

THE EPOCH TIMES

MIND &

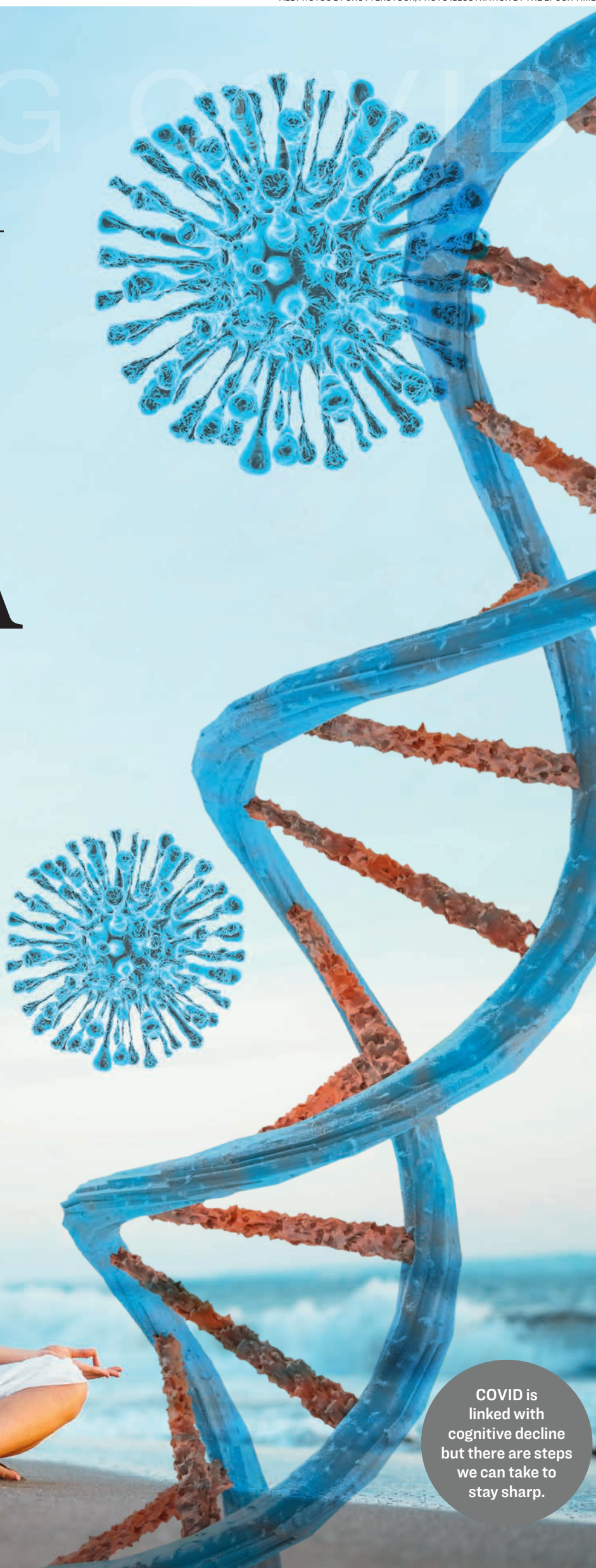
BODY

ALL PHOTOS BY SHUTTERSTOCK; PHOTO ILLUSTRATION BY THE EPOCH TIMES

LONG COVID

How COVID— and the Jab— AGE DNA

Meditation may help people recover from cognitive issues linked to COVID or the vaccine



COVID is linked with cognitive decline but there are steps we can take to stay sharp.

YUHONG DONG & HEALTH 1+1

A new British study found that the original SARS-CoV-2 virus (i.e., Wuhan strain) can impair cognitive ability in a way equivalent to making the brain age by two decades. Additionally, 69 percent of the world's population has received at least one dose of a COVID-19 vaccine, according to government data compiled by the University of Oxford. Is it possible that the vaccines themselves can also cause aging damage?

Nevertheless, there's no need to worry; aging is proven to be a process, and there's a way to help to reverse it.

Patients' Aging Brains

In the study, published in the journal *EclinicalMedicine*, experts from the University of Cambridge and Imperial College London Medical School evaluated the cognitive effects of the COVID-19 infection in humans.

The research subjects consisted of COVID-19 patients who were hospitalized for severe illness between March and July in 2020.

After these patients' recovery from acute infection, the researchers conducted follow-up visits for an average of six months to analyze and evaluate the patients' anxiety, depression, and post-traumatic

stress. The researchers discovered a significant decline in the patients' attention, complex problem-solving skills, and memory, along with reduced accuracy and prolonged reaction time.

These cognitive deficits are similar to the cognitive decline a person would experience between the ages of 50 to 70, which is equivalent to aging by two decades and losing 10 IQ points.

In addition, the recovery of cognitive ability is very slow in patients with COVID-19.

Continued on Page 6

Sunlight Key to Battling MS and Flare-Ups

Researchers have long known about the link between sunlight and multiple sclerosis

AMY DENNEY

People suffering from multiple sclerosis or at risk of developing it can live more rewarding lives when they increase and monitor their vitamin D levels.

Your body makes vitamin D in skin, the largest organ, when it's exposed to sunlight. Higher vitamin D levels lower the risk of developing multiple sclerosis (MS), and boosting vitamin D also appears to be beneficial for curbing disease relapses and even putting symptoms into remission.

Vitamin D is one of several natural remedies for MS that continues to draw the intrigue of researchers. Several organizations are using vitamin D and sunlight studies to formulate guidelines so they can inform patients, motivate them to get exposure to sunlight and take supplements when needed, and offer specific dosing.

Vitamin D is an essential vitamin that helps to regulate calcium and phosphorus in your body. Vitamin D is found in food such as fish, eggs, and milk.

Besides playing a role in MS, a vitamin D deficiency is thought to be associated with many other health conditions such as autoimmune conditions, allergies, asthma, COVID-19, heart disease, and others. Worldwide, a lack of vitamin D is a concern, particularly in colder climates and countries with longer winters. Experts say at least 1 billion people are deficient in vitamin D around the world.

Yale research in 2015 indicates that high levels of vitamin D in the blood act as a neuroprotector and are associated with fewer lesions in MS patients' brains. Supplementing vitamin D or increasing sunlight exposure is thought to increase gray matter in the brain, which indicates tissue regeneration.

University of Cambridge researchers found a positive relationship between vitamin D and a molecule that plays a role in the repair of myelin, which insulates the nerves. MS damages myelin. In this case, increasing vitamin D would speed up the process of myelin cell production, thereby protecting nerves from damage.

While the inner workings of the relationship are still somewhat of a mystery, the positive connection between vitamin D and MS is readily accepted as fact by MS organizations worldwide.

Continued on Page 2

You can get some of the benefits of sunlight in a bottle, but the real thing is best.



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Sunlight Key to Battling MS and Flare-Ups

Researchers have long known about the link between sunlight and multiple sclerosis

Continued from Page 1

Kassandra Munger, a senior research scientist at Harvard University who specializes in MS, said in a March 9 interview with BioNews that studies of people with higher levels of vitamin D show a decreased risk of MS, while those who are deficient in vitamin D have an increased risk. Additionally, studies on low levels of vitamin D in pregnant women and newborns are predictors of increased risk of MS as an adult.

"There is also remarkable consistency between many studies using different measures of vitamin D—assessing amount of sun exposure, vitamin D blood levels, or eating foods high in vitamin D in different populations worldwide—with nearly all pointing to vitamin D being an important risk factor for MS," Munger said.

While there's no official tracking system, one 2019 study in the journal *Neurology* concluded that there are more than 900,000 adults living with MS in the United States—more than twice the number reported in a 1975 national study.

One of the complications of diagnosing MS is the long list of possible symptoms that vary from one person to another and even fluctuate within a person over time.

The more common symptoms, according to the National Multiple Sclerosis Society, are dysesthesia (a squeezing sensation around the torso), fatigue, walking difficulties, numbness, tingling, stiffness or spasms in muscles of the legs, weakness, vision problems, vertigo, significant pain, itching, cognitive changes, and emotional changes. Also common are bladder, bowel, and sexual problems, as well as depression.

One criterion for diagnosing MS is excluding other potential diagnoses. Physicians must also find evidence of damage in at least two areas of the central nervous system, which is composed of the brain, spinal cord, and optic nerves. Evidence must exist that the damage occurred at different times.

Are You Getting Enough Vitamin D?

It's wise to test your vitamin D level as soon as you learn you have MS, either through your

general practitioner or by using an online lab.

Everyone aged 4 and older should have 125 micrograms of vitamin D daily, the equivalent of 5,000 international units (IU). By comparison, an egg offers about 0.9 micrograms of vitamin D—all from the yolk. This recommended daily intake is for the general population; those with MS need a higher dose to get the same benefits, according to Overcoming MS, a nonprofit based in the United Kingdom and Australia.

Vitamin D is a critical part of the protocol Overcoming MS has been using across the globe to help people live symptom free. You can read about its entire program online, which also includes diet, exercise, meditation, and community support.

Overcoming MS recommends a vitamin D supplement of 5,000 IU to 10,000 IU and says the risk of overdosing on vitamin D is rare.

"The results of the first test (after MS diagnosis) often show that vitamin D levels are low, which may be what brings on the attack," the organization states on its website. "If vitamin D levels are very low, it can be brought up quickly with a one-off megadose of vitamin D3 (e.g., 600,000 IU), followed by regular capsules or sprays."

Another approach, called the Coimbra protocol, recommends dosing ranging from 40,000 IU to 300,000 IU per day that must be carried out under the supervision of a qualified physician. The protocol was developed by Dr. Cicero Coimbra, a neurologist and professor at the Federal University of São Paulo for those with autoimmune diseases. There are a handful of doctors in the United States who oversee this protocol.

Sunlight and Vitamin D

Because vitamin D primarily comes from the sun, it's essential to be outside without covering, which includes sunscreen.

"Sun exposure is the primary way most people get vitamin D. Ten to 20 minutes of skin exposure can produce the equivalent of 10,000 IU of vitamin D. Compare that to diet where a serving of salmon has about 400 IU," Munger said.

Sunscreens are used to protect the skin from ultraviolet A (UVA) and UVB waveband exposure commonly associated with skin damage and cancer. However, UVB exposure is needed for vitamin D synthesis, and the National Institutes of Health has confirmed that sunscreen will interfere with this process.

The *Journal of Internal Medicine* published a study in 2014 that found subjects who avoided sun exposure were twice as likely to die of any cause compared to those with the highest exposure to sun. That research also indicated women with normal sun exposure habits weren't at an increased risk of melanoma (skin cancer) or related death.

Studies have also continued to show a higher occurrence of MS among people who live the farthest from the equator.

"MS prevalence is still strongly positively associated with increasing latitude and that the gradient is increasing, suggesting that potentially modifiable environmental factors, such

as sun exposure, are still strongly associated with MS risk," concluded an updated review published in 2019 in the *Journal of Neurology, Neurosurgery and Psychiatry*.

In addition to raising vitamin D levels, sunlight increases the feel-good hormones of endorphins and serotonin, said Marc Sorenson, who founded Sunlight Institute to inform the public on the benefits of sunlight.

It's fairly easy to get vitamin D from sunlight, though it must be weighed against the fact that heat can exacerbate MS symptoms.

Overcoming MS suggests going outside to expose as much skin as possible when the UV index is high, since that means spending less time in the sun. You can swim outdoors, since UV light penetrates water. To find out the UV index, use a local weather app or the Environmental Protection Agency's website. If you go outside at 10 a.m., you can spend a third longer in the sun.

What Is the Right Form of Vitamin D?

Vitamin D is found in two major forms—D2 and D3. Vitamin D2 is a man-made form added to fortified foods, and vitamin D3 is the type synthesized in the skin and mostly found in animal-based foods.

D2 is made in irradiated yeast and mushrooms, that is yeast and mushrooms exposed to UVB light. While mushrooms don't require sunlight to grow, it can affect the nutrient content of some mushrooms.

Both forms of vitamin D are used in food fortification and dietary supplements. A decade ago, the National Institutes of Health considered the two to be relatively similar in terms of benefits.

"At this time, firm conclusions about different effects of the two forms of vitamin D cannot be drawn; however, it would appear that at low doses, D2 and D3 are equivalent, but at high doses, D2 is less effective than D3," according to a 2011 Institute of Medicine Committee report reviewing intakes for vitamin D.

That same year, a study of 33 healthy adults followed for 12 weeks determined that D3 is 87 percent more potent in raising and maintaining vitamin D in the body and produces two- to three-fold greater storage of vitamin D than D2. The study was published in *Journal of Clinical Endocrinology and Metabolism*.

"These two nutrients are not biologically equivalent or interchangeable. Any suggestion that vitamin D3 and D2 are both good options falls into the 'bad science' bucket," writes Ashley Jordan Ferreira, vice president of scientific affairs at mindbodygreen, a health information website.

Can You Prevent MS or Relapses?

Certain people are at risk of developing

Boosting vitamin D appears to be beneficial for curbing disease relapses and even putting symptoms into remission.

10 to 20

minutes of skin exposure can produce the equivalent of 10,000 IU of vitamin D according to Kassandra Munger, a senior research scientist at Harvard University.

Healthy sun exposure requires not getting burned, which can increase the risk of skin cancer.

MS and having relapses. Vitamin D plays a role in both circumstances.

If you have an identical twin with MS, you also have a 25 percent chance of being diagnosed, according to Overcoming MS. An immediate family member (parent, sibling, or child) with MS gives you a 1 in 10 chance of also developing the disease.

But getting adequate sun exposure and supplementing with vitamin D are strategies that can improve your chances of staying healthy. Others are quitting smoking, eating a healthy diet, managing stress, and exercising regularly.

"Evidence indicates that people with high vitamin D levels have a lower risk of developing MS. The benefits of this vitamin are also evident among MS patients—those with higher vitamin D have less inflammation and reduced clinical activity," according to Patricia Inacio, author of several MS research projects.

A study in *Medical Hypotheses* from 1986 found that younger MS patients treated with vitamin D and calcium and magnesium cut the number of relapses in half.

The biggest key to prevention seems to be sunlight exposure at a young age.

Newborns with low levels of vitamin D were found to have an increased risk of MS, according to research of 521 patients published in the *Journal of Neurology* in 2017.

Another study of 1,320 patients compared vitamin D levels starting before age 20 and up to age 49. Published in *European Journal of Neurology*, it's thought to be one of the biggest studies of presymptomatic MS patients. Not only do the findings support the hypothesis that high levels of vitamin D at a young age reduce the risk of developing MS, but they also suggest vitamin D deficiency may be causal or at least a contributing factor to causing MS.

Besides vitamin D, MS patients are finding additional support and symptom improvement in natural solutions such as diet, exercise, meditation, emotional regulation, and sleep support.

Amy Denney is an award-winning journalist, certified Holy Yoga instructor and light therapy specialist. She works with clients looking for natural, side-effect free solutions to pain and stress.



Love Your Hair Naturally

Use these tips to give your locks their best chance to shine

ANDREA DONSKY

Short or long, straight or curly, dry, oily, or somewhere in between, we typically care a lot about our hair. We want to manage it responsibly and naturally, while at the same time, we often don't have a lot of time. So how can you love your hair naturally in the most efficient and effective ways?

Nurture healthy hair by skipping the harsh chemicals and treating it the way it wants to be treated.

Best Natural Hair Care Tips

When to Wash: Are you overwashing your hair? No more than twice a week is recommended if you have very dry hair and scalp. If you sport an oily scalp, every other day should be sufficient.

What to Use: Most traditional shampoos on the market are chemical experiments,



and your hair is the test specimen. Use chemical-free shampoos—those without parabens, sulfates, artificial fragrances and color, and other harsh ingredients that can damage your hair, irritate your scalp, and increase your risk of hormone imbalance. Also, wash and rinse your hair with lukewarm or cool water. Hot water can remove protective oils from your hair.

Brush Your Hair: Do you believe in the old adage about brushing your hair 100 strokes daily? Well, don't. Although it's normal to lose about 50 to 100 hairs daily, you want to minimize hair loss at the same time. Brush just enough to redistribute oils, remove dirt, or style your hair. Use a boar bristle brush and brush your hair before shampooing to remove dirt and loose hair, and never brush wet hair.

Condition Properly: Choose an all-natural conditioner and apply it to the tips of your hair only—not to your scalp. Thoroughly rinse out conditioner after use.

Stay Loose: If you like to wear braids, ponytails, and buns, be sure they aren't really tight, as this can cause hair breakage and root damage. Leave your hair a bit loose at the scalp. Hair extensions can also take a toll on your hair, so take a break every few months.

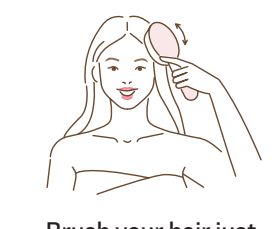
Forgo the Blow: The heat from hair dryers, straighteners, and curling irons can damage your hair. Dry your hair naturally, or use a towel to gently rub it dry after shampooing to



Choose an all-natural conditioner for the best results.



Avoid blow drying your hair, but if you must, try to use a low heat.



Brush your hair just enough to redistribute oils and style.

help to preserve your hair cuticles. But don't be a wet head! Don't go to bed with wet hair; shampoo with adequate time before retiring for your hair to dry.

Sleep on a Silk Pillowcase: Sleeping on a silk pillowcase can help your hair and skin to stay healthy and smooth and can help to reduce the appearance of facial wrinkles. It creates less friction to the hair and less damage.

Use Natural Oils: If you oil and massage your hair and scalp, choose natural oils such as coconut, olive, almond, or sesame. The use of natural oils on your hair promotes hair growth, fixes split ends, and moisturizes. You can use oil before shampooing. You may want to pamper your hair by wrapping your head in a towel after applying the oil and letting the oil better work into your hair. Keep the towel on for 10 to 15 minutes.

Go Wide: After you wash your hair, use a wide-toothed comb to comb your hair. This helps to reduce hair breakage.

Get Trimmed: A great way to help to eliminate split ends is to get your hair trimmed every six to eight weeks. Trimming helps to keep your hair healthy.

Feed Your Hair: Hair is composed of amino acids and proteins, and some of the best foods to feed your hair properly include salmon and other fatty fish rich in omega-3 fatty acids, such as tuna, mackerel, and herring. Nuts, eggs, green leafy vegetables, sweet potatoes,

and berries are also great for healthy hair. These foods provide the nutrients essential for healthy hair: protein, omega-3s, iron, zinc, biotin, and B vitamins. If you can't get these nutrients from your diet, be sure to take a high-quality supplement. And don't forget to stay well hydrated as well!

Protect Your Hair: The sun's rays can dry out and damage your hair over time. Wear a hat when outside in the sunlight and a swim cap when swimming in a pool or other outdoor water source.

Avoid Chlorine: Before you step foot into a pool, rinse your hair with nonchlorinated water. This can help your hair to absorb less hair-drying chlorine.

Go Soft: Forget bath towels and grab an old, soft cotton T-shirt or a cotton wrap to dry your hair. Rough towels on wet hair can damage hair cuticles over time.

Bottom Line
Love your hair naturally! You can enjoy beautiful, healthy hair without spending a lot of money or time. Follow these simple, natural tips, and you'll see what we mean.

Andrea Donsky, who holds a bachelor of commerce, is an international TV health expert, best-selling author, and founder of NaturallySavvy.com—a recipient of Healthline's Best Healthy Living Blogs for 2019. This article was originally published on NaturallySavvy.com



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Depression Probably Isn't Caused by a Chemical Imbalance: Study

Around 1 in 6 American adults are taking ineffective drugs based on the likely false serotonin theory of depression

JOANNA MONCRIEF & MARK HOROWITZ

For three decades, people have been deluged with information suggesting that depression is caused by a “chemical imbalance” in the brain—namely an imbalance of a brain chemical called serotonin. However, our latest research review shows that the evidence doesn't support it.

Although first proposed in the 1960s, the serotonin theory of depression started to be widely promoted by the pharmaceutical industry in the 1990s in association with its efforts to market a new range of antidepressants, known as selective serotonin-reuptake inhibitors or SSRIs.

The idea was also endorsed by official institutions such as the American Psychiatric Association, which still tells the public that “differences in certain chemicals in the brain may contribute to symptoms of depression.”

Countless doctors have repeated the message all over the world, in their private practices and in the media. People accepted what they were told. And many started taking antidepressants because they believed they had something wrong with their brain that required an antidepressant to put right.

In the period of this marketing push, antidepressant use climbed dramatically, and they're now prescribed to one in six of the adult population in England and in the United States, for example.

For a long time, certain academics, including some leading psychiatrists, have suggested that there's no satisfactory evidence to support the idea that depression is a result of abnormally low or inactive serotonin. Others continue to endorse the theory. Until now, however, there has been no comprehensive review of the research on serotonin and depression that could enable firm conclusions either way.

At first sight, the fact that SSRI-type antidepressants act on the serotonin system

appears to support the serotonin theory of depression. SSRIs temporarily increase the availability of serotonin in the brain, but this doesn't necessarily imply that depression is caused by the opposite of this effect.

There are other explanations for antidepressants' effects. In fact, drug trials show that antidepressants are barely distinguishable from a placebo (dummy pill) when it comes to treating depression. Also, antidepressants appear to have a generalized emotion-numbing effect that may influence people's moods, although we don't know how this effect is produced or much about it.

First Comprehensive Review

There has been extensive research on the serotonin system since the 1990s, but it hasn't been collected systematically before. We conducted an “umbrella” review that involved systematically identifying and collating existing overviews of the evidence from each of the main areas of research into serotonin and depression. Although there have been systematic reviews of individual areas in the past, none have combined the evidence from all the different areas taking this approach.

One area of research we included was research comparing levels of serotonin and its breakdown products in the blood or brain fluid. Overall, this research didn't show a difference between people with depression and those without depression.

Another area of research has focused on serotonin receptors, which are proteins on the ends of the nerves that serotonin links up with and which can transmit or inhibit serotonin's effects. Research on the most commonly investigated serotonin receptor suggested either no difference between people with depression and people without depression, or that serotonin activity was actually increased in people with depression—the opposite of the serotonin theory's prediction.

Research on the serotonin “transporter,” that is, the protein that helps to terminate the effect of serotonin (this is the protein that SSRIs act on), also suggested that, if anything, there was increased serotonin activity in people with depression. However, these findings may be explained by the fact that many participants in these studies had

The serotonin theory of depression started to be widely promoted by the pharmaceutical industry in the 1990s in association with its efforts to market a new range of antidepressants, known as selective serotonin reuptake inhibitors or SSRIs.



If antidepressants exert their effects as placebos, or by numbing emotions, then it is not clear that they do more good than harm.

VALERIYA ZANKOVYCH/SHUTTERSTOCK

used or were currently using antidepressants.

We also looked at research that explored whether depression can be induced in volunteers by artificially lowering levels of serotonin. Two systematic reviews from 2006 and 2007 and a sample of the 10 most recent studies (at the time the current research was conducted) found that lowering serotonin didn't produce depression in hundreds of healthy volunteers. One of the reviews showed very weak evidence of an effect in a small subgroup of people with a family history of depression, but this only involved 75 participants.

Very large studies involving tens of thousands of patients looked at gene variation, including the gene that has the instructions for making the serotonin transporter. They found no difference in the frequency of varieties of this gene between people with depression and healthy controls.

Although a famous early study found a relationship between the serotonin transporter gene and stressful life events, larger, more comprehensive studies suggest no such relationship exists. Stressful life events in themselves, however, exerted a strong effect on people's subsequent risk of developing depression.

Some of the studies in our overview that included people who were taking or had previously taken antidepressants showed evidence that antidepressants may actually lower the concentration or activity of serotonin.

Not Supported By the Evidence

The serotonin theory of depression has been one of the most influential and extensively researched biological theories of the origins of depression. Our study shows that this view isn't supported by scientific evidence. It also calls into question the basis for the use of antidepressants.

Most antidepressants now in use are presumed to act via their effects on serotonin. Some also affect the brain chemical noradrenaline. But experts agree that the evidence for the involvement of noradrenaline in depression is weaker than that for serotonin.

There's no other accepted pharmacological mechanism for how antidepressants might affect depression. If antidepressants exert their effects as placebos, or by numbing emotions, then it isn't clear that they do more good than harm.

Although viewing depression as a biological disorder may seem like it would reduce stigma, in fact, research has shown the opposite, and also that people who believe their own depression is due to a chemical imbalance are more pessimistic about their chances of recovery.

It's important that people know that the idea that depression results from a “chemical imbalance” is hypothetical. And we don't understand what temporarily elevating serotonin or other biochemical changes produced by antidepressants do to the brain. We conclude that it's impossible to say that taking SSRI antidepressants is worthwhile, or even completely safe.

If you're taking antidepressants, it's very important you don't stop doing so without speaking to your doctor first. But people need all this information to make informed decisions about whether or not to take these drugs.

Joanna Moncrieff is a senior clinical lecturer of critical and social psychiatry at University College London, and Mark Horowitz is a clinical research fellow in psychiatry at UCL. This article was originally published by The Conversation.

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

Arthur Waldron
LAUDER PROFESSOR, UNIVERSITY OF PENNSYLVANIA

Falun Gong has taught me how to be considerate of others and how to improve my relationships by handling conflicts constructively. [...] It has given me incredible relaxation, mental clarity, and freedom from stress.

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The book was a national bestseller in China in the 1990s, and has been translated into over 40 languages. Find out why it has captured the hearts and minds of tens of millions of people in over 100 countries worldwide!

Few Americans Have Good Cardio Metabolic Health

Cardiometabolic health is a strong predictor of chronic disease and early death

JOSEPH MERCOLA

Cardiometabolic health encompasses a spectrum of conditions and risk factors. Issues in cardiometabolic health are one of the biggest burdens on the health care system and modern society. The progression from a society in which most people were moving throughout the day to one where many people spend an average of 10 hours a day sitting has greatly contributed to the problem.

Each of the factors that contribute to your cardiometabolic health has an impact on your risk of heart disease, diabetes, peripheral vascular disease and early death. Not only are Americans not exercising as much as they once did, but they're also leading more sedentary lives, which has contributed to a rising rate of obesity, high blood pressure and high blood sugar.

The most important strategy for your health is to eliminate all processed foods from your diet.

Thankfully, there are simple strategies you can use to make a significant difference in your cardiometabolic health, and therefore your longevity. Although it may feel overwhelming to consider changes to your eating or exercise habits, as we have discovered in 2020 and 2021, those with good cardiometabolic health were more resilient to infectious disease and had a reduced risk of severe illness from COVID-19.

Since SARS-CoV-2, the virus that triggered COVID-19, is likely not the last pandemic society will face, your best strategy to improve your quality of life and reduce your risk of early death is to make the necessary changes to improve your cardiometabolic health.

Continued on Page 10



Fermented foods provide probiotics that researchers say can improve your gut health and your mood.

Few things contribute more to our health and happiness than moving our bodies.

ALL PHOTOS BY SHUTTERSTOCK

How to Naturally Increase Your Breastmilk Supply

If you're struggling to breastfeed your newborn, here are some things you can do

ASHLEY TURNER

Are you a new mom working around the clock to establish a strong milk supply for your growing babe? Or perhaps you've established your breastfeeding routine but have recently returned to work, or your little one has started on solids?

It's normal to have some minor fluctuations in milk supply throughout your breastfeeding season. Try not to stress about small decreases, as breastfeeding is all about supply and demand.

Many women experience dips in their supply if they return back to work and transition to pumping during part of the day. Similarly, you might notice a decrease in supply when your baby starts eating solids more regularly.

If you're noticing your supply isn't as robust as usual, don't fret! There are many natural tools that can help boost your milk supply.

Many breastfeeding moms find a bowl of warm, comforting oatmeal to be a great way to support their milk supply for the day.

Hydration

Hydration is one of the most essential keys to increasing and maintaining a healthy breast milk supply. Your body is working nonstop to provide essential nutrients to you and your baby, so supporting it with proper hydration is vital.

As a general rule, you want to aim to consume half your body weight in ounces or more to maintain and boost your milk supply. Adding trace minerals to your drinking water is important to ensure you don't deplete your body with the added water. The Original Quinton Hypertonic supplement is an excellent way to ensure you are supporting your body with enough electrolytes and trace minerals.

Continued on Page 12



PROSTOCK-STUDIO/SHUTTERSTOCK

Breastfeeding is natural, but it often isn't easy. Fortunately, there are natural ways to address issues ranging from clogged ducts to low supply.

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Few Americans Have Good Cardio Metabolic Health

Cardiometabolic health is a strong predictor of chronic disease and early death

Continued from Page 9

Few Americans Have Good Cardiometabolic Health

The research was led by the Friedman School of Nutrition Science and Policy at Tufts University and included scientists from Tufts Medical Center. The scientists looked at data from 55,081 adults who were 20 years and older from the 10 most recent cycles of the National Health and Nutrition Examination Survey (NHANES).

Based on this nationally representative sample of U.S. adults, the researchers found that fewer than 1 in 14 adults (6.8 percent) had optimal cardiometabolic health. The researchers evaluated five components: blood pressure, blood sugar, adiposity, blood cholesterol, and the presence or absence of cardiovascular diseases.

Those who were healthy had optimal levels in all five categories in the NHANES data collected as of 2017-2018. When the data were compared against the 1999 survey data, they found that 1 out of 3 adults had optimal levels of adiposity and that number declined to 1 out of 4 by 2018.

When the researchers evaluated the number of adults with diabetes or prediabetes, they found in 1999 that 3 out of 5 (60 percent) were free of disease but by 2018 fewer than 4 out of 10 (40 percent) were. Meghan O'Hearn, a doctoral candidate from the Friedman School and the study's lead author, said:

“We need a complete overhaul of our health care system, food system, and built environment, because this is a crisis for everyone, not just one segment of the population.”

Meghan O'Hearn, study lead author, Friedman School

O'Hearn found there was a large portion of the population who were at a critical point where addressing lifestyle factors could reduce the growing health care burden.

O'Hearn noted, “This is a health crisis we've been facing for a while. Now there's a growing economic, social and ethical imperative to give this problem significantly more attention than it has been getting.”

She added that the consequences of the state of health in adults don't only impact individuals personally. Instead, largely preventable conditions have a significant impact on national health care spending.

“We need to shift the conversation, because disease is not the only problem. We don't just want to be free of disease. We want to achieve optimal health and well-being,” she continued.

As O'Hearn points out, health is not just the achievement of being free from disease. The U.S. Office of Population Affairs uses the definition of optimum health from the American Journal of Health Promotion, which says:

“Optimal health is a dynamic balance of physical, emotional, social, spiritual, and intellectual health ... Lifestyle change can be facilitated through a combination of learning experiences that enhance awareness, increase motivation, and build skills and, most important, through the creation of opportunities that open access to environments that make

positive health practices the easiest choice.”

Overhaul Food System to Get Back to Basics

O'Hearn mentions overhauling the food system to encourage more people to eat healthier foods. However, this does not mean eating fake meat and soy-based food products but, rather, getting back to the basics of clean living.

Although industrial agriculture has been one of the most unsustainable practices, the answer is not replacing farms with a chemistry lab. Producing meat substitutes requires water, chemicals and fossil fuel. In that respect, it differs very little from conventional agriculture. Additionally, the nutrient value of lab-grown meat and meat substitutes is highly questionable.

For example, Seth Itzkan, environmental futurist and cofounder and codirector of Soil4Climate, suggests

Stress Ages the Immune System: Study

Findings suggest ways to counter chronic stress, preserve attack-ready immune cells

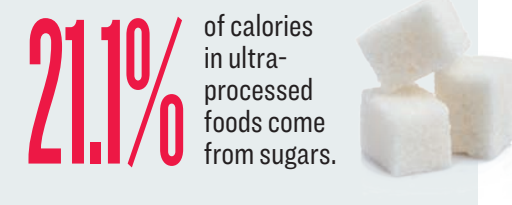
ZRINKA PETERS

We've all heard that too much stress can hurt our health. Stress contributes to ailments such as high blood pressure, heart disease, and diabetes.

Now, a study published on June 13 in Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences (PNAS), shows that years of accumulated stress can more rapidly age the immune system. This finding could help explain disparities

in health outcomes among people of the same chronological age, and provide insight to help those affected by stress.

The immune system degrades with age and worn-out white blood cells proliferate while “naive” new cells that are ready to fight harmful invaders decrease. This normal process of immune system aging is called immunosenescence. But the rate at which this deterioration occurs var-



fake meat products are destroying the environment by perpetuating a harmful reliance on genetically engineered (GE) grains while accelerating soil loss and detracting from regenerative agriculture, which may be why Impossible Foods holds 14 patents, with at least 100 more pending.

“It's not food; it's software, intellectual property—14 patents, in fact, in each bite of Impossible Burger with over 100 additional patents pending for animal proxies from chicken to fish,” he writes. Although the development and production of fake meat are based on sustainability claims, these should be backed up by environmental impact studies. According to a 2015 study, lab-grown meat actually requires more energy than conventional agriculture.

Creating patented lab-grown meat products is not about feeding the world or eliminating animal suffering. It's about dominating billionaires looking to put patents on the food system—and, as Impossible Foods put it, “to transform the global food system.”

While many view lab-created meat substitutes as the lesser of two evils compared to conventional factory-farmed meat, taking nature out of the equation is not the answer.

Instead, as I have promoted in the past, regenerative agriculture is a holistic herd management system that is an integral part of the regenerative agriculture equation and creates a complete ecosystem that both heals the land and is productive for the farmer. It is not eating meat that harms the environment but rather industrial farming practices that inflict damage.

6 Tips to Improve Cardiometabolic Health

While this is not an inclusive list, it's an important place to start. By making simple changes to your eating and exercise habits, you may help balance your nutritional status and improve your cardiometabolic health. This in turn can help you become more resilient, which will become more important in the coming years.

I believe one of the most important changes you can make is to transition to a cyclical ketogenic diet plan. For those who may find it challenging to drastically reduce carbohydrates, you'll find tips here to help lower your carb intake, reduce your cravings and help lower the impact carbs have on your health.

Eliminate Processed Foods
 The primary reason why processed foods are so pernicious is that they are loaded with seed oils and high amounts of the omega-6 fat, linoleic acid (LA). The amount of

Fewer than **1 in 14** adults (6.8 percent) had optimal cardiometabolic health.

LA in our diet has increased more than 25 fold since 1860.

This results in a dramatic increase in oxidative stress that contributes to ruining the quadrillions of mitochondria in your body. The most important strategy for your health is to eliminate all processed foods from your diet as they are loaded with LA.

Additionally, junk food manufacturers have taken flavor science to an extraordinary level and created artificial ingredients that produce the sought-after “bliss point” your body craves. These foods contribute to the obesity epidemic, which increases rates of obesity-related cancers and chronic illnesses.

It's been estimated that as much as 40 percent of American health care expenditures are for diseases directly related to the overconsumption of sugar. Research has demonstrated that 21.1 percent of calories in ultraprocessed foods come from sugars.

They increase how quickly you eat and cause delays in feelings of satiety. This contributes to obesity and metabolic dysfunction.

Ultraprocessed foods made people more vulnerable to COVID-19 during the pandemic. Improving your cardiometabolic health today can help increase your resilience against future infectious diseases.

Eat Your Carbs Cool

Research studies have demonstrated that by cooling carbohydrates before eating them, you may create more digestive-resistant starches. This can trigger a lower insulin and glucose spike and the starches may act as prebiotics for healthy bacteria in your gut.

A study published in 2020 found that cooking pasta, cooling it, and reheating it had a significant effect on blood glucose spikes in 45 volunteers. Similar results were found in a study published in 2008 looking

at freezing and toasting white bread and the response to the glycemic index.

This is interesting insight you may consider as you are reducing the number of carbohydrates you eat each day. It's also important to remember that most of these products are made with wheat, which contains lectins and is often contaminated with glyphosate that impairs tight cellular junctions in your gut. Consider transitioning to healthier choices, including sweet potatoes (including purple varieties).

Intermittent Fasting Lowers Carb Cravings

As has been increasingly shown through research, it's not only what you eat that factors into how the food affects your health, but also when you eat it. Fung believes the answer to Type 2 diabetes is to use time-restricted eating (TRE). In an interview in early 2022, he discussed how metabolic treatments such as TRE are the only way to resolve diabetes.

One of the keys to lowering your carbohydrate intake is to help eliminate your carbohydrate cravings. The key to getting rid of cravings, in my experience, is eating a diet that's high in healthy fats and low in refined carbohydrates. I am a big advocate of combining a cyclical ketogenic diet with TRE. Eating real food and selecting healthy fats are keys to reducing your carbohydrate cravings, no matter what ratio of fat, carbs and protein you eat.

Get Help

For **Emotional Eating** and food addictions are very real and can lead to obesity and related health problems. As clinical psychologist Susan Albers told HuffPost, “... [E]ating to avoid facing feelings is like putting a Band-Aid on a broken arm.”

Fortunately, there are solutions and the two most effective ones I know are intermittent fasting with a cyclical ketogenic diet and Emotional Freedom Techniques that help you release negative thoughts and feelings while you're taking steps to improve your physical health. If you feel that your emotions or your own self-image are sabotaging your efforts, I recommend consider trying EFT. You can find my free EFT manual online.

Fermented Foods Boost Mental Health

Incorporating fermented foods into your nutritional plan has many benefits, not the least of which is improving your gut microbiome and your mental health. A review of seven clinical trials found probiotics and/or prebiotics could help those struggling with depression and anxiety.

The review built on earlier studies that have shown people with depression have higher amounts of specific gut bacteria than those who are not depressed. Reducing your risk of depression and anxiety, as well as improving your overall health and resilience against infectious disease, may raise your motivation to take the steps needed to improve your cardiometabolic health.

Learn to Love Movement and Exercise

There is a long list of benefits from exercise for your physical and mental health, including improving muscle strength and flexibility and improving cognitive skills.

One study of 40 women found those who were relatively inactive viewed exercise as counterproductive to their goals, had a different view of what “exercise” entailed and how it would feel, and felt it would take too much time.

On the other hand, the highly active women believed that exercise fit their goals for relaxation, achieving success, and connecting with others. The researchers theorized that inactive women could improve their motivation by shifting the way they think about exercise and their definition of what exercise should look like.

The type of exercise you choose is a personal choice, but the objective is to do something that raises your heart and breathing rate. How you frame the idea may help change your perspective, so you enjoy the activities you've chosen.

For example, some of the top reasons that people start a workout routine are to lose weight and lower their risk of disease. However, these are extrinsic motivators and are not enough to overshadow discomfort for the benefit of a future reward.

An analysis of six studies demonstrated that people who placed a greater value on their internal feelings while exercising, rather than on the benefits they might experience later, stayed motivated to continue their activity.

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



When we eat poorly and sit around too much, we suffer a subtle but profound downgrade of key systems essential to health and happiness.

ALL IMAGES BY SHUTTERSTOCK

ies widely among people of the same chronological age.

Researchers from the University of Southern California (USC) analyzed responses from a national sample of 5,744 adults over the age of 50 who were asked about their experiences with five specific types of social stress: stressful life events, chronic stress, everyday discrimination, lifetime discrimination, and life trauma. They then tested participants' blood samples using a process called flow cytometry, in which blood cells pass single file in front of a laser that counts and classifies the cells.

The researchers found stressful life events were associated with an increase in markers of immune system aging. People who experienced more life stress had fewer attack-ready immune cells, leaving them at higher risk of developing a host of age-related illnesses, in-

cluding cancer, cardiovascular disease, and severe infections from viruses such as COVID-19.

Although this study looked at older adults, younger people may suffer the same effect. A study published in the October 2018 issue of the journal Brain, Behavior, and Immunity, found similar markers of accelerated immune system aging in high-stress mothers between the ages of 20 and 50.

Interestingly, the difference in immune system aging shrank considerably after the researchers controlled for poor diet and lack of exercise, lead study author Eric Klopach, a postdoctoral scholar at the USC Leonard Davis School of Gerontology, noted in a statement.

“What this means is people who experience more stress tend to have poorer diet and exercise habits, partly explaining why they have more accelerated immune aging.”

Everybody experiences some amount of stress, and not all stress is harmful. Some ‘good’ stress, which psychologists refer to as ‘eustress,’ may even be beneficial. But, in general, severe or chronic stress should



We lose healthy immune cells over the course of our lives, especially if we are often stressed, eat poorly, and don't exercise.

be well managed, Klopach said. “I know that can be difficult or impossible, but our study suggests that one way to offset the effects of stress on immune aging is to try to avoid unhealthy behaviors like smoking and drinking and to try to get regular exercise and eat a healthy diet.”

These results give hope that these simple, readily accessible lifestyle changes may significantly delay or reduce the harmful effects of stress on the immune system in older adults.

Zrinka Peters has been writing professionally for over a decade. She has a BA in English Literature from Simon Fraser University and has been published in a wide variety of print and online publications including Health Digest, Parent.com, Today's Catholic Teacher, and Education.com

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THE EPOCH TIMES

Eating Flowers: 9 Delicious, Healthy Blooms

Flowers offer a beautiful way to add some nutrition and unique flavors to your diet

LISA ROTH COLLINS

If you've never thought about eating flowers, then you're in for a treat! There are many edible flowers that aren't only delicious in a wide variety of dishes but are also healthy.

We aren't suggesting you run out into your garden or comb the roadsides or meadows for just any flowers. Only some flowers are edible, and there are a few guidelines you need to follow to ensure you are selecting flowers that are safe for consumption in main dishes, salads, sauces, and beverages.

First, however, let's look at nine delicious, healthy blooms suitable for your menu.

How to Choose Edible Flowers

Before you pick flowers for your menu, here are a few tips from the University of Minnesota Extension:

- When eating blossoms, remove the pistils and stamens first.
- Choose plants that are pesticide-free and certified organic. Do not consume any other type of flowers. You can purchase edible flowers at some farmers'

The star-shaped blue, pink, or white flowers of borage have long been valued for their healing abilities for cough and sore throat.



Flowers are known for feeding bees, but many are edible for humans too—and offer unique nutritional and medicinal properties.

markets, garden centers, selected grocery stores (look in the produce section, not the floral department), and online. Fresh flowers should be consumed within 24 hours. You also can grow your own.

- Wash fresh flowers gently and allow them to dry. Place them in a plastic bag in the refrigerator until ready for use.
- Add the flowers to your salad or other dishes immediately before serving.







For more edible flowers, see the University

of Minnesota Extension list.

Bottom Line

Once you start eating flowers, you may find yourself searching for new ways to enjoy them in your dishes. Brighten your meals, health, and taste buds with edible flowers today.

Lisa Roth Collins is a registered holistic nutritionist and also the marketing manager at NaturallySavvy.com, which first published this article.

 <p>Borage The star-shaped blue, pink, or white flowers of borage have long been valued for their healing abilities for coughs and sore throats. However, the leaves and flowers are also a raw nutritional treat in salads because of their cucumber and slightly sweet flavor. You can also enjoy them cooked in sauces, stews, soups, or as a side dish. Try a variety of borage recipes.</p>	 <p>Pansy Pansies come in many colors, with purple, yellow, and blue being the most common. These flowers are great as garnishes on cakes and other baked goods, but they are also delicious when the petals are added to salads. When you eat pansies, you will also benefit from their antioxidant and anti-inflammatory properties.</p>	 <p>Nasturtium Also known as monk cress (<i>Tropaeolum majus</i>), you can enjoy both the flowers and leaves of the nasturtium raw or cooked. The red, yellow, or orange flowers can be added to salads or used as a decoration on baked goods, while the leaves are perfect salad greens or a tasty ingredient in pesto. Added bonuses of nasturtium are its high antioxidant content and anti-inflammatory properties.</p>	 <p>Rose A rose is a rose is a rose ... but they don't all taste the same. That means you have a great variety of flavors from which to choose (there are more than 150 species of roses) when bringing more zest to your table. Rose petals (please don't eat the stems or leaves) can be added raw to salads or sandwiches, used to make rose-infused drinks, or made into rose petal jams or cupcakes.</p>
 <p>Dandelions Some people regard dandelions as weeds, but their bright yellow blossoms, as well as their leaves, roots, and stems, are high in antioxidants and also have anti-diabetic properties. You can enjoy the flowers and leaves raw in salads, or try frying the flowers in batter. The flowers also are used to make jelly and wine. If you prefer dandelion tea, steep the roots for a beverage that can help with digestion. A 2022 study reports that dandelion roots and other parts contain substances that provide protection to the gastrointestinal tract.</p>	 <p>Lavender The small violet flowers of the lavender plant have a delightful aroma, and are also known for their calming effects and delicate flavor. You can cook with lavender in a variety of dishes and desserts or simply enjoy the fresh or dried flowers as tea.</p>	 <p>Hibiscus The most popular edible variety of hibiscus is the Hibiscus sabdariffa (aka, roselle). These large pink, yellow, red, and white flowers can be enjoyed clipped directly from the plant in salads, or they can be made into jams and relishes. Recent research shows that healthy individuals who drank 7 ounces of a hibiscus beverage daily for six months experienced a significant decline in blood pressure, elevated antioxidant levels, and helped with skin hydration and redness.</p> <p>Another study indicates that hibiscus may be helpful for managing high cholesterol, inflammatory diseases of the kidney and liver, and cancer.</p>	 <p>Squash Blossoms One of the treats of summer squash is fried or stuffed squash blossoms. Zucchini blossoms are the most commonly consumed of the squash flowers, and they can be enjoyed raw in salads as well as cooked. If you are growing your own squash, choose the male flowers only, as the female blossoms are the ones that produce the squash. Male flowers have a thin, long stem and usually are found around the outer edges of the plant, while the female flowers grow near the plant's center and have small fruit near where the blossom and stem meet.</p>



A new study adds to previous work linking antibiotics to allergies.

Early Antibiotics May Lead to Lasting Asthma, Allergies

Study has major implications that should inform antibiotic use for young children

ANDREW SMITH

Early exposure to antibiotics kills healthy bacteria in the digestive tract and can cause permanent asthma and allergies, a new study shows.

The study, published in *Mucosal Immunology*, provides the strongest evidence so far that the long-observed connection between antibiotic exposure in early childhood and later development of asthma

and allergies is causal.

"The practical implication is simple: Avoid antibiotic use in young children whenever you can because it may elevate the risk of significant, long-term problems with allergy and/or asthma," said senior author Martin Blaser, director of the Center for Advanced Biotechnology and Medicine at Rutgers University.

In the study, the researchers note that antibiotics, "among the most used

INTENTIONAL LIVING

Living Life in the Slow Lane

You can't do everything, but you can do what matters to a life lived well



MOLLIE DONGHIA

A simple statement I've been reminded of recently is that we can't do everything and expect to do everything well.

Our society prioritizes efficiency and productivity. Many work long days, fill every minute of their schedules, rush from one thing to the next, and create systems that allow for tasks to get finished faster.

I've been here as a full-time working parent, and have experienced for myself the demands of this pace of living.

However, there's a paradox that comes from this fast-paced lifestyle.

This lifestyle can be inherently satisfying. Who doesn't enjoy checking every item off their to-do list and having a calendar full of social events and meaningful commitments?

But we're faced with an increased sense of time pressure and stress from the rigor created by that pace.

Stress levels and antidepressant use is on the rise; maybe part of the reason is the mad dash many of us live each day.

Pushing back against this fast-paced lifestyle is countercultural. When we take time to enjoy a hobby or allow our minds to relax, it can be seen as lazy or unproductive.

But living a slower pace of life shouldn't carry this stigma when our intentions improve our health and bring greater purpose to our days.

Throughout the seasons of life, I've realized the importance of slowing down. I'm less stressed when I have fewer commitments and I can spend more time focusing on the relationships around me. I am also better rested when I prioritize sleep and good routines.

If you're someone who feels as if life is moving at a speed that leaves you stressed and exhausted and are looking to simplify your life, I'd encourage you to consider sways to slow your pace of living.

Here are some practices that can help you enjoy life in the slow lane

Make a Daily 3-Item to-Do List

Don't try to accomplish everything that's possible in one day. When you achieve a few meaningful things, this boosts your motivation and allows you to keep the wheel turning without the risk of burn-out. Prioritize by choosing the three most important tasks. Write them down as you begin your day and let the momentum of accomplishing these important items carry you through the rest of the day.

Take Up a Hobby—Just for Fun

Research shows that how you spend your leisure time matters to your health. Hobbies are beneficial in many ways—better physical health, greater longevity, increased sleep, a larger social network, and even improved performance at work. Even if you're not great at it, find something you enjoy doing and stick with it.

Be Present With Those Around You

Having healthy relationships contributes significantly to your emotional well-being. When you choose to focus on those around you by taking a break from a device or busy schedule, you're able to listen and observe as you gain a deeper sense of connection with them. I've found that making better eye contact and asking engaging questions help me to be more present with those I'm spending time with.

Take In Your Surroundings

Not only is it important to be present with those around you, but also with your surroundings. My husband takes our two young sons for a long walk each morning. He's also chosen to avoid playing music or podcasts and instead enjoy the sounds of nature, interactions with neighbors, and the stillness of the morning.

Learn to Say 'No'

For a people-pleaser like myself, I enjoy being able to volunteer and serve those around me by giving my time. Saying no can be hard. But there's a limit to what I can take on without being burdened or stressed.

When we say yes to one good thing, we're simultaneously saying no to something else. Choose your priorities and commit to doing them well. Being generous is one way of living that my husband and I strive to model for our children, but if we're pushed to the brink of our limits, that's when we need to take a step back and find a balance of what we can do.

Prioritize Quality Over Quantity

As earlier said, you can't do everything and expect to do everything well. Prioritize what matters most and focus on those areas.

Take on fewer commitments and leave more margin in your week.

Read just a handful of blogs or news sites thoroughly, rather than saturating your mental capacity with an overabundance of ideas.

Own fewer items but choose those that add value—rather than clutter—to your life.

Follow fewer accounts on social media and make them ones that add encouragement rather than comparison.

When we take time to enjoy a hobby or allow our minds to relax, it can be seen as lazy or unproductive.

Create More Than You Consume

It can be challenging to create and resist being a mere consumer, but it offers us rewards beyond our purchase power. We rob ourselves of a valuable gift when the answer to all of life's problems involves spending more. The pleasures we get from consuming can never satisfy us. There's an integral sense of competence and gratification from making, fixing, and improving things with our own skills and ingenuity.

I feel more appreciative for days when I make a home-cooked meal, light candles for the table, and invite my family to sit and linger over conversation.

I photograph my children to capture childhood memories, and then enjoy creating a gallery wall in our living room or photobook for my family to look at.

I write to express my thoughts and share with others how I believe living intentionally can be done.

Take a Day Off Each Week

Taking a day off of work and any "productive" pursuits each week allows us to reset ourselves mentally. In 2019, a study by the U.S. Travel Association found that 768 million vacation days went unused, with 55 percent of workers admitting that they didn't take their allotted vacation days.

Taking a day of rest, or sabbath as referred to in several religions, means taking a meaningful break from the regular routines that you perform the other six days of the week. Mentally disengaging allows you to have less stress, fewer sleep issues, and greater job and life satisfaction.

The Benefits of Slowing Down

Living a slower, less hectic pace of life may mean fewer external accomplishments, but I guarantee you'll go further.

If you've grown tired of the fast-paced lifestyle that our society promotes, let me encourage you to embrace life in the slow lane. Make a decision to focus on what's most important and drop the rest. Let go of the desire to do it all. We're humans with limits.

Life is about enjoying the journey, not just the destination. So make the journey one to remember, rather than busily rushing through life.

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



Taking up a creative pursuit or hobby contributes to a meaningful life.

“These experiments provide strong evidence that antibiotics cause unwanted immune responses ...”

Martin Blaser, senior researcher

allergen than those that received water. "This was a carefully controlled experiment," Blaser said. "The only variable in the first part was antibiotic exposure. The only variable in the second two parts was whether the mixture of gut bacteria had been affected by antibiotics. Everything else about the mice was identical."

"These experiments provide strong evidence that antibiotics cause unwanted immune responses to develop via their effect on gut bacteria, but only if gut bacteria are altered in early childhood."

Additional coauthors are from the University of Zurich, New York University, and Rutgers.

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medications in children, affect gut microbiome communities and metabolic functions. These changes in microbiota structure can impact host immunity."

In the first part of the experiment, 5-day-old mice received water, azithromycin, or amoxicillin. After the mice matured, researchers exposed them to a common allergen derived from house dust mites.

Mice that had received either of the antibiotics, especially azithromycin, exhibited elevated rates of immune responses—i.e., allergies.

The second and third parts of the experiment tested the hypothesis that early exposure to antibiotics (but not later exposure) causes allergies and asthma by killing some healthy gut bacteria that support proper immune system development. Lead author Timothy Borbet of New York University first transferred bacteria-rich

fecal samples from the first set of mice to a second set of adult mice with no previous exposure to any bacteria or germs. Some received samples from mice given azithromycin or amoxicillin in infancy. Others received normal samples from mice that had received water.

Mice that received antibiotic-altered samples were no more likely than other mice to develop immune responses to house dust mites, just as people who receive antibiotics in adulthood are no more likely to develop asthma or allergies than those who don't.

Things were different, however, for the next generation. Offspring of mice that received antibiotic-altered samples reacted more to house dust mites than those whose parents received samples unaltered by antibiotics, just as mice that originally received antibiotics as babies reacted more to the

JLCO JULIA AMARAL/SHUTTERSTOCK

WISE HABITS

Getting to the Heart of Impulse Shopping

There are other ways to satisfy the emotional needs that drive our purchases

Just as stress and worry can drive emotional eating, there are certain feelings, emotions, and desires can drive our spending—to the detriment of our finances.



thiness. Underneath the hope for simplicity or control is a hope for a feeling of peace.

What's underneath the things you've bought most recently? What feelings were you hoping for? What experience of life? It can be powerful to take an honest look at this.

Other Strategies to Meet Those Needs

If what we hope for is an experience of life or a feeling, you might imagine that there are other ways to get this besides buying something. Consider some of the feelings or experiences we commonly pursue.

Peace: Could you meditate, take a walk, or sit in stillness and silence for a bit? Peace is always available to us if we give ourselves some space.

Comfort: Could you give yourself love and compassion? Could you give yourself some self-care? What could you do right now that would feel like a hug from a loved one?

Adventure: Could you go outside and feel a sense of play, adventure, and wonder? Could you find the adventure in everything you're doing?

LEO BABAUTA

It's a simple fact: the COVID-19 pandemic has increased the amount of impulse shopping most people have been doing. There are a lot of stats proving it, but you can simply take a look at your own life and the lives of people you know to see if it's true for you.

Why have we been more compelled to shop for clothes, gadgets, workout equipment, hobby toys, and more?

At the heart of it is uncertainty. We're feeling so much more uncertainty these days, and we don't know how to handle it.

The higher the uncertainty we're feeling about ourselves and the world around us, the more we reach for comforts and things that make us feel a little more in control. And shopping is one of those things.

There's nothing inherently wrong with that. Feeling in control and feeling comfort are two very lovely things—we all need them sometimes. The more we can let go of judgment, the more open we might be to other possibilities.

Let's take a look at what we're hoping that the shopping will bring us and then at other strategies to meet those needs.

What We Hope to Get From Shopping

When you go online to buy something you're craving, are you actually craving that item or something else?

In my experience, we're craving an experience or feeling we're hoping this purchase will bring.

We might hope that the purchase will give us:

- Comfort
- Love
- Health, wellness
- Excitement, joy, fun
- Serenity
- A feeling that we're cool, strong, or sexy
- A feeling of control
- Stylishness
- Adventure
- Simplicity
- Connection
- Self-improvement

We hope for a lot of things from our purchases beyond these few things that are some of the most common.

Underneath some of these is an even deeper desire. For example, underneath a hope for stylishness is a hope for a sense of wor-

We're feeling so much more uncertainty these days, and we don't know how to handle it.

Joy: Could you find joy in daily living?

Control: This feeling could be accomplished by getting your life in order, one small thing at a time. But it can also be helpful to realize that control is an illusion, and nothing we buy will ever really give us control. The real practice is surrender and trust.

Feeling strong, cool, sexy, or stylish: What we're really hoping for is a sense of self-worth from our possessions. As we can see from past purchases, it never really gives us that. Maybe a little boost in self-worth for an hour or two, if that. Instead, we could practice valuing ourselves. And that means paying attention to how we feel, giving ourselves love, taking care of ourselves, and honoring who we are. That's all free!

The good news is that this is all available to us right now in every moment—for free. That means we don't need to order anything, it has already arrived. It can be a nice relief to the bank account as well.

How would you like to practice with this?

Leo Babauta is the author of six books and the writer of Zen Habits, a blog with over 2 million subscribers. Visit ZenHabits.net



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