infectious and his entrepreneurial spirit means that he's always working on some new, exciting business venture. He seems to constantly be pushing boundaries, exploring new things, and living a life that appears exhilarating. He hardly sleeps, yet still manages to have boundless energy.

This is a yang person.

And some of us may know this person as well.

She's shy and soft-spoken, quiet and thoughtful and prefers books to people. Her movements are relaxed and graceful and, if she had her way, she would go to bed early and wake up late. Happiest in her own company, she has a rich inner life and, as a result, often seems lost in the clouds.

This is a yin person.

**What Is Yin and Yang?**

Yin and yang are often represented by an ancient Taoist symbol called the taiji. The dark half represents yin and the light half yang.

*Continued on Page 6*



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It is good science to question what we are being told is factual, especially when the data we are analyzing is new.

MEDICALLY CORRECT

## The Misinformation of Medical Misinformation

Doctors are facing a quagmire where treating patients becomes a matter of politics instead of science

PETER WEISS

I, like most OB-GYN physicians nationwide, received a very strange email from the Office of the Surgeon General through the American College of Obstetrics and Gynecology.

"The Office of the Surgeon General is seeking input from providers on the impact and prevalence of health-related misinformation during the COVID-19 pandemic. Through a 'Request for Information' (RFI), the Surgeon General is looking to gather personal experiences related to health misinformation from various stakeholders to further understand its sources and to better prepare for and respond to future public health crises.

"Sincerely, the ACOG Government Relations team."

Before I begin, you must know that most physicians have received many other strange emails from their hospitals, medical associations, and such. I have even received an email from my chairperson "suggesting" how I should vote on medical issues and who to vote for on the hospital committees. This one is the strangest of them all. It makes one start to wonder what world we live in. What is "health care misinformation" and what is the government's role? Are we being asked to be informants? I am going to try my best to be an independent examiner of truth and not disseminate any misinformation in this article.

An article in the Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences on April 9, 2021, titled Misinformation in and About Science makes a claim that misinformation undermines the ability to collectively acquire information, filter, and share it.

"Without reliable and accurate sources of information, we cannot hope to halt climate change, make reasoned democratic decisions, or control a global pandemic."

Bold statements, yet that article gives no scientific supporting data. Instead, it cites editorials and opinion articles as its sources.

Let's go to the heart of the email I received. Let me be on the record for the hundredth time, COVID-19 is real, was real, will forever be real, and can be deadly. I have been vaccinated twice, boosted once, and still got COVID. I won't get another booster, since I scientifically believe that I have natural immunity at this point. Others may do as they please.

Medicine is an art. There is no one size fits all. We all know smoking is bad for us and can lead to cancer, yet not everyone who smokes will get cancer. Is that statement misinformation?

What once was wrong may be found to be right and the other way around.

I have always said that cloth masks are useless against COVID, yet in the height of the pandemic, I could have been accused of misinformation. Yet we all know, yes even Tony Fauci knows, that cloth masks aren't effective at all in preventing COVID, and may even be harmful. How often did those cloth wearers wash or change those masks? It's like wearing the same pair of underwear on your face for a month straight! I still wear an N95 mask in the hospital and my medical office because I have to. I can play by the rules. I also don't have to worry about bad breath anymore.

How do we obtain the facts we use to then determine what is misinformation? We can't have misinformation if we first don't define the facts. Winston Churchill said it best, "History is written by victors." The same can be said about which facts we

use. Yes, there can be multiple factual endpoints, it just depends on which article you hold higher than the others. Oras Churchill implies, who is in power.

Dr. John Ioannidis, an absolutely brilliant Stanford scientist, has a magnificent paper, Why Most Published Research Findings are False, published in the Public Library of Science Medicine in 2005.

He states that "the probability that a research claim is true depends on the study power and bias." This basically means that one can manipulate an outcome by what data or bias one enters. This can be unintentional. He writes that "simulations show that for most study designs and settings, it is more likely for a research claim to be false than true.

He concludes, "Moreover, for many current scientific fields, claimed research findings may often be simply accurate measures of the prevailing bias."

So our surgeon general wants to know my thoughts on the prevalence of health-related medical misinformation. So here we go.

I think we both agree that our primary focus is to save lives and do no harm. Saving every life should truly be a mission statement of the Office of the Surgeon General. I am humbly suggesting that we focus on saving the most lives, and if preventing misinformation in any way shape or form can help, well, then count me in.

**What once was wrong may be found to be right, and the other way around.**

But let's be honest. This so-called misinformation by physicians is most simply described as the different opinions among physicians about how to best treat their patients.

I have seen many patients who come to me from another doctor who was just treating them wrong (in my opinion) and putting them at risk. Wrong medications, unnecessary surgeries, and so on. Some physicians are performing malpractice because there are bad physicians, just as there are bad lawyers, teachers, and actors. Questioning whether a 5-year-old should get a vaccine or wear a mask isn't misinformation. It's good science to question whether what we are being told is factual, especially when the data we are analyzing is new. Ioannidis is so right. I can probably find an article to support any claim from either side of an argument.

Finally, may I respectfully suggest that our surgeon general focus on the horrific opioid crisis that is destroying and killing thousands of our young people's lives. Focus on mental health and how depression, anxiety, loneliness, and fear are bringing such sorrow and anguish to so many. Too many people, young and old, are suffering mental health setbacks from COVID lockdowns.

If we could only stop the misinformation coming out of the mouths of our political leaders, we'd probably be much better off.

*Dr. Peter Weiss is a nationally known physician and healthcare thought leader who has advised CEOs, and political leaders on current and future healthcare trends affecting our country.*

# 5 Natural Detoxifiers for Everyday Life

Clean disease-causing substances out by supporting your body's detoxification systems

From algae to common spices in the kitchen, there are ingredients you can use for the natural detoxification of heavy metals and toxins that are common in everyday life.

Whether you're looking for a post-holiday fix-up or a year-round wellness solution, you can enhance the natural detoxification system of your body. Various whole foods including cruciferous vegetables, berries, garlic, soy, and spices such as turmeric are popular for detoxification support in functional medicine models of care.

Natural steps such as sweating and taking probiotics are also considered helpful in detoxifying dangerous metals and petrochemicals, which commonly persist as silent invaders in daily life. Let's have a look at some time-tested, evidence-based ways that you can use natural detoxifiers for a healthy rest of the year.

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Green tea may lower gastrointestinal tract absorption of PCBs and dioxins.



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### 2. Chlorella

Heavy metal toxicity poses serious human health risks. Exposure to pollutants, xenobiotics, and heavy metals such as mercury and lead can affect the levels and activities of antioxidants and enzymes in the body. The algae chlorella offers numerous nutritional benefits and helps enhance the elimination of these heavy metals.

It reduced the half-life of chlordecone, an organochlorine insecticide, to 19 days from 40 and contributed to the removal of heavy metals in patients with long-term dental titanium implants and amalgam (mercury) fillings.

In young Korean adults, chlorella supplementation detoxified carcinogenic heterocyclic amines (HCAs). A 2015 study also showed that it helped women detoxify cancer-causing polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbons (PAHs), a class of chemicals produced when coal, gas, wood, garbage, or tobacco is burned, through epigenetic modulation.



TETRA IMAGES/GETTY IMAGES

### 3. Garlic

Garlic has a long history of medicinal use, as well as a culinary history as a staple in cooking. Its major component, allicin, besides showing remarkable antiviral, antifungal, and antibacterial activity, is thought to play a role in its antioxidant and detoxification capabilities.

Garlic appeared safer clinically and as effective as the drug d-penicillamine in treating mild to moderate lead poisoning. Clinical improvement was significant in a number of symptoms such as irritability, headache, decreased deep tendon reflex, and mean systolic blood pressure after treatment with garlic but not drug therapy, wrote the researchers.

Along with onion, garlic also exhibited anticancer properties partly due to its ability to induce phase II detoxification enzymes. A separate study suggested that this effect may be partly due to organosulfur compounds in garlic, such as sodium 2-propenyl thiosulfate (2PTS).



BOZENA FULAWKA/GETTY IMAGES

### 4. Broccoli Sprouts

Broccoli sprouts are cruciferous vegetables that may aid in natural detoxification. Broccoli, along with its phytochemical sulforaphane, may activate enzymes that may protect against toxicity from PAHs. Broccoli sprout extract may protect the liver from different types of xenobiotic substances by inducing detoxification enzymes and glutathione synthesis.

A small amount of broccoli sprouts may also help protect against chemical carcinogens. "Small quantities of crucifer sprouts may protect against the risk of cancer as effectively as much larger quantities of mature vegetables of the same variety," wrote the researchers of a 1997 study.

In animal studies, broccoli sprouts also attenuated oxidative stress from alcohol consumption. Thus they may protect the liver by increasing antioxidant capacity and downregulating associated stress.



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### 5. Astaxanthin

Astaxanthin is one of the most potent antioxidants found in nature. A xanthophyll carotenoid with blood-red pigment, astaxanthin has been widely explored for its antioxidant, anti-inflammatory, and immune-enhancing properties, along with beneficial effects on DNA repair.

Astaxanthin supplementation for four weeks was found to increase blood levels of the antioxidant glutathione in active young men. In an animal study, this marine bio-compound emerged as a critical agent in protecting the brain against neuroinflammation and oxidative stress induced by environmental tobacco smoke.

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## Boosting Mood With Food

Comfort foods provide a quick boost, but the science is clear on what foods really nourish mental health

MAT LECOMPTÉ

If you've had a long day, or you're too wiped to cook, do you ever reach for a fresh salad?

Probably not. Like most people, you may head to the pantry to grab a box of mac and cheese or perhaps the freezer for a tub of ice cream—no bowl.

That stuff may help take the pressure off and make you feel all right, at least initially. High carb "comfort" foods send tryptophan to the brain, an amino acid that helps produce serotonin, a feel-good hormone.

But those effects are short-lived. Those foods contribute to inflammation and can promote depressive effects in the long term. They also become addictive and increase the likelihood of weight gain, heart disease, and diabetes.

On the other hand, diets high in fruits, vegetables, fish, and whole grains can lower the risk of depression by fighting inflammation.

A meta-analysis published in 2018 in the British Journal of Nutrition found that for every 100 grams of fruit or vegetables consumed, the risk of depression fell by 5 percent.

People don't often think of salads, fruit, or oatmeal as mood-boosting. That's likely because the impact isn't immediate. Eating a salad won't instantly start churning out feel-good hormones.

These tastes also aren't necessarily asso-

ciated with "comfort." You might remember eating ice cream with friends or your mom's mac and cheese when you were a kid, but do you have those same feelings about apples and spinach?

Improving mood with food takes a bit of a long-term outlook. Eating fresh foods and focusing on plant-based options regularly is the best way to fight inflammation that can contribute to depression. That doesn't mean there's no room for "comfort" foods. You just want to consume them sparingly.

I believe in the 80-20 approach, which is to eat nutrient-dense foods 80 percent of the time and indulge 20 percent of the time.

If you eat a lot of "comfort foods," scale back gradually. Going cold turkey can cause a very uncomfortable shock to the system. Also, look to substitute taste and bring pleasure to eating through spices and other flavors to help battle inflammation.

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



Eating whole foods, like fruits, vegetables, whole grains, and fish can combat the inflammation that contributes to depression.



## FOOD AS MEDICINE

# Amla: An Indian Superfruit

Indian gooseberry has a long list of medicinal benefits—including supporting hair growth

BETH GIUFFRE

You already know about the trusty, A-list superfruits such as blueberries. Some of you may be so accustomed to superfruits that you're already popping goji berries in your mouth like raisins, or blending açai berry powder into your smoothies on a regular basis—but have you heard of amla, the wonder fruit native to Asia?

Amla along with amla candy is listed as one of the front-line immunity enhancers in a “prevention first” approach for COVID-19, according to the Guidelines for Ayurveda Practitioners and India's Ministry of Ayush, which is responsible for the research and development of indigenous and alternative medicine systems in India.

Amla, or Indian gooseberry, contains a high concentration of vitamin C and other antioxidants, as well as active anti-inflammatory ingredients, which make it a go-to remedy for everything from preventing hair loss to fighting viruses and disease. Amla has superfruit status because of its high concentrations of minerals, amino acids, vitamins C and A, polyphenols, alkaloids, and flavonoids such as quercetin. With all this proven antioxidant and immune-boosting potential, amla may help prevent colds and coughs by fighting free radicals, combating inflammation, and supporting your production of white blood cells.

It's like the squirt of Windex that the ‘dad’ character from the movie ‘My Big Fat Greek Wedding’ sprays on every ailment and health issue—only amla actually works, and on top of that, it's completely natural. Weight loss? Squirt. Heartburn? Squirt. Need to lower your cholesterol? Squirt. Stressed out and need to cool down? Squirt. Just think of anything you don't want to suffer from and amla's your girl.

In a review article published in the International Journal of Pharmaceutical Sciences Review and Research, the authors describe amla's value from a medicinal plant perspective, calling it “mother nature's gift to mankind” and the No. 1 most used medicinal plant in Indian traditional systems of medicine.

Another review article published in the Journal of Ethnopharmacology in January 2022 looked at previous research on

the plant. The authors concluded that amla “showed remarkable therapeutic activities against several diseases such as diabetes, cancer, inflammation, hepatitis B virus, and malaria.” It also noted that there was a lack of information on dosing and the mechanism of action of the extract.

“Several bioactive molecules were isolated and identified from FPE such as tannins, flavonoids, saponins, terpenoids, alkaloids, ascorbic acid, etc. The in vitro and in vivo pharmacological studies on FPE revealed its antimicrobial, antioxidant, anti-inflammatory, anti-diabetic, anticancer, radioprotective, hepatoprotective, immunomodulatory, hypolipidemic, anti-venom, wound healing, HIV-reverse transcriptase effect. Toxicological studies on fruits indicated the absence of any adverse effect even at a high dose after oral administration,” they wrote.

This fruit is so cherished in traditional Indian medicine that its tree is considered sacred in India.

Amla has a rich history that not many Westerners know about. You may have heard the British Navy used vitamin C-rich citrus fruit as a cure for scurvy (vitamin C deficiency disease) back in the 1700s. Amla grows more abundantly than lemons and limes in the Indian forests. In addition to bounty, the fresh juice of Indian gooseberry contains nearly 20 times as much vitamin C as orange juice. So back in the 1940s, according to the Bombay Sarvodaya Mandal & Gandhi Research Foundation, the Indian people used amla—their most trusted natural resource—to cure scurvy.

## Amla for Skin, Hair, and Vision

For me—a beginner to Ayurveda—I was shocked to learn that amla staves off and treats virtually all the diseases that threaten our lives, including the biggies: cancer, heart disease, and diabetes. I was even more intrigued to learn that the wonder berry works for nearly everything that weakens with age: our hair, our skin, our



▲ Amla may not be the tastiest of snacks, but this nutrient dense, antioxidant-rich superfruit has earned the status of a sacred plant for good reason.

vision. Numerous studies show amla reduces the effects of premature aging. According to Charaka Samhita, a first-century Indian physician and one

Amla is top among herbs to keep you aging gracefully.

You can mix up your own preparations of amla at home.

As soon as you begin to look for it, you realize it's not that hard to find. You can find it in natural food stores or Indian grocery stores in powder, capsules, or fruits and seeds (check the frozen section for the berries). The word is definitely out. I even saw an online ad that said they sell it at Walmart.

A study published in Investigative Ophthalmology and Visual Science in 2019 found amla can protect against age-related macular degeneration by improving the mitochondrial health of eye cells.

Skin care experts and savvy DIY bloggers mix amla with oils, avocados, and bananas to make facial masks for acne, sun damage, and age spots. Amla helps enhance your complexion, preventing the breakdown of collagen, which forms the firm protein matrix in your skin and soft tissues.

Look closer at some of your Ayurveda-based beauty brands, and you may see the extract in your moisturizers and facial products. For instance, if you mix two tablespoons of amla with one cup of coconut oil, boil it until it turns dark brown, you will have yourself a natural remedy for gray hair and a great alternative to chemical dyes containing numerous toxins.

Several promising studies show amla promotes hair growth and strengthens hair follicles—possibly due to its high vitamin content and enzyme inhibiting action. Researchers say amla's carotene content helps with hair loss and balding and its iron and antioxidant effects prevent free radical damage to hair follicles and hormones.

A small animal study published in the Journal of Chemical and Pharmaceutical Research in 2009 found topical application of an herbal solution containing amla power was more effective than the popular synthetic hair loss product Rogaine (minoxidil) in stimulating hair growth. Amla can prevent gray hairs on your head by maintaining hair color. It may also strengthen the roots and improve hair luster.

In Asian nations such as Thailand and India, using amla for baldness is like using tea tree oil shampoos for dandruff—and—as you may have guessed, an amla hair mask works for

of the principal contributors to Ayurveda, amla is top among herbs to keep you aging gracefully. Amla extracts have been incorporated into dermatological practice for some time. The vitamin C contained in amla brightens your complexion, helps fade hyperpigmentation, and protects skin cells from free-radical damage. Amla has been used in preparations to treat 18 types of skin disease, including psoriasis.



This fruit is so cherished in traditional Indian medicine, its tree is considered sacred in India.

dandruff too (Squirt).

## Ways to Take Amla

The taste of amla has been described as sour, bitter, fibrous, and astringent. I know—those are not flavor profiles you look for in a food product. (Please send back the wine, it's corked). Truth be told, amla is so sour-tasting, they use it in India as an ingredient for pickling. Fortunately, there are ways to make it taste good, and you don't need to be a global food chef to conjure up a few quick and easy preparations.

Unless you have a wise Indian grandmother or are in a relationship with an Ayurvedic practitioner, before you cook up a treatment, you may want to do your research on this potent remedy. I recommend the site: EasyAyurveda.com. The site, written by an Ayurvedic doctor, breaks down how to take amla based on research and ancient technique.

I learned the hard way how not to take new superfoods. Trying to learn how to naturally boost the immune system, I interviewed a certified nutritionist who told me she drinks a glass of warm lemon powder with a scoop of camu camu powder first thing in the morning.

I regrettably skipped the research phase of trying a new food and purchased a huge bag of camu camu powder. I figured if I copied exactly what an expert nutritionist ate each day, my immune system would be like hers—foolproof. Did I mention she's in her 20 and at the pinnacle of health?

Despite my high hopes, camu camu doesn't taste like freshly squeezed orange juice. It tastes gritty and tart—more like a ground lemon petrified in granite (and a little like amla). Five minutes after I drank it up, I was dizzy and nauseous, turning green on the couch. I'll probably never try camu camu again.

Amla in its many forms—fruit, seed, leaf, powder—deserves to be taken seriously depending on your ailment and body sensitivities. Like anything new that you decide to put in your body, you need to know if your body wants it and why it needs it.

The fresh juice of Indian gooseberry contains nearly 20 times as much vitamin C as orange juice.



Beth Giuffre is a mosaic artist and frequent contributor to the Epoch Times. When the youngest of her three sons began having seizures, she began researching the root cause of intractable epilepsy, and discovered endless approaches to healing for those who are willing and open to alternatives.

## Causes and Cures for Ringing Ears

Here are 7 major causes of tinnitus and 3 effective remedies

## HEALTH 1+1

Tinnitus, the ringing of the ears, is a vexing condition that can affect a patient's daily life in severe cases. There are many causes of tinnitus, but no matter which one it is, once tinnitus occurs, it should be treated immediately.

In addition, there are some ways to alleviate and improve its symptoms.

According to Dr. Tenghong Xu, the attending physician at Huaiyuan Chinese Medicine Clinic in Pingtungshih, Taiwan, besides congenital factors, tinnitus can be caused by aging, the environment, psychology, illnesses, and many other factors.

### 1. Diseases in the Blood Vessels or Auditory Nerves

Arteries and veins may be abnormally enlarged or dilated and form hemangiomas (red bumps), and benign tumors may form on the auditory nerves (which are called acoustic neuromas). Both of these cases can cause tinnitus.

These types of tinnitus mostly occur in one ear and are often accompanied by other symptoms, such as headaches. Tumors in the head, auditory nerves, and blood vessels in the neck can be life-threatening. For instance, hemorrhagic brain strokes may be caused by hemangiomas in the brain.

### 2. Prolonged Exposure to High Noise Levels

Prolonged exposure to high noise levels

can cause damage to the inner ear receptors, resulting in chronic tinnitus that might not be remedied.

### 3. Aging of the Auditory Receptors

The elderly are prone to tinnitus due to the natural aging of their auditory receptors. And for people who are exposed to high-decibel environments over a long period of time, their auditory receptors may also experience early degeneration.

### 4. Overworking and Staying Up Late for Long Periods of Time

When a person is overworked to a certain degree, tinnitus can occur, and it's usually accompanied by ear congestion. One experiences a stuffy feeling in the ears, as if there were a layer of stiffness between the ears and the environment.

In these cases, tinnitus occurs at certain times of the day.

“My experience is that in patients who work shifts or stay up late for long periods of time, their tinnitus occurs in the afternoon, and it would get even worse in the evening,” said Xu. When a person's physical strength decreases, and he or she starts feeling tired, tinnitus will appear. And its symptoms will need to be alleviated by rest.

### 5. Meniere's Disease

For Meniere's disease patients, tinnitus usually appears in one ear, with ear congestion. These patients typically experience abnormal hearing, dizziness, and vertigo, often accompanied by nausea

**When a person is overworked to a certain degree, tinnitus can occur, and it is usually accompanied by ear congestion.**

and vomiting.

### 6. Nasal Allergies and Gastroesophageal Reflux

Xu said that because the eustachian tube and nasopharynx are connected, nasal allergies, sinusitis, and gastroesophageal reflux can all cause sudden tinnitus. For instance, gastric acid reflux into the pharynx can cause mild otitis media, and the pressure of fluid buildup can lead to tinnitus. When these conditions are treated, the tinnitus symptoms also improve.

### 7. Ear Strokes

An ear stroke, also known as sudden onset deafness or sudden sensorineural hearing loss, is a condition in which a patient's hearing is suddenly and significantly reduced. It's often accompanied by tinnitus, ear congestion, and dizziness. Most ear strokes occur in only one ear, while a small number of patients experience them in both ears. Factors that can cause an ear stroke include blockage of small blood vessels in the ears, injuries to the eardrums, viral infections, and stress.

Other causes of tinnitus include sleep disorders, stress, and ototoxic drugs (such as antibiotics).

### Can Tinnitus Be Cured?

Short-term sudden tinnitus caused by nasal allergies, gastroesophageal reflux, sleep disorders, or mental stress can be cured if the root cause is addressed with early treatment. Xu emphasizes that if this type of tinnitus isn't treated promptly, it could become chronic and even start affecting the patient's hearing over time. For example, tinnitus could become more frequent, with its volume

increasing, and hearing would become impaired.

If the loss is due to an ear stroke, most people can regain their hearing if they take advantage of the seven-day golden treatment period for ear strokes. However, if damage has already been done to the ear, then it can lead to long-term tinnitus.

Xu emphasizes that regardless of the cause of tinnitus, it should be treated as soon as possible, especially if the tinnitus is sudden and persistent. If the treatment is delayed for one or two years, the healing process will take longer.

Chronic tinnitus is difficult to cure completely, regardless of whether Chinese or Western medicine is used. The main goal in this case is to reduce the

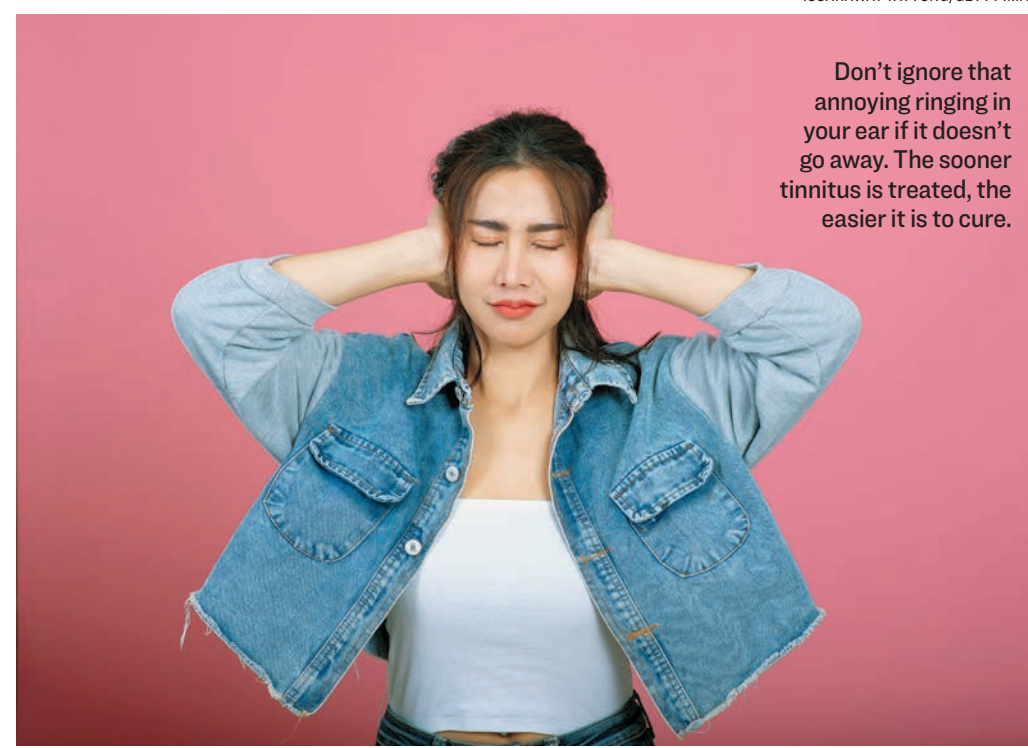
frequency of tinnitus and its volume.

One of Xu's patients was an airplane mechanic before his retirement. He was exposed to loud noises often over a long period of time and developed tinnitus. His tinnitus was originally very loud, but after treatment, its volume was reduced and it would no longer affect his sleep or daily conversations. In another case, a patient in his 60s had severe tinnitus and had to wear hearing aids. However, after taking medication for a period of time, the volume of his tinnitus became reduced so he no longer needed the hearing aids.

### 3 Remedies to Tinnitus

Besides seeking medical treatment, there are three other ways to improve tinnitus.

ISSARAWAT TATTONG/GETTY IMAGES



### 1. Acupressure

Massage the following acupuncture points on hands and ears to increase circulation:

Hegu point: On the back of the hand, in the depression between the first and second metacarpal bones at the base of the thumb and index finger, and more toward the index finger.

Yifeng point: In the depression at the base of the ear behind the earlobe.

Ermen point: In the depression in front of the upper part of the antilobium, when opening the mouth.

Tinggong point: In the depression in front of the middle of the antilobium, when opening the mouth.

Tinghui point: In the depression in front of the lower part of the antilobium, when opening the mouth.

Xu said that when patients have time, they can also massage their entire ears, and rub and press around them.

For tinnitus caused by aging or fatigue, the patient can press the below acupuncture points to replenish the fluids in their kidneys, qi (vital energy), and blood.

Zusanli point: Four finger-breadths directly below the knee on the outer side of the leg.

Taixi point: In the depression between the tip of the medial malleolus and Achilles tendon.

Fulu point: On the inner side of the calf, three horizontal finger-breadths above Taixi point.

Qihai point: About two finger-breadths below the navel.

Guanyuan point: About four finger-breadths below the navel.

### 2. Sleep at the right time

The time period between 11:00 p.m. and 3:00 a.m. is when the liver and bile me-

ridians circulate. So this is an important time for the body to recover. It is best to go to bed at 10:30 p.m.

“I always ask my patients to sleep at the right time first, and then sleep to the fullest,” Dr. Xu said. According to him, sleeping at the right time is even more important than the number of hours one sleeps. Sleeping for seven to eight hours is also important to improve tinnitus, especially when it is caused by fatigue or sleep disorders. Sleeping at the right time and sleeping enough can also prevent organs from aging, and indirectly solve the problem of the hearing organ aging.

He stressed that sleep is very important, and nowadays many inexplicable diseases are related to lack of sleep and unreleased emotional stress.

### 3. Do appropriate exercises

Regularly exercising not only helps release stress but also promotes systematic circulation. When people are tired, their circulation becomes poor, and tinnitus begins to appear.

In addition, in the case where tinnitus is caused by gastroesophageal reflux, patients should avoid stimulating foods such as caffeinated beverages, tobacco, and alcohol.

Health 1+1 is the most authoritative Chinese medical and health information platform overseas. Every Tuesday to Saturday from 9:00 am to 10:00 am EST on TV and online, the program covers the latest on the coronavirus, prevention, treatment, scientific research, and policy, as well as cancer, chronic illness, emotional and spiritual health, immunity, health insurance, and other aspects to provide people with reliable and considerate care and help.



## MINDSET MATTERS

# How Your Sense of Free Will Affects Your Health



## Serious Disease and Internal LOC

Certainly, health problems can threaten our feelings of control and self-efficacy. When it comes to conditions such as cancer and neurological diseases such as Parkinson's and dementia, we know we didn't cause them and often feel powerless over the prognosis. Still, experts say that feeling some control over health conditions does help.

In a 2022 article in the journal Patient Preference and Adherence, patients with metastatic prostate cancer experienced greater internal LOC when they were involved in treatment decision making and their health care providers used patient-friendly language. In the Journal of Health Psychology, patients who lacked an internal LOC and felt powerless over their circumstances experienced greater depression. And in the Journal of Psychology, women with breast cancer were seen to have better coping strategies and quality of life when they had an internal LOC.

Continued from Page 1



## Obesity and Locus of Control

One area in which feelings of powerlessness are rampant is obesity; many people carrying excess weight say they can't lose weight and that they're just "born that way" or that they're "big-boned."

A 2018 study in the International Journal of Research and Analytical Reviews notes that adolescents who have external rather than internal LOC believe external forces make them eat and "have higher levels of cortisol, very likely also affecting their long-term health e.g. develop-

ing overweight/obesity."

"If a child is raised with forming healthy relationships with the environment and better control (internal) he is expected to be good and healthy. Conversely, if it is external locus of control it might lead to ... unhealthy development like obesity/overeating as compensatory adaptive behaviors of the child in the long run," the study reads.

Research in the journal Frontiers in Endocrinology states that LOC "is an important characteristic in relation to obesity because, by definition, it indicates whether an individual believes that his or her environment and choices are under his or her control. Thus, in addition to actual physical cues of hunger or satiation, the ability to interpret those cues appropriately in a given social setting will help determine how obesity develops and persists."

Like the researchers in the International Journal of Analytical Reviews, the Frontiers researchers see a role of cortisol in obesity, and they specu-

late that it may have an influence beyond LOC issues.

"If cortisol simultaneously relates to stress and causes individuals to eat more and become obese, then, while the relationship between locus and control and obesity may be causal, the relationship between obesity and long-term health could represent a correlational one," they wrote.

The researchers also speculated that the external LOC of obese people may earn them inferior care from health care professionals compared with that received by "internally focused people will tend to succeed more often in weight-loss endeavors." The former may be "afforded less patience and time focused on their health behaviors" according to the scientists.

There may also be a link between mothers' locus of control and their offspring, researchers speculated in the International Journal of Obesity. Improving mothers' LOC while pregnant may have positive effects on their children's weight and LOC.

## Similar to the 'God control' seen with some recovering alcoholics, a 'spiritual health locus of control,' was correlated with higher odds of life satisfaction.

## Alcohol and Drug Addiction and Locus of Control

Like those who overeat, many who use drugs and alcohol to excess say external factors make them do it; psychologists say that means they lack an internal locus of control. Research in the Journal of Substance Abuse Treatment confirmed this and found that an internal LOC was highly correlated with recovery from addiction in cocaine abusers.

"Scores of hospitalized cocaine abusers made an internal shift over the course of treatment," the

researchers wrote.

Researchers in the Industrial Psychiatry Journal wrote that the LOC in alcoholic patients "was externally oriented," yet if this were changed, the patient would be "likely to improve." However, lacking an internal LOC in alcohol addiction could be positively transmuted when people with alcohol addiction acquire a spiritual LOC, such as seen in 12-step alcohol recovery groups, according to research published in the journal Addictive Behaviors. In other words, these people gained faith.

While studied patients admit they don't have sufficient internal LOC to



stop drinking, they acquired the belief in "God control over initial cessation of drinking" and "God control over one's continued maintenance of sobriety." These "changes in alcohol-related God control beliefs throughout the course of recovery" merit further research, according to the researchers.

## A strong or weak internal LOC is a factor in how well people who have taken 'predictive testing' that indicates they'll develop inherited dementia cope.



## Other Health Benefits of an Internal Locus of Control

Alcohol and cocaine abuse aren't the only addictions that can benefit from improved self-efficacy and a belief in one's own ability to navigate life—features of an internal locus of control. An improved "health" LOC helps young people control smoking of cigarettes and e-cigarettes, according to an article in the journal Toxics. The newly recognized disorder of "internet addiction" stems from an external rather than internal LOC, researchers wrote in

the journal CyberPsychology & Behavior.

A strong or weak internal LOC is a factor in how well people who have taken "predictive testing" that indicates they'll develop inherited dementia cope, researchers wrote in the journal Alzheimer Disease & Associated Disorders. And, similar to the "God control" seen with some recovering alcoholics, a "spiritual health locus of control," was correlated with higher odds of life satisfaction in African Americans who survived breast cancer, according to the Journal of Psychosocial Oncology. Again, the feeling that one isn't "in control" of one's own circumstances is replaced by the "control" of spiritual beneficence.

Finally, external versus internal LOC can even affect work stress, researchers wrote in the American Journal of Health Promotion. Those who have an external locus of control may feel stress in environments characterized by loss of structure, whereas those with internal LOC do well with less structure and more autonomy.

## Conclusion

Certainly, there are many aspects of life—from our genes and jobs to our families and social-economic conditions—that aren't under our control or even of our choosing. However, research suggests that a feeling of some mastery over our circumstances, whether shared decision making with medical providers, identifying new personal strengths, or spiritual faith, makes a positive contribution to our overall health. An internal LOC keeps us from feeling completely powerless

over circumstances and buffeted by outside forces, which, in turn, helps our health.

*Martha Rosenberg is a nationally recognized reporter and author whose work has been cited by the Mayo Clinic Proceedings, Public Library of Science Biology, and National Geographic. Rosenberg's FDA expose, "Born With a Junk Food Deficiency," established her as a prominent investigative journalist. She has lectured widely at universities throughout the United States and resides in Chicago.*

To find the studies mentioned in this article, please see the article online at [TheEpochTimes.com](https://www.theepochtimes.com)

# Are You Yin or Yang?

Continued from Page 1

You'll see that there's also a dot of each that exists in the other, demonstrating that each is mutually dependent, needing the other to exist.

Contrary to what many people believe, yin and yang aren't opposing forces; they're complementary. The two halves are dynamic and constantly changing, one into the other and vice versa. The taiji illustrates that although duality exists, each part can't exist without the other and can, in fact, coexist harmoniously.

Yin yang isn't just an Eastern concept, however. As modern science advances, it finds aspects of harmonious duality throughout the human body and physical world, from the way hormones and neurotransmitters have their counters to turn different processes on and off in the human body to the positive and negative qualities of protons and neutrons that make up our atomic and molecular cosmos.

## Yin Yang Theory

The earliest written reference to yin and yang goes back to the "Book of Changes," or I Ching, which dates to approximately 700 B.C., although it was likely a part of the culture even before that. Yin yang theory was the fo-

cus of the Yin Yang School during the Warring States period in China from 476 B.C. to 221 B.C. This school was sometimes also called the Naturalist School, and its objective was to use nature's laws positively to man's advantage, not through controlling and overpowering nature as in modern Western science, but by aligning with these laws. Its ultimate goal was to act in harmony with nature's laws for the benefit of mankind and all life on earth.

The Yin Yang School also set out to interpret natural phenomena, including the human body in health and disease. Over time, the yin yang theory became a central element of Chinese medicine, as it remains to this day.

One of the unique things about yin yang theory is that yin and yang aren't static, but fluid. This differs from the Aristotelian logic that dominated Western thinking for more than 2,000 years, believing that objects were defined as one thing and not another, i.e. the table is round; the table isn't round. Both can't be true.

Conversely, according to the yin yang theory, everything has both yin and yang aspects. Using the table example, the top of the table would be yang and the bottom yin, the exterior of the table would be yang and the underneath and interior surfaces would be yin.

Using another example, yin and yang are also dependent on what's being observed. Compared to the sun (hot, bright, active), which is yang, the earth (cool, blue, and full of oceans) is yin. But the earth would be considered yang when compared to the moon (cool, dark, quiescent), which is more yin in comparison. It's a concept that's simple, yet

profound, and its applications are infinite.

Below are some examples of yin and yang.

Yin	Yang
Darkness	Light
Moon	Sun
Female	Male
Night	Day
Inwards	Outwards
Contractive	Expansive
Passive	Active
Rest	Activity
Earth	Heaven
West	East
North	South
Right	Left
Back	Front
Below	Above
Slow	Fast
Damp	Dry
Cold	Hot
Inside	Outside

## Yin and Yang Personality Traits

Yin and yang can also be applied to aspects of our personalities.

Everyone is a dynamic mix of both yin and yang attributes, but some people are more yang and others are more yin. Childhood is naturally a more yang time with the explosion of growth and development and the boundless energy of youth. We gradually become more yin as we age, slowing down and becoming more introspective.

In general, people who tend to be more yang are expressive, magnetic, active, out-

going, highly social, and love being out in the world and doing things.

People who are more yin tend to be quieter types who enjoy solitude; inward activities such as reading, writing, and meditating; and prefer forests, mountains, and the ocean to loud parties with a lot of people.

Even though we all have yin as well as yang aspects and they fluctuate all the time, most of us have a "nature" tending more to one or the other.

## Examples of Yin and Yang Personalities

Yang personality types always make me think of my father. He had a large personality, and when he walked into a room, everyone noticed. He always effortlessly managed to be the center of attention because of his charm and magnetic personality. As a musician, he would bring out his guitar and sing, pulling whoever was within earshot into his orbit with his music and rich, velvety voice. He was highly social and thrived being the center of every social gathering.

I, on the other hand, am very yin. Quiet and shy, I'm happiest alone, my head buried in a book. I live in my imagination and can spend countless hours (time permitting) lost in ideas, thoughts, and creative pursuits. An afternoon walking in a forest surrounded by nature is my idea of heaven, and there isn't a book long enough or a cup of tea big enough to suit me.

Life also has its yin and yang phases. As stated above, as children, we tend to be

more yang, as we're in the growing, high energy time in our lives. But, as my grandmother always told me, our personalities become pretty clear from an early age, and these are perhaps our natural tendencies.

As we get older, many of us tend to slow down and pull inward. For some, age teaches us confidence and to be more "comfortable in our skin," helping us be more extroverted than we perhaps were in our youth. We can also make a decision to change a part of our personality, such as being more outgoing or taking steps to slow down and relax after noticing our tendency to overwork. All of this self-awareness can help us become more balanced, which is the key to a healthy, happy life.

Here are some examples of yin and yang personality characteristics.

Yin	Yang
Introverted	Extroverted
Quiet	Loud
Prefers solitude	Social
Being	Doing
Slow, deliberate	Quick, immediate
Relaxed	Active
Focused internally	Focused externally
Content	Ambitious
Flexible	Determined
Calm	Excited
Moderate	Pioneering
Introspective	Expressive
Creative	Logical
Cautious	Impulsive

Above are only a few examples of some yin and yang attributes, but the list is really lim-

ited. Knowing a bit about ourselves and our tendencies can help us in myriad ways.

## Cultural Differences

In the West, we tend to value the yang personality and yang traits in general, such as being high energy, ambitious, outgoing, and confident. In the East, however, value is placed on the more yin aspects. This is reflected in a societal inclination toward introversion and even in the regard for elders, people in the yin phase of life. Our elders, after a long life of living and learning, are imbued with something not present in the young—wisdom.

Yin and yang are simply one lens we can use to understand our natural tendencies and inclinations. We're all a beautiful and unique mixture of yin and yang energies, which should be celebrated because they make us who we are. This knowledge can help us be mindful of the things that can throw us off balance and how we can come back to the equilibrium that we're always striving to attain.

With the wisdom of this ancient philosophy, we can see the world in a new way and acquire some self-awareness that can help us in all aspects of life.

*Emma Suttie is an acupuncture physician and founder of Chinese Medicine Living—a website dedicated to sharing how to use traditional wisdom to live a healthy lifestyle in the modern world. She is a lover of the natural world, martial arts, and a good cup of tea.*



## How Knowing If You Are Yin or Yang Can Help You

Other than the fact that as humans we have a deep desire to know and understand who we are, there are other ways this information can help us, especially in terms of health and well-being. Because yin and yang can be applied to everything in existence, there are many ways knowing if we tend to one or the other can help us navigate life with more awareness, and help us stay healthy in the process.

## Yin Health

If you tend to be more yin, then you might be prone to illnesses with cold or dampness as the cause. Because yin is itself associated with cold (as opposed to heat, which is yang), be mindful about staying warm, especially in the colder months. Wear enough clothing when you go out in cold weather, eat warming foods to balance your yin energies (especially in winter and colder months), and try to be more active. This will help to keep energies moving and create a bit more yang to balance your yin.

Yin conditions also tend to come on more slowly and be chronic with

symptoms that are more subtle, so some awareness is advised in keeping your body balanced and harmonious. Thankfully, this mindfulness is one of the strengths of yin types.

## Yang Health

If you tend to have more yang attributes, there are some things to be aware of. Because yang is associated with heat and activity, be mindful about staying hydrated and getting enough rest. In the hotter months, be sure to balance your yang nature with cooling foods, slowing down, and taking care to get enough sleep. Yang types are more susceptible to "burnout," as they tend to push themselves too hard, sometimes to the point of exhaustion. Be mindful to not take on too much and balance your ambition and high energy with some introspective activities such as yoga, qi gong, contemplation, journaling, or meditation.

Yang conditions tend to come on quickly with more severity, so balance is key, especially in the summer months, where yang energies are most intense. Yang types tend to have robust immune systems and recover quickly as long as they aren't depleted.

Now that you know a little more about what it means to be "yin" or "yang," which do you think you have more of? Or are you a perfect balance of the two?



# Ask a Doctor: How Do I Drop My Pandemic Stress Load?

COVID-19 and all that came with us has many of us on high alert—and that is taking a toll on body and mind

JESSICA RUSSO

The last two plus years of the COVID-19 pandemic have created a biologically toxic load of stress for many, if not most, people around the world. Social isolation—created by lengthy quarantines, lockdowns, masks, and social distancing—has taken a toll on our mental health. And what happens in the mind, echoes throughout the body. Many have suffered financial stress due to income or job loss. Others have been denied critical mental health care and other medical care during this period. This has often led to further distress and poorer health. Ongoing media reports that focus on the dangers of COVID-19 have also helped fuel pervasive anxiety.

So what can you do to reduce worry and curb hopelessness during this stressful time? The bottom line is you need to calm your central nervous system.

When we are under physical or psychological threat (real or imagined), the flight or fight response, or what is known as the acute stress response, is activated. The sympathetic nervous system stimulates the adrenal glands, triggering the release of catecholamines, hormones which include adrenaline and noradrenaline. This results in an increase in heart rate, blood pressure, and breathing rate.

The acute stress response has a valuable purpose but is, as its name suggests, only meant for brief periods. During ongoing periods of stress, such as what we have experienced during this pandemic, the stress response is constantly activated. As result, our bodies get too much cortisol, epinephrine, and other stress hormones, disrupting almost all of our body's processes, including sleep, digestion and metabolism, our reproductive systems, and our circulatory systems. We may experience headaches, anxiety, depression, poor impulse control, and cognitive fatigue.

There are many ways to reduce the activation of the acute stress response. The most important thing to remember in reducing psychological stress is that you must take care of your psyche as well as your physical body. Emotional stress impacts physical stress and vice versa.

For example, when you feel stressed, you might not eat nutritious foods but reach for comfort foods, which may contain bad fats and refined sugars, which wreak havoc on your physical body, creating hormonal imbalances which can contribute to a worsening in anxiety and depressive symptoms.

At the same time, if you eat during times of stress, your body may not be able to fully digest what you have consumed, as the digestive system shuts down when our bodies are prepared to fight or run due to perceived danger. Poor digestion can lead to irritability, depression and heightened anxiety.

There are many things you can do to deactivate the acute stress response:

### Start Your Day With a Meditation

Aim for at least 10 minutes of meditation; 20

minutes is ideal (or longer). You can do it in bed, but sit up first; don't meditate lying down, as the brain is less active when you're horizontal. The greatest gains experienced through meditation come from an alert yet relaxed mind.

There are many kinds of meditation, such as guided visualization, mindfulness, mantra-based, or "bodyscans" to reduce muscle tension. Find the one that's right for you. There are many good meditation apps, such as Headspace, Insight Timer, Calm, Buddhify, Ten Percent Happier, or Simple Habit.

You can also use this time for self reflection or spiritual contemplation. This is the time to clear your head and be clear about what matters.

### Practice Mindful Eating

Eat nutritious foods, eat only when you are hungry, and chew your food thoroughly. Enjoy what you are eating. When possible, do not multi-task when eating, such as checking email or watching TV. Try not to eat when you are upset.

### Be Aware of Your Breath

Correct breathing is one of the best things you can do for your body and mind. Breathe in through your nose and feel the air fill your belly. Good breathing comes from using the lower part of your lungs, not from the upper part, which is more of a chest-breath. Most adults who are not aware of their breath use the upper part of their lungs. This does not bring enough oxygen into your cells and fails to activate the vagus nerve, which is essential in producing a state of relaxation.

Instead, you want to breathe like a young child. If you ever watch a baby breath, it looks like his or her tummy is going in and out. That's what you want. Your belly should expand with each breath like a balloon and deflate with each exhalation. Try to inhale for at least 3 to 5 seconds and exhale for 5 to 7 seconds. Check your breath throughout the day and evening.

### Exercise Enough

Enough means at least three times per week for 20 minutes. We've all heard this for years. You've probably also heard that exercise releases endorphins in the brain, which energize both mind and body. Exercise also helps to relax muscles and activates a number of different brain functions, including neural growth, reduced inflammation, and new activity patterns that promote feelings of calm and well-being.

Studies show that exercise can treat mild to moderate depression as effectively as antidepressant medication and without the side



Meditation, mindful eating, quality sleep, and exercise are all proven ways to reduce your load of disease-causing stress.

The greatest gains experienced through meditation come from an alert yet relaxed mind.

26 PERCENT

Running for 15 minutes a day or walking for an hour reduces the risk of major depression by 26 percent.

SOURCE: HARVARD T.H. CHAN SCHOOL OF PUBLIC HEALTH

effects. A recent study done by the Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health found that running for 15 minutes a day or walking for an hour reduces the risk of major depression by 26 percent. Aerobic exercise is a great stress reliever but slower exercise practices, such as yoga, tai chi, chi gong, or Falun Gong are also very healing for both mind and body. The Falun Gong exercises are always taught free of charge: LearnFalunGong.com

### Practice Good Sleep Hygiene

For at least one hour before bed, engage in calming activities, such as a bath or shower before bed. Not only is the water relaxing in the moment, but the drop in your body temperature as you cool down afterward may make you feel sleepy.

Try adding a foot massage with calming essential oils such as lavender or chamomile, after bathing. Stretching can also be very helpful right before bed.

Write down any stressful tasks you have to do, any worries or stimulating thoughts and feelings before bed. Finish journaling with a gratitude list.

Read a hard copy book and or listen to an online "bedtime story." Reduce exposure to blue light (from TV and other devices) one hour before bed. Electronic devices like your phone emit blue light, which can reduce the melatonin levels in your body. Melatonin is a chemical that controls your sleep/wake cycle. When your melatonin levels dip, it can be more difficult to fall asleep. Devices that emit blue light can also distract you, keeping your brain alert. This may make it harder to fall asleep. Set your device to warmer light in the evening.

Take 10 deep, slow breaths upon lying down.

Jessica Dean Russo, PsyD., is a clinical psychologist in full-time private practice in Philadelphia and specializes in integrative mental health care. She is a volunteer faculty member with the Department of Psychiatry and Human Behavior at Thomas Jefferson University Hospital in Philadelphia.

JONATHAN KNOWLES/GETTY IMAGES

# Who's in Charge of Your Drinking?

If you don't like your relationship to alcohol, here are some ways to fix it

JEFF PERKIN

Life is hard enough, right? We need something to cope. Why shouldn't we have a temporary escape from the stresses of life? We know how serious alcohol abuse can become, but most casual drinkers feel that it isn't really harming them.

The truth is that consistent use of alcohol, even at surprisingly low levels, can pave the way for serious health problems.

There are many reasons why alcohol sales total more than \$200 billion every year in the United States alone. It's highly addictive for one. According to the "Alcohol-Related Disease Impact" (ARDI) report from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, an average of 140,557 people lost their lives per year in the U.S. alone from 2015 to 2019 due to the chronic and acute effects of alcohol abuse. The effects of sustained alcohol abuse over time can include liver disease, digestive problems, heart problems, in-

creased risk of cancer, and more.

And then there's the collateral damage it can cause to families and communities.

Despite the ever-present epidemic of alcohol-related disease, most people assume that they don't have a problem even if they drink relatively often. Many of us have learned lessons the hard way (myself included). When does our drinking become a problem for our health? More importantly, how do we honestly admit it and change our habitual behavior?

The answer isn't one-size-fits-all and it doesn't have to involve quitting altogether. It may simply be about shifting our relationship to alcohol while avoiding using it for the wrong reasons. The road less traveled requires we choose to face our emotions and behaviors with honesty and awareness. This life-changing, personal commitment involves prioritizing our internal well-being, rather than seeking external relief from a bottle of wine or a six-pack of beer.

Continued on Page 14

Alcohol can be beguiling, offering a toxic solution to life's problems.

An average of 140,557 PEOPLE

lost their lives per year in the U.S. alone from 2015 to 2019 due to the chronic and acute effects of alcohol abuse.

SOURCE: "ALCOHOL-RELATED DISEASE IMPACT" (ARDI) REPORT FROM THE CENTERS FOR DISEASE CONTROL AND PREVENTION

# The Epidemic No One Wants to Talk About

Why are young people hurting themselves, and how do we stem the tide?

JENNIFER MARGULIS

Katie Meyer had her whole life ahead of her. A senior at one of the most prestigious universities in the world—Stanford—the 22-year-old was also a soccer star. A goalkeeper and captain of her team, Meyer's excellence on and off the field helped Stanford defeat North Carolina 5-4 to win the women's College Cup national championship in 2019.

But on March 1, Meyer was found dead in a residence hall on Stanford's campus. A few days later, her parents, in a tear-filled interview on "The Today Show," told the world that their daughter had died by suicide.

### A Global Problem

In 2020, nearly 46,000 people died by suicide in America, and there were an estimated 1.2 million attempts, the American Foundation for Suicide Prevention says.

Worldwide, more than 700,000 people take their own lives each year, according to the World Health Organization.

According to a March brief from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), deaths by suicide increased from 2000 to 2018, but declined slightly in 2019. For both men and women, suicide rates were lower in 2020 than in 2018 and 2019. While it seems that suicide rates in females over 25 went down during that time, the rates of suicide among girls and women ages 10 to 24—like Meyer—have increased.

Suicide is the second-leading cause of death among children and adults ages 10 to 34, and the fifth-leading cause of death in adults ages 35 to 54, the CDC brief explained. It "is a major contributor to premature mortality."

These numbers, however, are likely to be underestimates. Social stigma, deaths that are attributed to drug addiction but may actually be suicides, and deaths from car crashes, firearm accidents, and other tragic incidents (such as drowning and poisoning) that may have actually been intentional but are counted as accidents may all lead to underreporting, experts say.

Indeed, in one 2015 study, researchers at Bournemouth University in the United Kingdom found that in 18 of the 20 countries they analyzed, a large number of suicides were wrongly classified as undetermined deaths.

"[W]e are masking the loss from suicide and failing to prevent these family tragedies..." Dr. Colin Pritchard, a research professor in psychiatric social work who directed the research, lamented in a statement.

Continued on Page 15



Suicide is the second leading cause of death among those aged 10 to 34.

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Blueberries are packed with tannins and anthocyanins that have been linked to anti-cancer effects.

## Blueberries' Potent Phytochemicals Preserve Brain Health

Blueberries protect blood vessels and appear to slow age-related mental decline

JOEL FUHRMAN

Native to North America, blueberries have been part of the human diet for more than 13,000 years, long before they were formally recognized for their health and anti-cancer effects. Blueberries are among the best foods you can eat, and I recommend eating them every day. I have created easy, healthy recipes using blueberries, plus non-dairy milk, ground flax seed, and other nutrient-dense, plant-rich foods, that give my patients a variety of ways to enjoy this wonderful fruit.

Since blueberries contain flavonoids and other specific phytochemicals that help protect against vascular instability, I instruct my diabetes and heart disease patients to eat fresh blueberries every day, and to eat frozen blueberries in the wintertime. In my book, "The End of Heart Disease," I cite a randomized, double-blind, placebo-controlled clinical trial published in the Journal of the Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics that showed a 68 percent increase in blood nitric oxide levels among women who consumed blueberry powder daily for eight weeks. This is beneficial because nitric oxide relaxes and protects blood vessels.

**The flavonoids in blueberries—catechin, epicatechin, myricetin, quercetin, and kaempferol—are extremely valuable for superior health.**

Blueberries are packed with tannins and anthocyanins that have been linked to anti-cancer effects. They've also been shown to prevent—and even reverse—age-related mental decline. Blueberries appear to prevent and reverse abnormal physical and mental decline, including coordination and balance, according to a review published in the Journal of Nutrition that looked at previous research in animals and humans. In another study published in the Journal of Agricultural and Food Chemistry, nine adults in their 70s and 80s with mild memo-

ry decline added about two cups of wild blueberry juice to their diet for 12 weeks, and their performance on memory function tests improved compared to the placebo group.

The flavonoids in blueberries—catechin, epicatechin, myricetin, quercetin, and kaempferol—are extremely valuable for superior health. These phytochemicals are not optional nutrients; they are essential for the normal function of your immune system.

For a powerful health booster, try this easy recipe, Dr. Fuhrman's Patriotic Salad. The synergistic punch of blueberries, strawberries, and leafy greens activates phytochemical repair mechanisms that arm our cells against damage from toxins and aging.

The blueberry flax smoothie recipe is another easy recipe using fresh or frozen blueberries, non-dairy milk, and ground flax seeds. Patients tell me that they prefer this to ice cream.

*Joel Fuhrman, M.D. is a board-certified family physician, seven-time New York Times best-selling author and internationally recognized expert on nutrition and natural healing. He specializes in preventing and reversing disease through nutritional methods.*

### DR. FUHRMAN'S PATRIOTIC SALAD

- 1 cup fresh or frozen strawberries (red)
- 1 banana (white)
- 1 cup fresh or frozen blueberries (and blue)
- 6 to 12 lettuce leaves
- 1/2 cup non-dairy milk
- 1/2 cup cashews or macadamia nuts

Blend nuts, banana, and non-dairy milk to make topping. Arrange berries and lettuce leaves in a bowl. Pour topping over fruit and serve.

### DR. FUHRMAN'S BLUEBERRY FLAX SMOOTHIE

- 2 cups fresh or frozen blueberries
- 3/4 cup non-dairy milk
- 1 tbsp. flax seeds, ground
- 5 kale leaves

Blend and enjoy.

All recipes republished from DrFuhrman.com



A blueberry and flax smoothie is a nutritious snack that some say is even more delicious than ice cream.

To find the studies mentioned in this article, please see the article online at [TheEpochTimes.com](http://TheEpochTimes.com)

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## The Good and Bad of Sugars

Sugar can be addictive as cocaine, even though it's one of the most critical substances to human life



Sugar is one of the three building blocks of life, after DNA and protein, but that doesn't mean it's always good, especially not in the age of "free sugar."

HEALTH 1+1 & YUHONG DONG

Known as "the sweetest killer" and "a poison more addictive than drugs," sugar is consumed by virtually everyone. According to Dr. Heather Moday, a U.S. immunologist, during the COVID-19 pandemic, sugar is the worst food for your immune system.

What Exactly Is Sugar?

Sugar is a food that everyone is very familiar with, and it's ubiquitous in our lives. We need sugars to maintain our health, and they can also bring us relaxation and pleasure. However, sugar is like a double-edged sword that can also damage our health if left unchecked. So, what exactly is sugar?

Sugar is an umbrella term for a large group of carbohydrates. They're naturally occurring in many foods, but are added in substantial quantities in many processed foods.

Glucose

Glucose is one of the body's two key energy sources. The other is fat. Glucose is sometimes known as blood sugar when it's measured inside the body. It's an energy-supplying substance that the human body and brain can directly utilize. Excess glucose is stored in the body in different ways. It can be converted into liver glycogen and muscle glycogen and then released into the blood to supply energy when needed. It can also be converted to fat.

Glucose is relatively rare in nature. Honey, for example, has a high amount of glucose and fructose. For the most part, glucose is created inside the body when we digest carbohydrates or starch.

Fructose

Fructose is a sugar that's abundantly present in fruits, honey, and sweet vegetables, such as beets, potatoes, carrots, and onions. It's the "sweetest" of all sugars. It's 1.7 times sweeter than sucrose.

Fructose can't be directly used for energy in the body, and excess fructose can't be converted to glycogen storage like glucose, so it's mainly converted to fat. Fatty livers, obesity, and some other problems are mainly related to fructose. In addition, fructose reduces the body's sensitivity to insulin and its ability to process fat, thus increasing the risk of diseases, such as heart disease and fatty liver disease.

However, eating fruits in appropriate moderation is beneficial and harmless to the human body, because the sugar in fruit isn't like free sugars, such as granulated sugar, but it's encapsulated inside the cells, as the cell walls of plants prevent fructose from being absorbed by the body too quickly.

What we need to be more vigilant about isn't the natural sugars in fruits and vegetables, but the added sugars, especially high-fructose corn syrup. These "free sugars" can make blood sugar levels rise rapidly.

Sucrose

Sucrose is derived from sugar canes. Common sugars used in the food industry, such as white sugar, brown sugar, and rock sugar are all basically composed of sucrose.

Lactose

Lactose, mainly derived from milk, is beneficial to the health of the intestines. However, some people lack lactase in their intestines and can't digest lactose. For them, after drinking milk, they'll develop lactose intolerance, and this may cause diarrhea.

Polysaccharides

Polysaccharides are sugar chains composed of many glucose molecules. Starch and cellulose

lose in rice and noodles are examples of polysaccharides. Cellulose comes from grains, fruits, and vegetables, and is very important to the human body's health.

Is Sugar More Addictive Than Drugs?

Sugar is necessary to maintain our health, but we need to rationally face some of the health problems it also brings.

As mentioned, although fructose is high in sweetness, a moderate intake of fruits and vegetables is beneficial to the human body. What we really need to be wary of is artificially added free sugars, such as sweet chocolates, cakes, and other sweets that many people love.

We all know that children love to eat sugar. This is because children need a lot of energy when they're growing up. Sugar can also activate the "pleasure centers" of our brain and trigger the release of dopamine, which brings a sense of pleasure.

However, this can lead to addiction. There's even a saying that sugar is more addictive than drugs.

**Sugar is necessary to maintain our health, but we will need to rationally face some of the health problems it also brings.**

In 2007, a study by researchers at the University of Bordeaux in France conducted a particular reward experiment with rats. In this experiment, two levers were placed in front of the rats for them to choose freely. Choosing Lever C would give them the "reward" of cocaine (an addictive drug); choosing S would give them some water with saccharin, which has no calories—just a sweet taste. The rats chose sweetness over cocaine, even when the dose of cocaine was increased. They did another experiment with sucrose and found the same results.

"Our findings clearly demonstrate that intense sweetness can surpass cocaine reward, even in drug-sensitized and -addicted individuals. We speculate that the addictive potential of intense sweetness results from an inborn hypersensitivity to sweet tastants," the researchers wrote.

Other scientists looking at previous research found that sugar had potent effects on the brains of rats.

"Sugar is noteworthy as a substance that releases opioids and dopamine and thus might be expected to have addictive potential," researchers wrote in a 2008 review published in Neuroscience & Behavioral Reviews.

"Neural adaptations include changes in dopamine and opioid receptor binding, enkephalin mRNA expression and dopamine and acetylcholine release in the nucleus accumbens. The evidence supports the hypothesis that under certain circumstances rats can become sugar dependent. This may translate to some human conditions as suggested by the literature on eating disorders and obesity."

Another later research review came to similar conclusions.

"At the neurobiological level, the neural substrates of sugar and sweet reward appear to be more robust than those of cocaine (i.e., more resistant to functional failures), possibly reflecting past selective evolutionary pressures for seeking and taking foods high in sugar and calories," a 2013 review published in Current Opinion in Clinical

Nutrition and Metabolic Care reads.

**Worst Food for the Immune System**

Compared with other addictive substances, sugar addiction affects our body in a more subtle way, like a chronic poison.

Moday pointed out that during the COVID-19 pandemic, sugar is the worst food we can eat for the health and effectiveness of the immune system.

The American Journal of Clinical Nutrition conducted an experiment. After a group of subjects fasted overnight, they took 100 grams of free sugar orally on an empty stomach. As a comparison, another group of subjects took the same amount of starch orally on an empty stomach. The experiment found ingesting free sugars cut the "combat power" of phagocytes by nearly half. Phagocytes are important immunity cells that protect us by ingesting harmful foreign particles, bacteria, and dead or dying cells.

The maximum reduction occurred between one and two hours after ingesting sugar. Even after five hours, immunity was still affected.

In contrast, the control group that ingested starch didn't show a decline in immunity. Therefore, eating a moderate amount of rice, noodles, and steamed bread won't harm the immune system the way that sugar will.

However, the negative effect of excessive intake of sugar on the immune system isn't limited to inhibiting the functions of phagocytes.

A high-sugar environment can also cause chronic inflammation and inhibit all aspects of the immune system, including white blood cells, natural killer cells, macrophages, and T cells, resulting in a decrease in the comprehensive ability of the human body to recognize and kill germs. Also, another study found that 50 percent of patients hospitalized with COVID-19 in the United States have diabetes or obesity.

Therefore, to improve our bodies' natural immunity, we must pay more attention to eating less added sugar.

**Eating Less Sugar Is Anti-Aging**

Eating too much sugar is known to have several common health effects, such as tooth decay, weight gain, obesity, and diabetes. The increase in blood sugar caused by consuming sugar will also soak the body's cells in a high-sugar environment, which will produce advanced glycation end products (AGEs).

AGEs are normally produced by the body's metabolism, and the ability to remove AGEs decreases with age. It has been shown that AGEs contribute to increased oxidative stress and inflammatory responses. They also accelerate aging and lead to many chronic degenerative diseases, such as diabetes, atherosclerosis, osteoporosis, kidney diseases, neurodegenerative diseases, cancer, and skin degeneration.

You can also ingest AGEs through dry heat cooking meats or baked goods. Beef and other red meats contain more AGEs than white meats. Therefore, for our own health, we can try to eat less roasted, fried beef and eat more beef stew instead, and the amount of AGEs will significantly decrease.

Back to the issue of sugar, a good question may be how much sugar we should eat every day?

Although an excessive intake of sugar is un-

healthy, sugar is also essential for maintaining our bodies.

"Sugar is such an important element that scientists refer to it as the third building block of life—after DNA and protein," a 2021 article in Science Daily reads.

So, what amount of sugar should we consume daily?

According to the World Health Organization's latest dietary guidelines released in 2015, the amount of free sugar should be reduced to less than 5 percent of the total daily calorie intake and no more than 25 grams (six teaspoons) in order to avoid obesity, tooth decay, diabetes, heart disease, vascular diseases, and even cancer.

**Best Way to Cut Sugar**

In order to improve health and the effectiveness of our immune system, people who are accustomed to eating sweets can consider reducing sugar. To reduce sugar, we must learn to read nutrition labels on food packaging. Sugar can go by many names, including agave nectar, brown sugar, cane crystal, cane sugar, corn sweetener, corn syrup, crystalline fructose, dextrose, evaporated cane juice, organic evaporated cane juice, fructose, fruit juice concentrates, glucose, high-fructose corn syrup, honey, invert sugar, lactose, maltose, malt syrup, molasses, raw sugar, sucrose, and syrup.

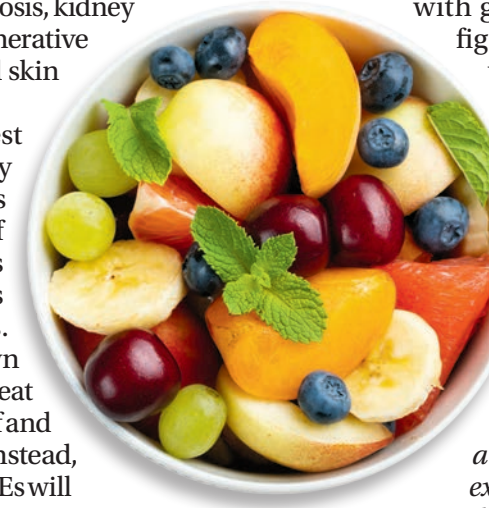
Check the sugar content of every item in your pantry. Also, eat fewer processed foods and more carbohydrates in the form of vegetables, beans, fruits, nuts, or seeds.

We often eat sugar for emotional reasons rather than for the needs of the body. Part of the reason they're so addictive is because they temporarily satisfy an emotional desire. They do this, we've learned, by increasing dopamine levels in a similar way to drugs, such as cocaine. If you refrain from consuming too much sugar, the desire to eat sugar will weaken; but if you indulge in eating sugar, then the desire will increase, and the next time will be even more difficult.

Part of the problem with the dopamine-triggering effects of sugar is how it compels us to overeat.

Scientists conducted an experiment in which one group of rats was fed to be 100 percent full, whereas another group was 70 fed to be percent full. Guess which group of rats lived longer? The rats that were fed to 70 percent full lived 20 percent longer than the first group.

Sugary foods provide an overpowering flavor that can denature our taste preferences. A normal flavor profile can satisfy us with good food that we don't feel compelled to overeat. Instead, we can savor and enjoy its taste. To be a person with good taste, literally and figuratively, we might as well start with how we eat and savor nuanced flavors while we hold excessive desires in check. This will also bring many benefits to our health.



Eating fruits in appropriate moderation is beneficial and harmless to the human body, because the sugar in fruit is not like free sugars.

*Yuhong Dong is the chief scientific officer for a Swiss biotech company and was previously a senior medical scientific expert for antiviral drug development with Novartis Switzerland and held similar roles at Novartis China. She is a postdoctoral fellow in the Chinese Academy of Medical Sciences and a doctor of infectious diseases.*



# How Neurotransmitters Can Affect Your Health

Problems with your brain's chemical messengers can leave you confused, stressed, sad, and more

ASHLEY TURNER

Brain function and thought patterns are intimately related to neurotransmitters, the chemical messengers that carry signals between neurons, or nerve cells, and other cells within the body. Neurotransmitters are essential for various physical and psychological functions including mood, anxiety, fear, joy, and happiness. They are also involved in regulating heart rate, sleep, and appetite.

There are two classifications of neurotransmitters that are named based on their effect on the brain: excitatory and inhibitory. Excitatory neurotransmitters have an excitatory effect on the neurons. They cause the neuron to fire an electrical signal called an "action potential" up the cell. Some common excitatory neurotransmitters are epinephrine, norepinephrine, dopamine, acetylcholine, and serotonin.

Inhibitory neurotransmitters have an inhibitory effect on neurons, meaning they prevent the action potential from being fired. The most abundant inhibitory neurotransmitter is GABA.

## How Are Neurotransmitters Produced in the Body?

Most neurotransmitter production begins with an amino acid from the diet or another chemical that's already present in the body. Different amino acids are precursors for different neurotransmitters and the receptors to which they bind. Enzymes and various nutrients are required to convert these amino acids into neurotransmitters. B vitamins, vitamin D, minerals, and other compounds play a critical role in brain health to manufacture all neurotransmitters.

It's worth mentioning that genetic variants can stop the production of these enzymes needed to make neurotransmitters.

We will discuss seven main neurotransmitters in this article, but keep in mind that there are more than 100 compounds that can act as neurotransmitters.

## Acetylcholine

One of the primary roles of acetylcholine in the central nervous system is to promote cognition, memory, and arousal. It's also involved in peripheral nervous system function and is used to activate muscles.

A deficiency in acetylcholine would look like a decrease in visual and verbal memory as well as frequent memory lapses. Individuals needing acetylcholine support might notice a decline in creativity or comprehension. Difficulty calculating numbers or recognizing objects and faces are also indicative of an acetylcholine issue.

Adequate dietary intake of healthy fats is important for acetylcholine production. Foods high in choline such as pasture-raised egg yolks, fatty grass-fed and pasture-raised meats and dairy, and nuts are helpful for acetylcholine production.

## Catecholamines

Epinephrine and norepinephrine are in a class of neurotransmitters called catecholamines. Technically, dopamine also falls into the catecholamine class, although dopamine will be discussed separately because of its different physiological effects. Additionally, take note that epinephrine and norepinephrine are also called adrenaline and noradrenaline.

Epinephrine and norepinephrine are involved with the body's "fight-or-flight" response. When released into the bloodstream, they increase heart rate, pupil dilation, and shunt blood to muscles. In the brain, they stimulate receptors for mental speed, focus, and concentration. Likewise, a catecholamine deficiency might look like a reduction in mental alertness, speed, concentration, and cognition.

Dietary support for catecholamines could include foods high in tyrosine such as cheese, eggs, fish, nuts, seaweed, and turkey. Foods high in caffeine such as coffee, tea, and cacao also stimulate epinephrine and norepinephrine. That's why caffeine

There are more than

100

different neurotransmitters, all with essential roles—and without proper nutrients, your body can't make enough of them.

There are two classifications of neurotransmitters that are named based on their effect on the brain: excitatory and inhibitory.



Foods high in caffeine such as coffee, tea, and cacao stimulate epinephrine and norepinephrine. This is why caffeine can increase overall brain function.

Individuals with dopamine imbalances may experience feelings of worthlessness or hopelessness, or self-destructive thoughts.

can increase overall brain function.

## Dopamine

Dopamine has various functions in the brain including motor coordination, mood, attention, learning, along with motivation and reward. It's largely associated with the pleasure system of the brain.

Individuals with dopamine imbalances may experience feelings of worthlessness or hopelessness, or self-destructive thoughts. They often have an inability to handle stress and may feel angry while under stress. They sometimes desire isolation or have a lack of concern for loved ones.

Protein intake and assimilation along with proper blood sugar are important for dopamine production. Other key nutrients for dopamine production are oxygen, iron, and folate.

## Serotonin

Also known as the "happiness neurotransmitter," serotonin is found in both the central and peripheral nervous systems and is involved with mood, sleep, temperature regulation, and appetite. In fact, roughly 80 to 90 percent of the body's serotonin production occurs in the gut.

Those with serotonin deficiencies often feel a loss of pleasure in their hobbies, interests, relationships, and favorite foods. They might have trouble falling asleep at night. Individuals with serotonin deficiencies sometimes have a strong dependency on others. Often, they can experience feelings of paranoia, rage, unprovoked anger, or sadness for no reason. Women with serotonin problems often suffer from premenstrual syndrome.

The body's ability to create serotonin is a process that demands protein intake and absorption along with vitamins B3, B6, B9, B12, iron, and magnesium. Deficiencies in these nutrients can promote serotonin imbalances. Furthermore, blood sugar imbalances, tryptophan deficiencies, and gut problems can greatly affect serotonin levels.

## GABA

Gamma-aminobutyric acid (GABA) is the main inhibitory neurotransmitter in the brain. Those with impaired GABA production usually experience feelings of dread, anxiety, or panic for no reason. They are easily overwhelmed, worry easily, and have a restless mind. Sometimes, it's associated with disorganized attention, depression, and insomnia.



When your neurotransmitters get out of balance, so do all the functions they manage.

# Causes and Cures for Shrinking Gums

If you're getting long in the tooth, pay attention since it could have broader implications for your health

TED L'ESTRANGE

A lingering glance in the bathroom mirror may bring you the unsettling realization that your gums are shrinking or red, or that your teeth are longer. What's going on?

Truth be told, it didn't happen overnight. The condition may have been quietly developing for years, but now, it's clearly visible. Someone may have said something about your bad breath, which can also prompt a closer look in the mirror.

We can see the outline of the teeth below the gumline but we can't see what's beneath the gums. There, surrounding the tooth as it embeds into the jawbone is the periodontal ligament, which acts like a hammock, allowing the root of the tooth to move in various directions under the force of biting and chewing. This ligament connects the tooth's outer root surface to the bone surrounding the tooth. The periodontal ligament is a wonderful arrangement that allows this protective movement and helps guide orthodontic movement of the teeth by an orthodontist when necessary. Unfortunately, we can treat this ligament very badly.

This gum recession that we see in the mirror means that the actual root of the tooth is now exposed. Instead of the gums forming a hermetic seal around the tooth, we are now exposing and losing that periodontal ligament. As the gums move away from the tooth, all of these tissues are disappearing.

## Why Do Our Gums Shrink?

The first and most common cause, long before we can see it in the mirror, is from chemical and physical irritation of the gums by the buildup of soft plaque and hard, calcified plaque or calculus.

Soft plaque deposits build up rather quickly around the gum margins if not removed by adequate oral hygiene. These deposits, made worse by the modern Western diet, are food for bacteria and other microorganisms that multiply and form intricate competing colonies. Then, minerals such as calcium and phosphorus from the saliva cement them into place, creating calculus. Any growing population of living creatures produces waste products. Where do the waste products go? Well, there's no sanitary service apart from the protective effects of our saliva. This natural mouthwash can't by itself remove the physical deposits. To compound the situation, drugs commonly used to treat hypertension, urinary incontinence, depression, allergies, and many other conditions can reduce the amount of saliva we make.

As a result, the toxic waste products from those microorganisms sit there, irritating the gums, which then become red and inflamed. This is called gingivitis. This red and inflamed body tissue will eventually bleed, giving us evidence of a problem when we brush or floss. In time, this inflammation spreads and the teeth lose the periodontal ligament attachment to the bone.

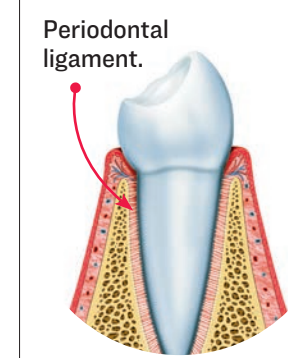
Long before we noticed a problem in the mirror, a space had developed between the gum and tooth. This is called "pocketing." The tissues attached to the teeth respond to these assaults and move away from the root of the tooth. As a result, we see the root of the tooth appearing above our retreating gumline.

To prevent this from happening, we need to remove all of the sticky food material from the teeth within 24 hours each day. That's why it's recommended to brush at least twice a day. The longer this process of plaque and calculus formation continues, the more we lose our gums and bone attachment—and the more root surface appears.

Armed with this knowledge, and with a fresh determination to have healthy gums, some people will vigorously brush the outside of their teeth back and forth. Alas, this can lead to tooth brush abrasion; that is, although those surfaces of the teeth do become clean in that area, the scrubbing results in the gums being physically pushed away from the teeth. Over time, one creates grooves in the exposed root surfaces as the root surface is softer than the hard enamel



When our gums recede, they stop protecting the tooth and the tissues that hold it inside our jaw bone, leading to a variety of issues.



The periodontal ligament holds the teeth to the jaw bone below the gums.

ILLUSMEDICAL/SHUTTERSTOCK

Poor oral health leads to inflammation and long term inflammation creates overtaxed chronic immune response, making us less able to deal with infections, injury, and illness.

In order to prevent gum recession, we need to brush gently and brush our gums as well.



RIDO/SHUTTERSTOCK

over the rest of the tooth, especially if we use abrasive toothpaste.

Systemic health issues can also damage gum tissues, accelerating their loss. Likewise, we now understand that dental health can affect systemic health as well. Oral bacteria can enter the bloodstream and cause havoc for the heart and other organs. And vice versa, uncontrolled diabetes puts people at risk of becoming sick from dental problems. Alzheimer's disease, as well as rheumatic and respiratory conditions can have links to gum disease as well. Poor oral health leads to inflammation and long-term inflammation creates an overtaxed chronic immune response, making us less able to deal with infections, injury, and illness.

Smoking plays a similar role, and also causes the gums to lose vitality.

As the gums recede, so do the attachments to the periodontal ligament and, thus, to the bone. The teeth will then be standing without any support to hold them in place. As we use our teeth on a daily basis to chew, this back-and-forth wiggling is like pushing a fence post back and forth; we will eventually push it over. Usually, pain from biting with a loose tooth will encourage us to seek dental care before it's fully loosened.

A process called abfraction can occur on teeth where one sees a loss of tooth structure below the enamel level on the exposed root surfaces. This process can also be the result of grinding the teeth. Teeth grinding, or bruxism, is a destructive, unconscious habit that can wear out the enamel on the chewing surface of the teeth. As one's occlusion, or closure, of the teeth changes, it can eventually affect the shape and profile of one's face.

As gums recede, acid reflux from the stomach can exacerbate any problems with the less-durable portion of our teeth normally protected by the gums. Acidic 'sports drinks,' sweets, and excess sugars can also lead to cumulative negative effects.

## What Can We Do About Gum Shrinkage?

The first and most obvious step is to prevent further damage by stopping the cause and progression of gum loss. Deposits on the teeth and around the gums need to be removed, typically by a dentist or dental hygienist. Simply cleaning the teeth is both a preventative process and a definitive treatment. Your dentist or hygienist can apply a disclosing agent to your teeth to reveal the less obvious deposits that still exist on the teeth. Then, the biofilm, a microscopic blanket covering the teeth, will become apparent. If our gums are already shrinking, we must address the primary cause. Often, this is because we haven't been able to clean the plaque-forming deposits that led to gingivitis and tissue loss in the first place.

In a busy life, maybe we simply don't brush our teeth for long enough, or effectively. We may miss some areas, or fail to clean between the teeth. We may have formed the habit of cleaning some easier to reach areas better than other harder to reach areas. Being either right- or left-handed also will lead to favorite cleaning areas.

Sometimes, it is a matter of technique. We are not trying to scrub teeth, as we are not polishing metal. Rather, we want to regularly remove soft deposits from all the sur-

faces of the teeth.

Bleeding may occur if the gums are inflamed. This is an early symptom of gingivitis. Any open wound will bleed if stimulated. But if we stop brushing because of this bleeding, it will become worse. With comprehensive, careful, soft brushing, bleeding will reduce quickly after a few days. We need to be brushing on the gum areas as well, not just the top part of the tooth. Although not essential, an electric toothbrush can be more efficient than a standard brush, with many new modern examples now available.

For those with less manual dexterity, an electric brush is really beneficial.

Don't use a hard brush as that will exacerbate the recession, especially in conjunction with scrubbing.

Pocketing will still persist even after careful brushing, so cleaning between the teeth is also essential. There are great products such as water flossers and special toothbrushes that can help us do this this efficiently.

However, if hard plaque or calculus is present on the teeth, this hard substance won't be removed by a home regime. These deposits need to be removed by a dentist or hygienist as this calculus is like cement attached to the teeth.

Once all the teeth surfaces are clean, they may feel sensitive or look unsightly.

## How to Address Sensitive Teeth

A number of brands of toothpaste are formulated especially for sensitive teeth and their regular use can also be effective.

Restorations (fillings) may need to be applied to the exposed, unsightly root surfaces. With modern materials, the exposed surfaces can be covered without drilling by using adhesive or bonding techniques.

The recessed areas of the root are more vulnerable to decay. If decay has occurred, it needs to be removed but can still be restored. The decay is usually a dark brown or black color, depending on your diet. All these restorations use adhesive techniques and materials that can be very esthetic, blending in with the surrounding surfaces of the teeth.

So now, there is no decay and the gums are clean and healthy but the teeth are still too long. Unfortunately, the gums won't grow back up again to cover the exposed root surface of the teeth, and spaces are evident between the teeth. We have visible gum shrinkage!

What can be done?

One method uses a piece of skin tissue, or gum graft, usually from the roof of the mouth or palate. This can be harvested and stitched into place to cover the missing gum section. This is often done by a dental specialist called a periodontist, but can be done by a trained dentist as well. This is a well-established procedure and the results can be very effective. Another method used to restore gum tissue is to apply relatively standard white dental filling material to both the surface of the root and tooth to close the space. Modern adhesive materials enable white composite fillings to be placed in this way to any part of the teeth. Dental composite fillings can be fashioned into any shape, as long as there is a surface for it to adhere to. The results can look quite good.

A good partnership with a dental team and our own comprehensive attention to removing all plaque material from the teeth and gums on a daily basis can stabilize many existing periodontal conditions and hopefully enable us to keep our existing teeth and gums.

Ted L'Estrange BDS, LDS, RCS, practiced dentistry in both Australia and the United Kingdom for over 40 years and conducted a sessional TMJ clinic at the British School of Osteopathy for 7 years. He studied Rehabilitation Neuro-Occlusal in Barcelona, Spain, with Dr. Pedro Planas.



# Who's in Charge of Your Drinking?

If you don't like your relationship to alcohol, here are some ways to fix it

Continued from Page 9

## What Qualifies as Alcohol Use Disorder?

We've all heard it before, "the first step is admitting you have a problem." The tricky part is knowing what qualifies as a "problem." Drinking can be so deeply woven into our social circle that we don't know what a drinking problem looks like. We believe our drinking isn't a problem if we're functioning adults, even if we're drinking several times a week and regularly battling hangovers. We may think differently, however, if we could see the toll alcohol is taking on our bodies and the insidious dependency it may be creating.

The Mayo Clinic defines an alcohol use disorder as "a pattern of alcohol use that involves problems controlling your drinking, being preoccupied with alcohol, continuing to use alcohol even when it causes problems, having to drink more to get the same effect, or having withdrawal symptoms when you rapidly decrease or stop drinking."

"Binge drinking" is defined as having five or more drinks for a male, or four drinks for a female, within two hours; many people fall into this category without even realizing it. People often confuse binge drinking with "high-intensity drinking," which is what you might see at a college fraternity. High-intensity drinking is often defined as drinking at double the rate of binge drinking, so around 10 drinks within two hours for a male, or eight for a female. Someone who buys a six-pack of beer and drinks it within the two hours of a sports event is technically binge drinking.

It might surprise people to learn that when a man has more than 14 drinks in a week, it is considered "heavy drinking" by the National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism (NIAAA). Also by this standard, heavy drinking is more than seven drinks per week for a woman. Most of us know people who would be considered "heavy drinkers" at these levels. Before you shrug off this standard, consider that the body can begin seeing negative effects at even lower levels of alcohol intake.

According to the Cleveland Clinic, about 90 percent of people who drink 1.5 to 2 ounces of alcohol per day, about two medium glasses of 12 percent wine, or less than two pints of regular strength beer, will develop fatty liver, the early stage of alcoholic liver disease.

"If you drink that much or more on most days of the week, you probably have fatty liver. Continued alcohol use leads to liver fibrosis, and finally, cirrhosis. The good news? Fatty liver is usually completely reversible in about four to six weeks if you completely abstain from drinking alcohol," the Clinic writes.

While fasting from alcohol use for several weeks may not work for everyone, drinking fewer days each week is a necessary start. Our bodies need a break. There should be two or more consecutive days every week that we aren't drinking at all. If that seems too difficult, try alternating days with an alcohol-free day, just recognize the problem and start taking steps to resolve it.

Continued from Page 1

**The road less traveled requires we choose to face our emotions and behaviors with honesty and awareness.**

## Thinking and Drinking

Self-destructive behaviors spring from self-destructive thoughts. Many of us struggle with persistent negative thoughts that have become ingrained. These can be negative beliefs about ourselves or grievances we have carried with us for years. Often the first step to controlling our drinking is learning to watch our thoughts and stop listening to them.

Observe your thoughts, detach from them, and replace them with constructive thoughts that serve you such as "I am a work in progress. I am consciously shifting my life and making positive changes every day." If you want to work on improving your-

self, and your relationship with alcohol, be your own biggest supporter instead of your worst enemy. The last thing we need is to beat ourselves up. That only adds more stress and a defeated mentality, which isn't a good foundation for change.

And beware of black and white thinking about alcohol. Sobriety doesn't have to be an all-or-nothing approach, though it can be for some people. It's also important to be realistic about our goals and have patience while we implement new strategies for dealing with stress rather than trying to drink our problems away.

## Tools for Coping With Stress Without Drinking

I'm not a doctor or an addiction specialist, but I am someone who has struggled with drinking in the past, and I am related to other people who have struggled with drinking. Because of a serious desire to be healthier and more free, I have walked the talk of redefining my relationship to alcohol. While before, I was drinking every night just to get through life, now, I successfully limit my alcohol use to a moderate amount mainly on special occasions. Many times a year, I take multiple month fasts from alcohol use. It's not always easy, but it is possible.

My past drinking tendencies fell into the "heavy drinking" and "binge drinking" categories for many years of my life. While I knew it wasn't great, I also wasn't as consciously concerned as I could have been about the toll it was taking on my mental and physical health. Eventually, the dependency grew to the point that I was beginning to feel trapped; I was drinking without enjoyment out of addiction. That's when I had to get honest with myself or face the consequences.

Stopping habitual drinking is hard, but the consequences of not doing so can be devastating.

When you look at the patterns of your drinking behavior, what do you recognize? Do you drink as a way to navigate from one stressful day to another? Are you drinking to escape how you feel? There may not be easy or clear answers to these questions but at some level, you are likely aware if your drinking is a problem. Loved ones may have said something, or you may routinely regret your drinking.

If you think your drinking is a problem, there are tools you can use to end the dangerous and vicious cycle of alcohol dependency.

## Creating Space Between Thought and Action

One such tool is simply to wait before drinking. Breaking through habitual thoughts and behaviors is an important shift. This starts



Cultivating a deeper sense of self awareness will let you better see your thoughts and feelings.

If alcohol has become your default stress reliever, finding better ways to cope with stress will make it easier to get your drinking under control.

According to the NIAAA, a standard drink is one of the following:

- **12 ounces of regular beer** (5 percent alcohol)
- **8 to 9 ounces of malt liquor** (7 percent alcohol)
- **5 ounces of unfortified wine** (12 percent alcohol)
- **1.5 ounces of 80-proof hard liquor** (around 40 percent alcohol)

a different mind/body state. People rarely regret working out, but they often regret drinking alcohol. Building self-respect is a big part of creating a shift in your drinking.

## Treating the Body Like a Temple

Nutrition and digestion tend to improve when we drink less alcohol. When we decide to take our health seriously, we also want to think about what we're eating. Food and mood are deeply connected and eating can trigger an emotional rollercoaster that can sabotage our efforts to reduce drinking.

Foods high in sugar and fat can stimulate a dopamine surge that gives us a quick emotional high, followed by a lower emotional low. Eating healthy food regularly creates a stable base that will make it easier to manage the ups and downs of daily life.

More significantly, if you are eating poorly, you are leaving your body in a state of chronic, low-grade malnutrition. As a result, your body is sending you signals that it's in need of nutrients. This can take the form of a stress response that will leave you feeling unsettled and can also trigger your urge to drink.

Healthy decisions also tend to be compounding. When you eat well, you will feel better about yourself and your ability to make decisions that are in line with your rational self-interest. It's about shifting to a virtuous cycle rather than a vicious one.

Confused about what to eat? The recipe for adequate nutrition is fairly simple. Eat more fruits, vegetables, and whole grains, and less processed foods and excess sugar.

Meat-eaters may want to buy meat that is grass-raised and grass-finished whenever possible. Seeking out a local farm or farmer's market can go a long way toward ensuring that your food is fresh and grown as organically as possible.

Looking for an alcohol replacement? Kombucha is a delicious, probiotic drink with a kick. Probiotics such as

kombucha can be good for gut health while giving you something with more spice than water or juice.

**Remember You Are Gaining, Not Losing** Health and well-being require an integrative approach. It's a mind and body process that extends from our internal self to the world we create through our daily choices. This process is about creating beneficial behaviors. Ask yourself, "what could I be doing to improve myself and my health?"

Don't add to your stress by setting unreasonable expectations. Start small and improve gradually. Try one or two things this week. Don't be afraid to ask for help. You and a friend can offer each other support or you can find a program in your area to help hold you accountable. Be patient and supportive of yourself.

You aren't just losing alcohol. Remember to focus on the positives you will gain, rather than what you are giving up. Controlling your drinking can lead to better finances, improved sleep, improved health, weight loss, improved mental health, more time, increased immunity, more clarity, and reduced risk of disease. It can also lead to a long-term pattern of making better decisions and a better ability to navigate the inevitable challenges of life.

If you are concerned that your problem requires more serious attention, seek help from an addiction treatment program. Help is available and the serious consequences of prolonged alcohol abuse are avoidable. It's not too late to work on your health, lifestyle, and mindset.

A part of wisdom is realizing that we can't seek externally for fulfillment. Lasting peace is only found by seeking within. Taking control of our drinking is an important step on the path to self-mastery.

Jeff Perkin is an integrative nutrition health coach available at [WholySelf.com](http://WholySelf.com)

# The Epidemic No One Wants to Talk About

Why are young people hurting themselves, and how do we stem the tide?

Continued from Page 9

While we don't yet know how the global response to COVID has affected suicide rates, the mental health professionals I've spoken to over the past month—including a middle school guidance counselor, several medical doctors, and two child psychologists—tell me that they have seen that more young people are more troubled than ever before.

Even conventional media outlets, including an NBC News investigation and a report from NPR, are reporting that the pandemic has led to a rise in suicidal thoughts, suicide attempts, and self-harm in young people. "Children are not rubber bands," wrote Paul Thomas, M.D. (with whom I have co-authored two books), a pediatrician based in Portland, Oregon, on his Facebook page in reference to yet another young person who has died. Sarah Schultz, a track and field star at the University of Wisconsin, took her own life on April 13. "They're not resilient. They are suffering in untold ways."

## Impulsive Suicides

Some suicides are a result of sudden inclination that may not be connected to anything beyond a present situation, like the breakup of a relationship, for example, or a public or even a private humiliation.

That may be what happened to Jordan John DeMay, a 17-year-old who took his own life on March 25. The Michigan teen was being exhorted by a cyberstalker after he sent a sexually explicit picture of himself to a cyber extortionist, as reported by the Daily Express.

"Imagine: You're 17 years old, you're embarrassed," Marquette County Sheriff Greg Zyburt told a journalist. "You're scared to death, and what do you do? And ultimately, he took his own life."

According to Maria A. Oquendo, M.D., impulsive attempts may account for the majority of attempted suicides. One survey of over 48,000 adults found that 64 percent of the attempts were impulsive.

## Difficult Childhoods and Suicide Risk

At the same time, people who have experienced ongoing childhood trauma are also at increased risk of dying by suicide.

We now know that an adverse childhood experience, which researchers call an "A.C.E.," can compromise your health as an adult in many ways, including putting you at higher risk of dying by your own hand.

In that first study, scientists found a strong

correlation between the number of ACEs a child experiences from birth to age 18 and future health issues. These findings have since been replicated.

Then, in 2017, researchers in Texas and California discovered that grown-ups who had experienced ACEs were more likely to have attempted suicide than those who had not.

Yet another study, published in January 2019 in Child: Care, Health, and Development, sampled the health outcomes of nearly 9,500 people over a 13-year span, finding also that the more difficult and traumatizing experiences people had in childhood, the more likely they were to seriously consider suicide or make an attempt.

"Compared with those with no ACEs," the researchers wrote, "the odds of seriously considering suicide or attempting suicide increased more than threefold among those with three or more ACEs."

In addition, a meta-analysis of the existing literature, published the same year, similarly found a strong connection between suicide and childhood trauma and abuse.

## Stemming the Tide

Dr. Paul Thomas, whose oldest son has openly struggled with both addiction and suicide, and was once put on a 24/7 suicide watch, argues it's important to talk honestly and openly with people—especially young people—about suicide.

My cousin died by suicide, as did the only child of one of my closest friends. As a mom of three young adults and a 12-year-old, I think talking openly is very important.

But, at the same time, there's so much shame and awkwardness around this subject that it is difficult to know where to start. It makes it even harder that conventional media outlets tend to ignore or gloss over suicide, partly out of a fear that publishing details about people who die by their own hands might encourage more suicides, especially among teens and young adults.

"People are often afraid of the word and they won't bring it up," Dan Reidenberg, executive director of the Suicide Awareness Voices of Education, told the Huffington Post for a 2018 article titled "How to Talk About Suicide in a Way That's Actually Helpful."

Still, silence is the wrong approach, according to Reidenberg.

"The best way to talk about suicide is openly and honestly," he said.

As hard as this is, try to get in the habit of telling your children and other loved

**People who have experienced ongoing childhood trauma are also at increased risk of dying by suicide.**



Shame or awkwardness can prevent important talks about suicide.

**10 to 34**

► Suicide is the second leading cause of death among children and adults ages 10 to 34, and the fifth leading cause of death in adults ages 35 to 54.

## What Are ACEs?

Starting in 1994, researchers began studying the effects of bad childhood experiences on the physical and mental health of more than 17,000 adults. The study identified 10 Adverse Childhood Experiences or ACEs:

1. Psychological abuse
2. Physical abuse
3. Sexual abuse
4. Emotional neglect
5. Physical neglect
6. Witnessing violence against your mom or another adult woman
7. Substance abuse or overuse by a parent or other household member
8. Mental illness, suicide attempt, or suicide death of a parent or household member
9. Jailing of a parent or other household member
10. Parents' separation or divorce

ones that they can talk to you about anything, even their darkest and most shameful secrets.

If someone in your life is feeling suicidal right now, do your best not to let them self-isolate. Arrange to have someone with them at all times while they are in crisis. Don't be ashamed to enlist the help of family members, friends, and community members so that your loved one is surrounded by emotionally and mentally stable helpers. Just being present with them may save their life.

And once you are together with them, face to face, you can help get them into a treatment program or make an appointment with a clergy person or therapist. You can also help them dial a suicide hotline and/or dial it for them and hand them the phone.

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## Helpful Resources

Starting in 1994, researchers began studying the impact of bad childhood experiences on the physical and mental health of over 17,000 adults. The study identified ten Adverse Childhood Experiences or ACEs:

### 1. NowMattersNow.org:

A suicide prevention website and YouTube channel for anyone having thoughts of self-harm. NowMattersNow also provides resources for people whose loved ones are feeling suicidal.

### 2. National Suicide Prevention Lifeline:

1-800-273-8255, a toll-free, confidential support line for people in distress.

### 3. Call 211:

If you need immediate help, dial 211, an emergency telephone number that links people in crisis with local help organizations. You can also dial 911 to get help from the local police if you or a loved one is in crisis.

### 4. Attend a Death Café:

A death café is a place to come together to share food and community and talk in a safe and confidential space with other people about death, grief, and loss. Not specifically about suicide, The Death Café movement began in Europe to foster a safe space to talk about all aspects of death. The website will help you find a volunteer-run meeting near you. [DeathCafe.com](http://DeathCafe.com)

### 5. Crappy Childhood Fairy:

Anna Runkle, who grew up in a very poor family with addicted but loving parents goes by the moniker Crappy Childhood Fairy. Her website, [www.crappychildhoodfairy.com](http://www.crappychildhoodfairy.com), offers free courses and videos for people who are dealing with complex post-traumatic stress disorders that stem from chaos during childhood.



# 3 Good Reasons You Should Be Listening to More Music

Music has a powerful effect on our mood, biochemistry, and even our immune system

MICHAEL TYRRELL

Music is a universal language that can overcome different cultures, beliefs, and languages. It has a transcendent ability to touch the human soul. The cells in our bodies respond to it, and even those who can't hear it can feel it.

The organic power of music is inescapable. When individuals find themselves facing physical or emotional distress, they commonly turn to traditional medicine to find relief. But medicine tends to treat symptoms; it doesn't address the root cause of the imbalance.

Music is a holistic therapeutic alternative that can be a viable medical treatment—and there is a growing body of research that supports this unsung hero of healing.

## Music's Effect on Physical Health

Doctors and researchers are increasingly recognizing the physiological impact of music on the body's natural rhythms.

A Wilkes University study suggests that certain types of music may improve immune functioning. To reach this conclusion, researchers measured undergraduate students' IgA antibody levels before and after 30 minutes of exposure to one of four conditions: a tone click, a radio broadcast, a tape of soothing music, or silence. Amazingly, the study found that students exposed to the music had significantly greater increases in IgA than in any of the other conditions. IgA is critical to our immune system's front-line defense against disease.

Music can also help us help ourselves. Researchers in the United Kingdom found that listening to motivational music increased the length of time study participants could walk on a treadmill before reaching exhaustion. By improving our endurance and boosting our exercise performance,

music can definitely contribute to an overall healthier lifestyle.

This is just the beginning of a long list of potential perks, as additional research indicates benefits along the lines of lower blood pressure, reduced pain, relieved headaches, enhanced learning retention, reduced muscle tension, improved focus, smoother digestion, better sleep, increased blood flow, and more.

Be warned, however, that not all music is created equal and some music can reduce reading comprehension and memorization. Seek something soothing and possibly instrumental.

## A Time-Tested, Natural Remedy

For thousands of years, we've used music and chanting as a way to naturally treat and ward off disease. The Chinese character for medicine is even based on the Chinese character for music.

Music is a completely natural, organic modality of healing with zero side effects, and it's painlessly simple and inexpensive to administer. There are several ways to introduce music into your daily regimen and vastly improve your physical and mental health almost instantly. Here are three of them:

- 1 Use Sound to Sleep Soundly**  
 Music is known to influence and regulate your heart rate. At rest, a healthy human heart beats at approximately 60 to 80 beats per minute, so if you listen to a piece of music that has a similar (or slower) tempo, your heartbeat will sync with the music, and you will begin to relax. Create a long playlist of slow songs, and play them as you go to sleep—you'll quickly be singing along with your own chorus of Zs. A full night of rest is one of the most important investments you can make for your health; happiness and clarity will be the resulting dividends.



**Students exposed to the music had significantly greater increases in IgA than in any of the other conditions.**

## 2 Tune In at Work to Tune Out Distractions

Studies show that listening to music—especially the songs we love—while we work boosts brain activity and productivity. In 1972, Applied Ergonomics conducted a series of experiments on factory workers and discovered that there is a strong correlation between background music and workplace efficiency. Listening to music releases a powerful neurotransmitter called dopamine—a key emotion and mood driver that's also released when we eat delicious food and meditate. Who isn't more productive when they're in a great mood?

## 3 Create Harmony in Your Home

There is music specifically written to calm and encourage us. There are even frequencies in music that can be used to soothe mental and physical ailments. Experiment with different music and see which ones seem to bring a tangible sense of peace to your home. Your children and pets will be noticeably calmer, and you will get more accomplished throughout the day.

Beyond a sense of calm, music is increasingly being recognized for its potency in the realm of healing. It may be that music can do more than we imagined, and the medical world is certainly beginning to take notice.

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Music has a transcendent ability to touch the human soul like nothing else.



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