

MIND & BODY

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3,400

MILLIGRAMS
The average American eats about 3,400 milligrams or 1.5 teaspoons of salt a day.

The Salt Controversy

The divided findings around salt reveal an issue at the heart of medical science and clinical practice

SUSAN C. OLMSTEAD

Is eating too much salt truly harmful? Mainstream medical advice and routine doctor visits may have convinced you that this is a clear-cut “yes,” but the science is anything but uniform. So why isn’t that reflected in common clinical practice?

The salt controversy does more than raise questions about how much salt is too much; it points to the very heart of a little-discussed issue: that much of the medical information we receive isn’t based on scientific consensus, despite the tone of definitive and certainty in statements made by key voices, including our doctors.

We’ve all gotten the message that we tend

to eat “too much” salt—and that too much salt is a bad thing. Doctors, dieticians, and health associations have long cautioned that consuming excess sodium can hinder kidney function, raise blood pressure, increase the risk of cardiovascular disease, and even harm sleep quality.

Recognizing that, for most people, processed food is a major source of sodium, the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) announced in October 2021 a new plan to encourage manufacturers of packaged foods to cut down on added salt in their products. The FDA set a new goal for average salt intake of 3,000 milligrams per day, a 12 percent drop from the American average of about 3,400 milligrams per day.

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The science around salt intake is sharply divided, but somehow that divide never shows up in public health campaigns or the doctor’s office.

SALT SCENARIOS

LOW SALT

Too little salt can make us crave sugar, leading to weight gain and Type 2 diabetes.

HIGH SALT

Researchers found that a high-salt diet increased the levels of the stress hormone glucocorticoid by 75 percent.



While many people perceive dementia as inescapable once it’s begun to develop, research strongly suggests otherwise.

Escaping a Dementia Diagnosis

Factors within your control can make all the difference when it comes to cognitive decline and Alzheimer’s

AMY DENNEY

Alzheimer’s disease is increasing among younger people. But while a three-fold increase in early-onset dementia and Alzheimer’s disease among younger adults may seem frightening, many cases are prematurely diagnosed and reversible.

There are at least a dozen explanations for memory loss. Many people suffering from dementia have more than one contributing factor among causes that are mostly preventable, temporary, or avoidable. That’s the good news.

The bad news is that your average doctor may not be fully aware of that. A study published in May in the Journal of Alzheimer’s Disease pointed out that no pharmaceutical options for Alzheimer’s and dementia have offered improvement or even stopped cognitive decline.

Given pharmaceuticals are the default treatment for many doctors, that leads to an unsettling doctor’s visit if you’re experiencing memory loss or other cognitive issues.

“It’s not surprising when neurologists say, ‘There’s nothing we can do.’ Thousands of patients are told this every day,” said Lisa Feiner, a board-certified health and wellness coach. “Most doctors are not trained in things like nutrition or stress reduction or toxins or treating trauma or sleep issues.”

But lifestyle modifications are successfully reversing or minimizing symptoms for many patients who implement change. In a study published in August in the Journal of Alzheimer’s Disease, 21 of 25 patients improved after physicians used each person’s genetics and biomarkers to create a nine-month personalized protocol. Patients were evaluated for multiple contributing factors, including inflammation, insulin resistance, nutrient and hormonal deficiencies, toxins, and genetics.

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Peeking Inside the COVID Vaccine

Are unlisted ingredients in these vaccines proprietary secrets or unintentional contaminants?

UNDER SCRUTINY
Some of the unlisted substances found in the COVID-19 vaccines have unwelcome side effects as well as potential therapeutic effects.

CONAN MILNER

More than 12.7 billion doses of the COVID-19 vaccine have been administered since the treatment became available nearly two years ago. Some have received one or two doses, while others have had multiple doses. Yet many don't know what these shots actually contain.

The Food and Drug Administration (FDA) website provides ingredient lists for curious consumers to consider. For example, vials from Moderna and BioNTech/Pfizer famously contain messenger ribonucleic acid (mRNA). This is a genetic sequence designed to program your cells to manufacture a spike protein, thereby training the immune system to guard against the signature spike of the COVID-19 virus in the wild.

Less well-known ingredients include a different mix of lipids (fats). Pfizer's shot, for example, contains 4-hydroxybutyl, and Moderna's contains SM-102. These shots also include polyethylene glycol, cholesterol, a few salts (such as potassium chloride and sodium chloride), and sucrose (sugar).

Johnson and Johnson's (Janssen's) vaccine doesn't contain mRNA but instead features as its main mechanism of immune system training a recombinant, replication-incompetent adenovirus expressing the SARS-CoV-2 spike protein. Like its mRNA counterparts mentioned above, the J&J vaccine contains a variety of other chemicals, such as citric acid monohydrate, trisodium citrate dihydrate, ethanol, 2 hydroxypropyl-beta-cyclodextrin, polysorbate-80, and sodium chloride.

Several items on the list of these publicly disclosed ingredients, such as mRNA and SM-102, come with controversy. Public health officials, regulators, and drug makers have been quick to defend these ingredients as safe and necessary to ensure the vaccines' effectiveness.

Experts have also been quick to quash fears that the vaccines may contain other, even more questionable components not disclosed to the public.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention addresses common vaccine-related concerns such as these on its website, stating that the “vaccines do NOT contain ingredients like preservatives, tissues (such as aborted fetal cells), antibiotics, food proteins, medicines, latex, or metals.”

In regard to metals, however, some research suggests otherwise.

Presence of Metals
Earlier this year, the German Working Group for COVID Vaccine Analysis (GWG) released a report detailing what they found when examining various vaccine vials. GWG is an international network of more than 60 scientists, medical doctors, and other experts. Their goal is an in-depth laboratory analysis of these vaccines.

A microbiologist and gain of function expert from GWG, Sabine Stebel, presented the group's findings before the World Council for Health General Assembly on Sept. 5. Researchers looked at most of the COVID-19 vaccines on the market: Johnson and Johnson, Moderna, and AstraZeneca, as well as the only shot that has received full FDA approval—Pfizer's Comirnaty (other vaccine options have merely received emergency use authorization.)

GWG examined vials using scanning electron microscopy and energy-dispersive X-ray spectroscopy. What they found were relatively large metallic foreign bodies. The European Union's good manufacturing practice (GMP) standards permit particle sizes no greater than a quarter of a micrometer, but GWG's analysis discovered many metal particles from several batches that measured in the double digits. These metallic objects were found in all Pfizer and AstraZeneca vials studied, as well as some Johnson and Johnson vials, GWG said.

“If you filter a substance that is to be injected properly, you shouldn't see anything under the microscope,” Stebel said in her presentation. “These structures are definitely too big to be injected into a living person.”

Another feature of vaccinated blood samples was the degradation of the blood itself.

The types of particles found consisted of alkali metals such as cesium and potassium, alkaline earth metals such as calcium and barium, and cobalt, iron, chromium, and titanium. Researchers also found rare earth metals such as cerium and gadolinium, as well as aluminum, silicon, and sulfur.

Although some of these elements are non-toxic and even essential to human health, many can be highly toxic even at low doses.

One example is barium, which is toxic to humans and animals in soluble form. In high concentrations, barium blocks the passive potassium channels in the cell membrane. This leads to disturbed muscle cell function and potassium deficiency in the

blood, as potassium remains in cells in increased amounts.

Another example of toxic potential found in the vaccines is the heavy metal cobalt. Although minute amounts of cobalt are essential to life, in the event of an overdose, it can lead to symptoms such as nausea, visual disturbances, heart problems, and damage to the thyroid gland.

Gadolinium is a rare earth metal used as a contrast agent in magnetic resonance imaging, but the metal can be highly toxic and can accumulate in the brain and bones.

Only Moderna vials revealed a significant concentration of antimony, which was found in the greatest concentration compared to other metal elements.

Changes in Blood
In addition to analyzing vaccine vials, GWG researchers analyzed the blood of vaccinated individuals and compared it to blood samples from nonvaccinated individuals. They found that the blood from all the vaccinated patients they tested (specifically those having had either the BioNTech/Pfizer or the Moderna vaccines) presented “novel structures,” such as rectangular crystals and spirals.

“These kinds of structures have never been found in human blood before. These structures were most frequently found in the Comirnaty vaccine from BioNTech/Pfizer,” the report reads.

Injected people have 100 percent consistently altered blood as seen with live cell dark field microscopy. This includes impeded blood flow with red blood cells sticking to each other, even to the extreme of “rouleaux formation,” and profoundly decreased red blood cell stability and survival.

Another feature of vaccinated blood samples was the degradation of the blood itself. The report provides images from live blood cell analysis of the cell membranes of erythrocytes (red blood cells that look like concave discs) that have become deformed and notes an “unusually rapid disintegration of the different types of cells in the vaccinated blood.” Such cell deformations are usually only seen in chronically ill people and people with severe degenerative diseases.

Researchers also observed frequent examples of blood clots and changes in blood viscosity, with vaccinated individuals demonstrating reduced blood flow capacity because of blood cells sticking to one another.

Contamination or Proprietary Secret?
Do these mystery metals serve some kind of function in the vaccine formulas, or are they merely the result of unintentional contamination?

Drug makers admit contamination is possible, as the GWG wasn't the first to detect metal in the vials. The group's work was initially inspired by news of stainless steel contaminants found in Moderna vaccine vials in Japan in 2021.


The deaths of two men aged between 30 and 40 occurred within days of receiving their second Moderna dose from the contaminated batches. However, Japan's Health Ministry stated that it didn't believe the stainless steel particles posed any additional health risk. And Moderna didn't indicate that the presence of the particles was a part of their vaccine recipe. They stated that the contamination probably occurred during production.

Later that year, foreign material was found in unused Pfizer vials at vaccination sites in three Japanese cities. The vials (95 in total) all belonged to the same lot, but the cities that had the vials couldn't identify the contents. They requested that Pfizer analyze the white floating matter.

At a press conference, Pfizer's Japanese subsidiary surmised that the material was likely vaccine ingredients that hadn't been

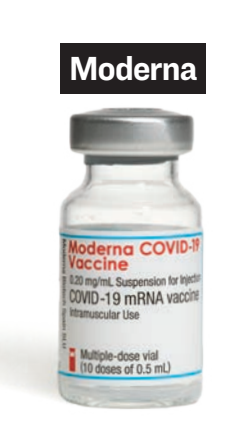
Listed Covid-19 Vaccine Ingredients

Pfizer




mRNA, lipids ((4-hydroxybutyl)azanediyl) bis(hexane-6,1-diyl) bis(2-hexyldecanoate), 2 [(polyethylene glycol)-2000]-N,N-ditetradecylacetamide, 1,2-Distearoyl-sn-glycero-3-phosphocholine, and cholesterol), tromethamine, tromethamine hydrochloride, sucrose, and sodium chloride.

Moderna



mRNA, lipids (SM-102, polyethylene glycol [PEG] 2000 dimyristoyl glycerol [DMG], cholesterol, and 1,2-distearoyl-sn-glycero-3-phosphocholine [DSPC]), tromethamine, tromethamine hydrochloride, acetic acid, sodium acetate trihydrate, and sucrose.

Johnson & Johnson



Recombinant, replication-incompetent adenovirus type 26 expressing the SARS-CoV-2 spike protein, citric acid monohydrate, trisodium citrate dihydrate, ethanol, 2 hydroxypropyl-beta-cyclodextrin (HBCD), polysorbate-80, sodium chloride.

SOURCE: FOOD AND DRUG ADMINISTRATION

fully dissolved and that they posed no safety or efficacy issues. The company said in a statement that it was aware of the report and was “conducting a full investigation.”

What else can be found in these vaccines? That depends on the analysis. Consider the conclusions from a Spanish-based study that found the presence of something called graphene oxide, a type of nanomaterial used in various biomedical applications.

Pablo Campra, a chemical sciences professor and researcher at Universidad de Almería in Spain, found evidence of graphene-like nanoparticles in numerous vials from four different vaccine makers. The graphene was detected using a spectroscopy technique called micro-Raman, which employs laser photons to vibrate molecules. Campra's report from November 2021 details his technique and the results of his findings.

Campra employed the micro-Raman technique after screening various objects selected for their graphene-like appearance under optical microscopy and found conclusive evidence of graphene oxide structures.

Analyses other than Campra's have detected graphene nano-structures in the COVID vaccines. Yet the drug industry and public health experts explicitly state that these vaccines contain no such thing.

However, there's evidence to suggest that vaccine makers may one day add graphene to their formula. A May 2021 study published in the Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences determined that graphene oxide nanoparticles could be effective in a flu vaccine because of the material's “high antigen-loading capacities and superior immunoenhancing properties.” Researchers say this material “can be easily adapted for constructing mucosal vaccines of different respiratory pathogens.”

Another study from May 2021 suggests that graphene oxide “nanosheets” may make valuable additions to personal protective equipment and other medical applications.

Researchers concluded that the only concern for adding graphene oxide was its potential for toxicity.

It would hardly be the first time a toxic substance was added to medicine. Many drugs employ toxic substances in low doses to provide a medicinal effect. Antimony, for example—is used as an antiprotazoal adjuvant in some traditional vaccines.

The question is, are the metals and nanomaterials independent researchers are finding in vaccine vials part of a proprietary secret or unintentional contamination?

If it's a proprietary secret, the application is inconsistent. GWG's report states that their research team found no graphene in the vaccine samples they analyzed.

However, the materials GWG found don't seem to be an accident either. The report notes that the Pfizer doses in particular exhibit a vast number of crystalline platelets and shapes that can “hardly be interpreted as impurities.”

“They appear regularly and in large numbers in all samples,” it reads.

Their report stresses that this summary isn't the final word, but is instead “a preliminary, continuously evolving presentation of research.” Scientists call for further investigation and discussion.

“Much still remains to be analyzed, but what we have found—we are convinced—is so important that the public in general and the scientific community in particular must be informed about it. There needs to be a wider understanding of the dangers that the COVID-19 vaccines pose to health and research into how the worst effects of these vaccines can be prevented, or at least mitigated,” researchers wrote.

Researchers have found unlisted ingredients in COVID vaccines by using electron microscopy, energy dispersive X-ray spectroscopy, and Raman micro-spectroscopy.

Keep your head and neck protected when you go outside during the colder months.

CHINESE WISDOM FOR SEASONAL LIVING

7 Wellness Tips to Maximize Winter Health

Solar Term: ‘Heavy Snow’ (Dec. 7–21)

MOREEN LIAO

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

term of winter. Around this time, the cold yin energy reaches its peak, and the yang energy starts to evolve. The snow is getting much heavier, and the temperature is much colder in most of the northern hemisphere.

As the yang energy slowly starts to move and grow during this solar term, wild animals, such as tigers, which strongly reflect the yang energy of nature, start to come out of their caves and mate.

Impact on People
People who are born during this solar term have plenty of water element in their constitutions. As a result, they tend to be creative and full of ideas and

are believed to be very intelligent and outgoing. They're often good in communication, with strong leadership qualities.

According to traditional Chinese medicine, these people need to pay special attention to their hearts and circulatory systems. They may experience an irregular heartbeat, strokes, or even heart attacks because of the constriction of the blood vessels from the colder weather.

Lung and lung related problems are more likely to develop or even become worse around this time.

Lung and lung-related problems are more likely to develop or even become worse around this time. To protect against this, stay away from polluted areas, stop smoking, and drink a good amount of warm water to cleanse toxins from the body.

Generally speaking, it's indeed the time

when people can easily get a cold or flu, so keeping warm is particularly important to maximize well-being.

7 Tips to Maximize Wellness During ‘Heavy Snow’

1. Drink plenty of hot goji berry tea; add ginger root for those who have cold hands and feet.
2. Drink chai tea or chai lattes instead of coffee to strengthen kidney function, since coffee flushes the yang energy out from the body.
3. Reduce the consumption of sugar, as it disrupts the body's natural energy balance.
4. Wear a hat, scarf, and gloves. For the elderly who live in extremely cold areas, a soft wool hat can preserve body heat during sleep.
5. Use the heel of one foot to massage the inner side of the other lower calf in circular motions to promote energy flow for the whole body.
6. Diffuse warm and sweet notes of essential oils (see suggestions below) to lift the energy, motivate the mind, and

keep the body warm.

7. Avoid anger or sudden shocks to prevent damage to the heart and brain.

Seasonal Foods
Cooking with quality nut oils, such as sesame, walnut, or avocado, helps your body gain good energy and prolong the heat.

Broccoli, dill, chestnut, cashew nut, green onion, yam, and walnut are all very good sources of protein during this time of year.

For those who have concerns or who want to strengthen their heart and circulatory systems, try ingesting foods that are red in color to enhance these functions.

Beetroot, cranberries, strawberries, cherries, rose hip jam, and rose tea are all good choices.

Seasonal Herbs and Essential Oils
Spicy and warm essential oils, such as geranium, rose, sandalwood, rosewood, lemongrass, wintergreen, ginger, or cinnamon, warm your heart and energize your body.

Epoch Times contributor Moreen Liao is a descendant of four generations of traditional Chinese medicine doctors. She's also a certified aromatherapist and the founder of Ausganica, a manufacturer of salon-quality, certified organic cosmetics. Visit Ausganica.com

Keep your head and neck protected when you go outside during the colder months.

How to Treat Diabetes Through the Mind-Body Connection

Unwinding is more than pleasant, it's an essential way to reset your physiology.



The complexities of our biochemistry can be profoundly influenced by our state of mind

TATIANA DENNING

Diabetes is a prevalent chronic disease in the United States that carries significant rates of morbidity and mortality. The disease is associated with number of serious complications, including kidney disease, cardiovascular disease, stroke, and blindness. Diabetes not only impacts a person's quality of life but can also shorten their lifespan; it has been ranked as the eighth leading cause of death in the United States.

A Look at the Numbers

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, diabetes affects 28.7 million people in the United States. It's estimated that another 8.5 million have diabetes but don't know it, meaning that 1 in 5 diabetics haven't yet been diagnosed. This brings the true number of diabetics to 37.3 million, or about 1 in 10 Americans, with the majority (90 to 95 percent) having Type 2 diabetes. This is

It's believed that there's a relationship between stress hormones, such as cortisol and adrenaline, and hormones, such as insulin, which help regulate blood sugar.

what we'll focus on here.

Diabetes is diagnosed through either a fasting blood glucose level of 126 or greater, a HgB A1C level of 6.5 percent or greater, or a random glucose level (non-fasting) or glucose tolerance test of 200 or greater.

In addition, another 96 million U.S. adults have prediabetes, a condition that appears before the diagnosis of Type 2 diabetes is made and is indicated by a glucose level between 100 and 125 and a HgB A1C level between 5.7 percent and 6.4 percent. A person can have prediabetes for years and not even be aware of it. According to the CDC, risk factors for becoming prediabetic include being overweight, exercising less than three times per week, being older than 45, having a parent or sibling with diabetes, or having a personal history of gestational diabetes or polycystic ovarian syndrome.

As of 2017, it was estimated that nearly \$10,000 per year is spent per diabetic patient—and health care costs have only gone up since then. In that same year, the total estimated cost of diabetes in the United States was \$327 billion dollars (yes, that's billion), with \$237 billion be-

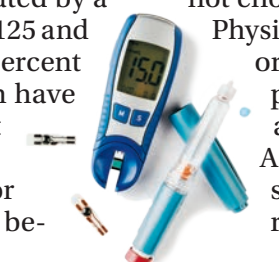
ing spent on direct medical care and another \$90 billion due to lost productivity. To put things in context, America's total national deficit in 2015 was \$439 billion.

Traditional Diabetes Management

Depending on glucose numbers at the time of diagnosis, Type 2 diabetes is typically first treated with diet and exercise. While this approach is key to the disease, not enough importance is given to it.

Physicians often don't have the time or broader knowledge to teach patients how to eat healthier and get in the needed exercise. And even if they're not resistant, some patients may not even realize how poor their diet is thanks to the successful imaging created by marketers.

The unfortunate result is that the majority of patients ultimately end up on medications. Metformin has long been a first-line mainstay, with a variety of other medications being added over time, including injectable insulin. In recent years, a number of newer therapies have been brought to the market, both oral and injectable, including GLP-1 agonists and SGLT-2 inhibitors. Of course, as one of my attendings drilled into our heads



Diabetes brings a burden of health risks that are entirely avoidable.

How the Vagus Nerve Changes You

This critical nerve plays diverse roles and you probably need to tend to it

MARTHA ROSENBERG

When it comes to major nerves in the human body, most people have heard of the optic and olfactory nerves, the facial and trigeminal nerves, and certainly—if they have been in pain—the sciatic nerve. Yet one of the body's most consequential nerves that affects everything from mood, the immune system, heart rate and digestion to depression, post-traumatic stress disorder, and inflammatory bowel disease has somehow not become a household word: the vagus nerve.

The vagus nerves—there are actually two of them on each side of the body—are the longest nerves in the human body, originating in the brain and ending at the abdomen. The vagus nerve, part of the parasympathetic nervous system, unites the autonomic nervous system and sympathetic nervous system, which creates homeostasis or balance in the body.

Few anatomical structures perform so many functions and yet so seldom ap-

pear in medical articles. According to a recent article in The Epoch Times, the vagus nerve is quite the workhorse, regulating circulation, breathing, heart rate, digestion, and body temperature and even exerting anti-inflammatory actions! An article in the journal *Frontiers of Immunology* elaborates on these actions.

"Because of its anti-inflammatory effect, the VN [vagus nerve] is a therapeutic target in the treatment of chronic inflammatory disorders where TNFalpha [tumor necrosis factor alpha, an inflammation protein] is a key component," the researchers wrote.

They advocated exploring ways to stimulate the vagus nerve as a treatment for a wide range of conditions.

"VNS [vagus nerve stimulation] could be used as a non-drug therapy to treat inflammatory disorders of the GI tract, such as IBD, irritable bowel syndrome, and postoperative ileus, which are all characterized by a blunted autonomic balance with a decreased vagal tone."

According to Physiopedia, a nonprofit that educates physiotherapists, the vagus nerve also:

- innervates the skin around the external ear and the internal surfaces of the

laryngopharynx and larynx.

- provides taste sensation to the tongue.
- innervates the muscles of the pharynx, soft palate, and larynx.
- innervates the trachea and bronchi and regulates heart rhythm.
- stimulates peristalsis and gastrointestinal secretions.

Additional Vagus Nerve Functions

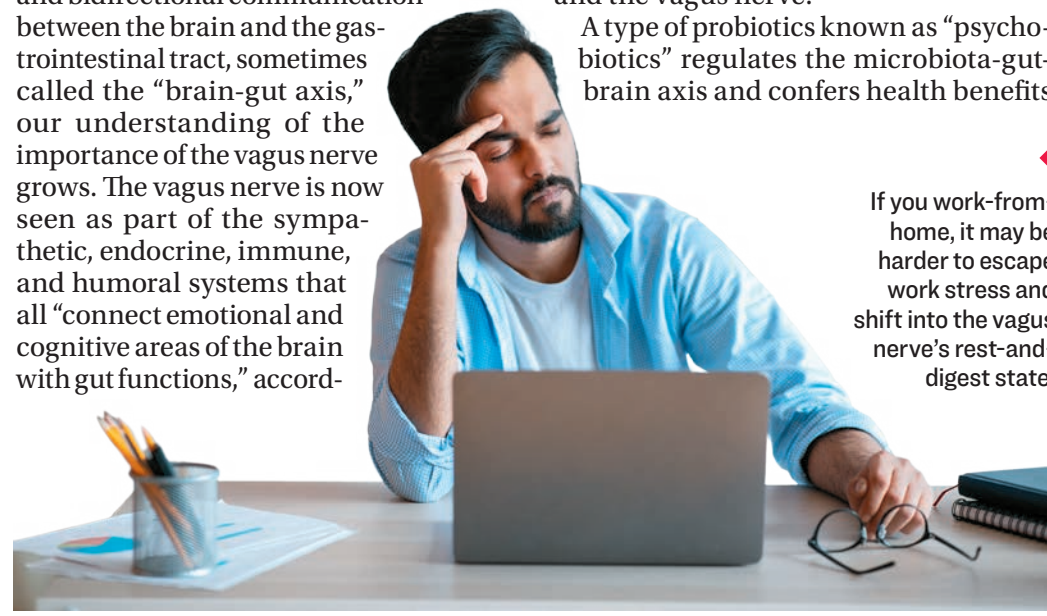
As more is learned about the microbiome and bidirectional communication

between the brain and the gastrointestinal tract, sometimes called the "brain-gut axis," our understanding of the importance of the vagus nerve grows. The vagus nerve is now seen as part of the sympathetic, endocrine, immune, and humoral systems that all "connect emotional and cognitive areas of the brain with gut functions," accord-

ing to a research review in *Frontiers in Psychiatry*. It's even likely that the activity of gut bacteria affects the behavior of the vagus nerve, according to the study.

Elaborating on the interaction between gut bacteria and the vagus nerve, a study published in the journal *Nutrients* states, "The microbiota-gut-brain axis is a bidirectional link involving the central nervous system, the enteric nervous system, and the gut microbiota. ... The effect of microbiota on the brain occurs through three main pathways of the microbiota-gut-brain axis: hormones and neurotransmitters, the immune system, and the vagus nerve."

A type of probiotics known as "psychobiotics" regulates the microbiota-gut-brain axis and confers health benefits



If you work-from-home, it may be harder to escape work stress and shift into the vagus nerve's rest-and-digest state.

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Creative pursuits engage the mind and leave us relaxed and fulfilled.



Nature is soothing in a way that leaves us refreshed and feeling connected.

during residency, no medications, not even over-the-counter medications such as aspirin, are without possible side effects. And some can even add to the issue being treated.

For example, while insulin helps control blood sugar, it can also cause weight gain—and excess weight is implicated in diabetes. And despite medication therapy, it's estimated that less than half of diabetics are able to keep their blood sugar levels within the goal of 80 to 130 before a meal and less than 180 in the two hours after starting a meal, or a HgB A1C of 7 percent or less.

While medications certainly have their role and have done much to control diabetes and even extend patients' lives, a focus on complementary options deserves more attention.

Mindfulness and Diabetes

In addition to a healthy diet and increased activity, mindfulness practices have been shown to play an important role in managing diabetes.

A recent meta-analysis published in September in the *Journal of Integrative and Complementary Medicine* looks at 28 studies involving diabetic patients who incorporated some form of mind-body practice into their routine.

The analysis found that these adult diabetic patients had a statistically and clinically significant improvement in their blood glucose levels.

Researchers found that mind-body practices conferred a 0.84 percent reduction in HgB A1C numbers, with yoga decreasing A1C by an average of 1 percent. And for every additional day of yoga practice per week, HgB A1C decreased by an average of 0.22 percent. The review concluded that "mind and body practices may be an effective, complementary nonpharmacological intervention for Type 2 diabetes."

So just how do mind-body practices help improve diabetes? It's believed that there's a relationship between stress hormones, such as cortisol and adrenaline, and hormones, such as insulin, which help regulate blood sugar. Studies such as a 2018 review published in *European Endocrinology* have shown that mind-body practices, such as meditation, have a positive influence on hormones, and lead to "modest improvements in body weight, glycaemic control,

and blood pressure." Mindfulness practices have even been shown to confer enough benefit that they "lead to improvements across all domains of holistic care—biological, psychological and social," the researchers reported.

Mindfulness practices also lead to an increase in self-awareness and an improvement in self-care. This, in turn, leads to healthier habits, including paying more attention to eating diabetic-friendly foods, getting enough sleep (which also impacts hormones), and increasing activity levels—all of which lead to an overall improvement in quality of life.

Incorporating Mindfulness Into Your Day

There are a number of ways to incorporate meditation or other types of mind-body practice into your day. Whether it's joining a class (be it in-person or online), using an app, or doing something on your own, there's something for everyone.

One easy and simple option is taking 15 minutes in the morning for some intentional quiet time. It's a great way to get your day started on a positive, peaceful, and focused note.

First, find a quiet place where you can sit or lie down without distraction. Next, gently close your eyes and focus on breathing in and out through your nose, making sure to breathe down into your belly. Try to eliminate any distracting thoughts that come your way, and keep your muscles relaxed and free of tension. Just like a muscle, the more you do it, the stronger your ability to clear your mind and release stress and tension will become.

Another option is to focus on the sensations in our body, a mindfulness exercise called a body scan. First, find a quiet spot to get comfortable. Starting at the top of your head, spend 30 to 60 seconds focusing on how the area feels. Note any tension, pain, or discomfort, and then release it, imagining the discomfort

convey empathy Porges wrote, and we "wouldn't be able to tell how anyone else was feeling." He's widely credited with developing the Polyvagal Theory based on the vagus nerve, which has been instrumental in understanding the nervous system and how it retains traumatic experiences.

He also said our bodies can respond to situations in fear, even if we don't consciously register that we're afraid or perceive a threat.

"Because of our heritage as a species, neuroception [how our neural circuits distinguish if stimuli are safe or dangerous] takes place in the primitive parts of the brain, without our conscious awareness," he said.

How Can You Quiet Your Vagus Nerve?

A 2017 book called "Accessing the Healing Power of the Vagus Nerve: Self-Help Exercises for Anxiety, Depression, Trauma, and Autism" by Stanley Rosenberg with a foreword by Porges offers several natural techniques for healing and strengthening your vagus nerve. Scientific studies in medical literature point to other useful techniques. As the vagus nerve is so responsive to stress, these exercises often rest on relaxation techniques that quiet the nerve and the conditions associated with it.

A study in the *Journal of Psychology & Health* found that patients with vagus-nerve-related Inflammatory Bowel Dis-

Without the vagus nerve, we couldn't convey empathy and we 'wouldn't be able to tell how anyone else was feeling.



Our thoughts, feelings, and behaviors give us three avenues to shape our mental well-being and physical health.

disintegrating with each breath you exhale.

Next, move your focus to your face and jaw (an area where people often hold tension) and repeat. Move to the neck and shoulders (also an area of high tension), and continue downward until you reach your toes. Eliminate any drifting thoughts that arise, and bring your focus back to your body. You can even repeat the process if you feel any remaining tension in your body or mind.

If you need a little assistance with your practice, there are some great online meditation options, including Diabetes Sangha (a meditation community), Online Meditation Events, and Mindful Leader. There are also some helpful apps, with some of the most-often recommended ones being Healthy Minds Program, Waking Up, Headspace, and Calm (which includes "sleep stories," something great for those with insomnia).

Some other great ways to incorporate mindfulness into your day include taking a walk in nature or around your neighborhood, gardening, taking an art class or working on an art project, journaling, or even the simple act of cooking. During these times, we can focus on clearing out our minds and breathing deeply into our bellies. Actually, I often find that my mind naturally clears itself in these situations, and my stress levels naturally decrease.

Another idea is to get involved with some type of volunteer work or simply do something kind for another person. This also helps to clear our minds and acts as a type of mindfulness. By taking the focus off our own situations, we decrease our stress levels while also contributing something positive to the world around us.

In Conclusion

While some people may be reluctant to try meditation, thinking that it won't really do anything, that it's religious or perhaps of a different religion, or that it takes too much time, meditation can be done no matter how busy your day may be and no matter what your spiritual or religious beliefs (some who are religious even say they feel it brings them closer to God)—and it works!

Through this simple and convenient method, you can clear your mind, relax your body, and decrease your stress levels—ultimately leading to enhanced physical and mental well-being and an overall improvement in your quality of life. In fact, both the CDC and the American Diabetes Association, in its publication *Diabetes Spectrum*, tout the benefits of mind-body practice for improving diabetes.

So whether you're diabetic or not, give mind-body practice a try. You might just discover benefits you never imagined possible!

Tatiana Denning, D.O. is a preventive family medicine physician. She believes in empowering patients with the tools, knowledge and skills needed to improve their health by focusing on mindfulness, healthy habits, and weight management.

ease who received three relaxation training sessions and a relaxing audio disc to take home showed improvements in anxiety, pain, and stress. A study in the *Journal of Crohn's and Colitis* found that "Multi-convergent therapy," a type of psychotherapy that combines mindfulness meditation with cognitive behavioral therapy, was also successful in reducing symptoms of inflammatory bowel disease.

Hypnosis has also been effective in quieting the vagus nerve, according to a study published in the *International Journal of Clinical and Experimental Hypnosis*. According to the authors, "shifting the balance of the sympathovagal interaction toward an enhanced parasympathetic activity, concomitant with a reduction of the sympathetic tone," produced improvement in subjects who responded to hypnotism (which not everyone does).

Finally, research published in the *Journal of Investigative Medicine* found that many well-established mind/body modalities, such as yoga, tai chi, qigong, mindfulness-based stress reduction, meditation, and deep breathing, were effective in the treatment of post-traumatic stress disorder, which is highly correlated with vagus nerve hyperarousal.

Clearly, exercises that can calm and strengthen this miraculous nerve can be of great benefit to our health—and they can often be practiced at home after a little guidance.

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WISE HABITS

How the Feeling of Pointlessness Can Derail Us

This common emotional hurdle doesn't have to turn into an impossible barrier to growth

LEO BABAUTA

Something I've noticed that derails a lot of people's goals or attempts to form habits is the feeling that it's pointless to even try. If it feels like it won't matter if you do anything, why would you try? So when people feel this, they'll usually give up, understandably.

But if we want to break through this barrier, then the opportunity is to learn how to work with this feeling of pointlessness.

If we can find a way to feel empowered when things feel pointless, a whole new range of possibilities opens up for us—including the possibility of moving through the most difficult parts of a project or habit change.

What would it be like if you worked with your desire to give up when things felt hard and pointless?

Let's look at how to recognize the feeling of pointlessness and how you might work with it to create something new.

How to Recognize the Feeling of Pointlessness

It can be difficult to recognize this stumbling block, so let's look at some common ways that it appears:

- You missed a few days of a new habit (workout, meditation, journaling, and so forth) and you feel discouraged and want to give it up. The reason is the feeling of pointlessness: "Argh, I'll never get this, I suck, I can't do it."
- You think no one is going to care—you want to write a book or blog, for example, but you have the feeling that you're writing it and no one will read it. That feels pointless, so you might not even try.
- You want to sign up for something that could change your life—a new course, coaching, or something else—but you think that you won't actually pour yourself into it, so you won't get value out of it. "What's the point, if I'm not even going to show up for it?"
- You feel overwhelmed by the huge pile of tasks, clutter, or emails in front of you and feel like you can't tackle all of it, so you don't even start.
- Every time you give your best effort, things return back to where they were. It feels Sisyphean. So you just give up.
- You keep having the same conversation with someone, and it's not getting you anywhere. It's frustrating because you're going around in

If we can find a way to feel empowered when things feel pointless, a whole new range of possibilities opens up for us.

When we learn to put aside our feeling of hopelessness, we can more easily pick up where we left off and keep making progress.



- circles, so you decide to fire them, quit, break up, or ghost them.
- You were giving your best effort and then got derailed by something out of your control—injury, sickness, someone else's mistake or crisis, world events, and so forth. Why even try?
- You feel lost in the unknown. Best to stick to what you know!
- You're so far behind with bills that it feels impossible to catch up. So you ignore them.

You can see that this applies to everything in our lives—wanting to meditate, date, declutter, exercise, get out of debt, create something meaningful, build an amazing team, and so on.

This feeling of pointlessness stops us on all fronts. Time to take it on.

How to Work With the Struggle

There's nothing wrong with the feeling of pointlessness—it's such a human feeling. The difficulty comes when we believe it and make it mean something.

So my encouragement is to make it mean nothing other than this is just how it feels right now. That feeling of pointlessness is only meaningful to the extent that we care about how we feel—I feel sad, lonely, uplifted, curious, playful, angry, or crestfallen. They matter, but they're not the entire world.

Feel the feeling. Give it some compassion. Breathe.

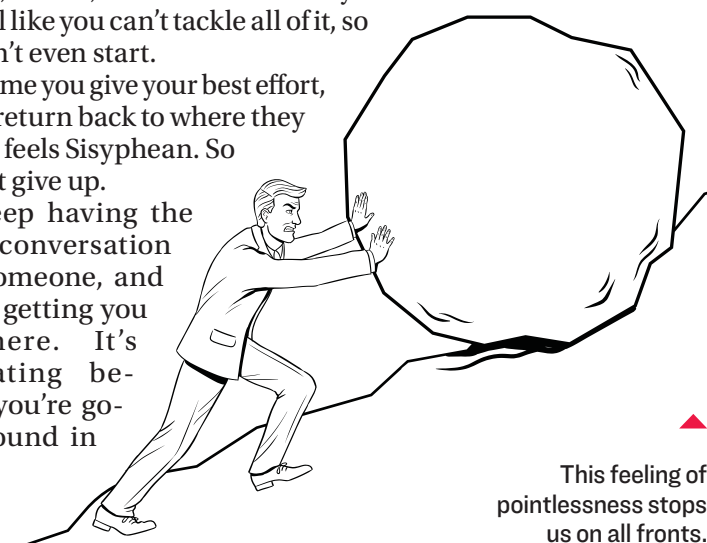
Then find a way to feel more empowered:

- Missing one or two days is just an expected part of the process of learning and growth.
- Messiness is a part of life, something beautiful to love and embrace.
- If no one read a single word of my writing, would there still be something powerful for me in the writing process?
- If I keep ending up in the same place, is there something for me to look at here, something I could learn from it? Would that make these repeated attempts valuable to me if I learned something?
- If I keep failing to finish a course or program, is there an opportunity to shift something that would be powerful for me? What would it be like if I changed this pattern forever?
- Could I let myself be curious when I'm lost in the unknown?
- If I'm far behind, could I focus just on the next step?
- If I have a mountain of tasks, could I love the activity of climbing the mountain? Could I find joy in each step?

What would it be like to find meaning in the place that feels pointless?

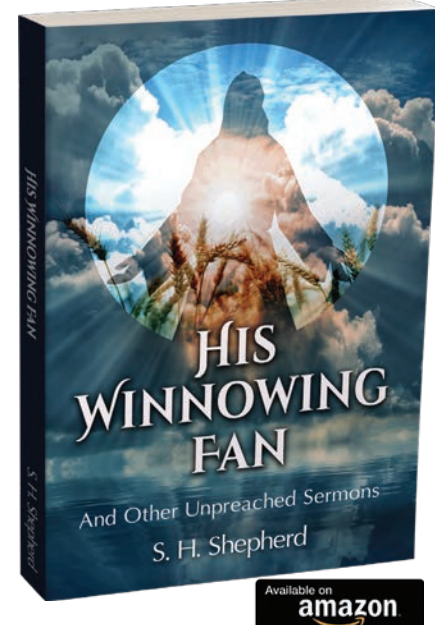
Leo Babauta is the author of six books and the writer of Zen Habits, a blog with over 2 million subscribers. Visit ZenHabits.net

Some tasks seem endless, but no hill lasts forever.



This feeling of pointlessness stops us on all fronts.

His Winnowing Fan



Only a portion of the many messages of the Bible are being heard today. Hardly any are on eschatology, the subject of heaven and hell. Instead, we hear only an abbreviated form of Christianity that consists of Jesus's teachings on love, mercy, forgiveness, and compassion. While crucial to our understanding of salvation, they do little to startle or influence behavior, but are preached because they are easier to hear.

Messages that concern God's wrath and man's eternal future should be preached more often, for they alert us to be more watchful of what we say and do, and help us to act more naturally with honesty, integrity and truthfulness. In addition, important aspects of Christian life are seldom if ever taught today, such as how should evil be treated—should it be tolerated or opposed, and how should Christians view the tolerant world?

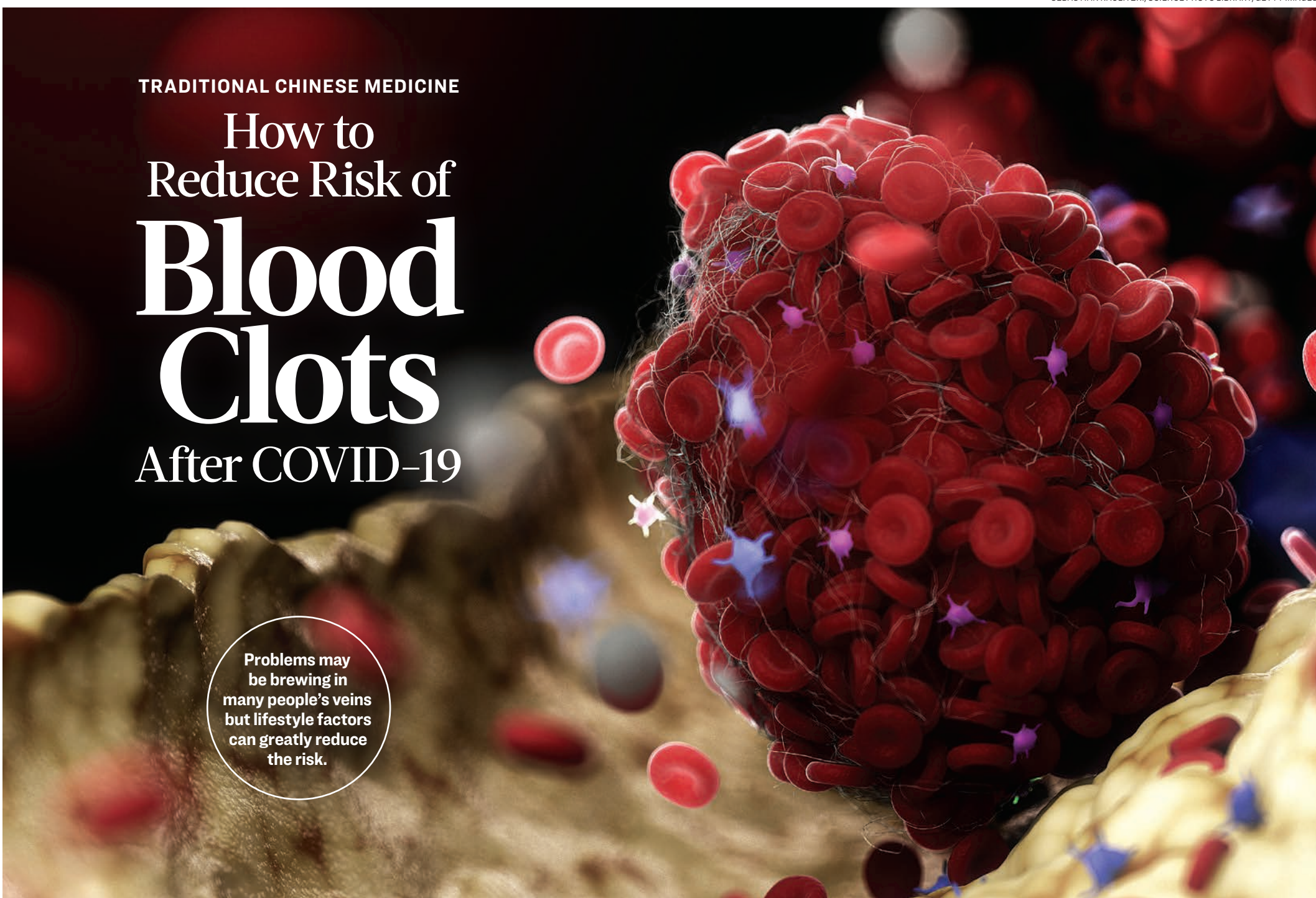
Each chapter of this book discusses an important sermon topic that is seldom if ever elucidated. They tell us that the purposes of God are not the purposes of man, that God's purposes transcend man's, and also man, himself. Were the full teachings of the Bible faithfully given to the world, the problems of the church would be solved and attendance would take care of itself.



TRADITIONAL CHINESE MEDICINE

How to Reduce Risk of Blood Clots After COVID-19

Problems may be brewing in many people's veins but lifestyle factors can greatly reduce the risk.



These 5 things can reduce risk of COVID and vaccination-linked blood clots

JONATHAN LIU & SINDY LAM

Thrombosis, or blood clots that block veins or arteries, is one of the complications of COVID-19. Research has found that the incidence rates of both arterial thrombosis and venous thrombosis increase significantly in COVID patients.

In addition, some people have rare side effects such as thrombosis with thrombocytopenia syndrome after they get vaccinated. This is when antibodies produced by the vaccine activate platelets, resulting

in low platelet count and blood clots.

Western medicine usually adopts anticoagulant (blood thinners) and thrombolytic therapy (drugs to break up blood clots) to tackle thrombosis. However, this also carries the risk of side effects such as bleeding and allergies.

Traditional Chinese medicine (TCM) has a long history of curing thrombosis effectively, even in cases of thrombosis that are difficult to treat with anticoagulants.

Continued on Page 12

You can think of qi as the substance that fills the total energy requirement of the body. It comes mainly from the air we breathe and the food we eat.

4 Habits for Preventing Thrombosis

There are best practices that we can incorporate into our daily life to prevent thrombosis, and many of them are not so difficult.



AVOID LENGTHY SITTING

If you are sitting too much at work and home, it is critically important you get up and move.



EAT WELL AND AVOID SMOKING

Many foods can help prevent blood clots, while smoking can encourage them.



DRINK ENOUGH WATER

Water can help dilute the blood and reduce the risk of forming clots.



CONTROL UNDERLYING HEALTH CONDITIONS

It is important to actively prevent and treat obesity, diabetes, and high blood pressure.

OVERTREATMENT

Strange Side Effects From Statins

Statins have been linked to everything from diabetes to suicide, but alternatives do exist

When it comes to pretty much any chronic condition, lifestyle factors are front and center.

MARTHA ROSENBERG

Few drug classes have been as popular as statins, which were introduced in 1987. Statins block the enzyme in liver cells (called HMG-CoA) that produces cholesterol, lowering the risk of cardiac death, myocardial infarction, and other atherosclerotic events.

The medications were considered such wonder drugs when they first appeared that U.S. health officials recommended adding them to the public water supply. Pfizer's statin Lipitor was the best-selling drug in the history of the world.

Yet soon after Lipitor went off patent in 2011, the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) added warnings to the drug about the risk of liver damage, memory loss, confusion, Type 2 diabetes, and muscle weakness. The FDA also recommended that patients should receive liver enzyme

tests before taking the drugs, not just while they're taking them.

Does Cholesterol Really Cause Atherosclerotic Events?

While the contribution of cholesterol to heart events is backed by the Mayo and Cleveland Clinics and the American Heart Association, cholesterol "skeptics" call the connections merely a hypothesis. A 2018 article in the journal *Nutrients*, "Inflammation, not Cholesterol, Is a Cause of Chronic Disease," expounds on the theory.

"The reduction of dietary or serum cholesterol" isn't behind heart events but, rather, they're caused by "inflammation induced by several factors, such as platelet-activating factor (PAF), that leads to the onset of cardiovascular diseases (CVD)."

Continued on Page 12



Statins are supposed to prevent deaths from cardiovascular disease but the drugs come with side effects that other treatments don't have.

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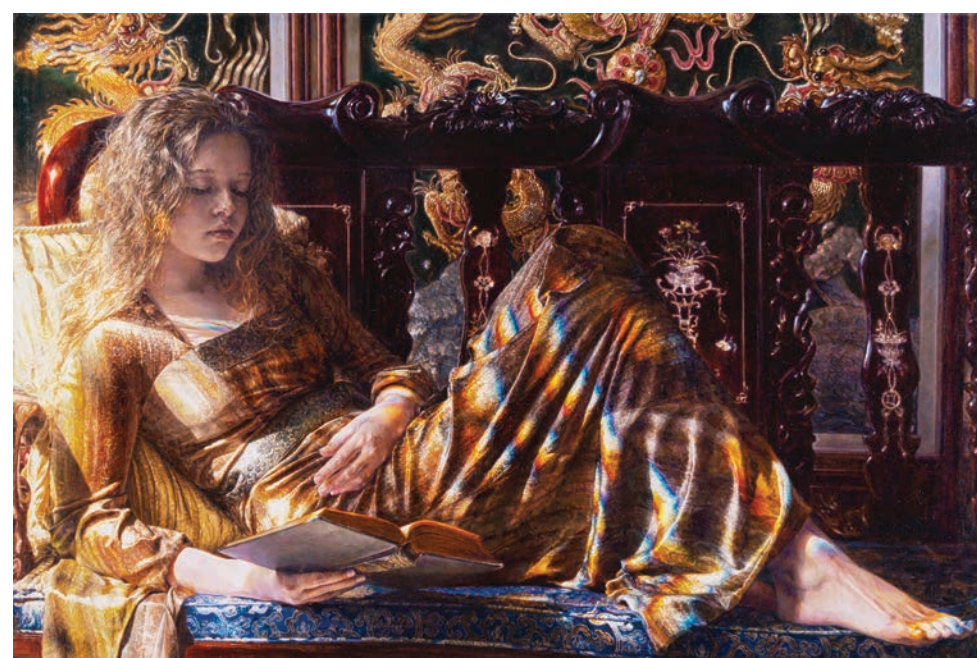
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THE EPOCH TIMES



The most profound way your body interacts with your environment is by eating it.

Why Good Digestion Is Important in Ayurveda

Your very body begins with digestion, so if you have problems here, they must be resolved

JOHN IMMEL

Many doctors agree: Better health starts in the digestive tract. But why? Just what role does digestion play, and why is it the cornerstone to better health?

Simply put, when you eat good food and digest it well, you build good blood. As if by magic, digestive enzymes inside your belly break down the food you eat into nutrients your body can utilize. Once these nutrients are broken down and absorbed into your blood, they are fed to your vital organs.

Therefore, the better your digestion, the better your blood, the better your organs, and the better your health.

Digestion isn't easy. In fact, digestion is a metabolic monster consuming up to 60 percent of your daily metabolism. Since it's such an energy hog, you have to pay close attention to it.

Ayurvedic medicine is one of the great ancient medical systems still thriving in the world today. Ancient ayurvedic practitioners knew how important and difficult digestion really was, so they approached their digestion with awe, wonder, and a sense of the sacred. The Hindu god of fire, lightning, and the sun, Agni, was also the god of digestion. While we don't suggest you worship Agni in order to heal your digestion, we do recommend a healthy respect for digestive organs.

By the incredible feat of digestion, when you eat an apple, it becomes a part of your body. And whether the apple is hot or cold, acidic or basic, sugary or bitter, your digestion neutralizes these qualities and transforms them into the building blocks of living human flesh. That's pretty amazing, right? But that's not all, good digestion brings you clarity, lightness, energy, vitality, and resilience to disease. Good digestion brings joy and enthusiasm. Finally, good digestion confers beauty and a fragrant aroma.

Indigestion Causes Disease

The opposite is also true. Without good food and digestion, you can't build good blood. If you make poor food choices, can't produce the right enzymes, or can't absorb nutrients properly, you will not be able to build good blood.

Some argue that good digestion is even more important than good nutrition. That's because when you can't digest your food, you can't extract the nutrients from it. Either way, when you're not digesting your food correctly, you simply can't build the best blood, and your health suffers.

More insidiously, when your digestion is weak, bacteria proliferate in the unabsorbed food. They multiply rapidly in your intestines, leading to a process of fermentation, gas, and bloating.

Ever wonder why flatulence smells? It smells because of the waste products of these bacteria—literally bacterial feces and urine. These waste products are highly toxic and smelly, turning your digestive tract into a veritable sewer. Those who are mindful of health will take precautions to prevent indigestion not only because it leads to nutrient deficiency, but because it cascades into this rapid buildup of poisons. Undigested food tends to sit, stag-

nant in the intestines.

As bacteria turn the food in your gut rotten, your immune system has to fight these bacteria to prevent them from infesting your body. Your immune system must also break down the poisons in your gut. This both exhausts and overstimulates your immune system, leaving you prone to disease, food allergies, and autoimmune disorders.

Bacteria aren't the only organisms that thrive when digestion is weak. Parasites love indigestion. When your digestion is strong, your enzymes, especially the acids in your stomach, naturally kill ingested parasites. But if your digestion is weak, these parasites survive and infest the small intestine.

Ayurveda has a special name called ama for the poisons produced by critters in your gut. Whether you are suffering from chronic skin issues, mood disorders, or even aches and pains, poisonous ama is often the silent cause. Muscle tissue and nerve tissue are among the most sensitive tissues to ama.

When I had poor digestion from years of traveling overseas, I developed heart palpitations due to ama. Once I healed my digestion with ayurveda, the heart palpitations went away.

When you have indigestion, you also feel emotionally disturbed from the buildup of ama. A mild buildup of ama causes simple dissatisfaction with your life, as well as anger and anxiety. A medium buildup causes general discomfort and malaise as well. In advanced conditions, like mine was, you may get heart palpitations as well.

Digestion Is an Opportunity to Heal

As awe inspiring as digestion is, it isn't beyond your influence. In fact, your influence over your own food choices and digestive capacity is one of the greatest opportunities you have to influence your blood chemistry, and therefore your health.

Anytime you take medicine, the first interaction of your body with the medicine happens in the digestive tract. The most profound way your body interacts with your environment is by eating it. Food and digestion are where your body meets nature in the most profound way, a fact you can harness to your advantage.

In short, your influence over your digestion can be a determining factor in your state of health and wellness. The benefits of good digestion and the evils of indigestion make digestion relevant to everyone. That's why, for more than 5,000 years, ayurveda has believed that diet and digestion is the first step to health.

Visit John Immel's website, JoyfulBelly.com, for Ayurvedic nutrition one tasty recipe at a time, and professional, clinically focused, Ayurveda training courses. Immel also founded the National Association of Ayurveda Schools and Colleges, and the American Association of Biocharacteristics Clinicians.



Good digestion is the foundation to good health because it provides the essential substances your body needs to sustain itself.

HEALING ALTERNATIVES

Toe Spacers Play a Role in Correcting Foot Problems

Surgery can often be avoided with a holistic approach to realigning toes

AMY DENNEY

Toe spacers are a useful tool for anyone whose feet spend a great deal of time scrunched inside shoes. While they aren't a miracle cure for major foot problems, toe spacers can help stretch out and realign toes that are beginning an inward compression. They can prevent toes from drifting out of order and offer recovery after wearing constricting shoes. And they can hold toes in the correct position for patients doing rehabilitation to prevent or recover after surgery.

Toes that are straight, spread, and flat are normal for foot physiology but those traits often vanish in feet constantly in shoes that are narrow, rigid, overly structured, or have an incline. Toes may not seem like that big of a deal, but they're connected to the body's muscular, nervous, and circulatory systems. They constantly read and respond to sensory information that is foundational to the body's operation.

"Separation of toes can help if used in the right way," Dr. Paul Thompson said. "A big part of my practice is exercises based around stability and strength."

To speed up healing, he often recommends toe spacers for patients to hold their feet and toes in the correct position while doing prescribed exercises. Toe spacers are usually made of silicon or gel and slide between the toes, stretching out not just muscles in the toes but the connective tissue holding together the entire foot.

Some podiatrists are recognizing the value of approaching toe deficiencies in a more holistic, gentler way using exercises and tools in place of the more traditional, invasive model of orthotic inserts and surgeries.

"The industry has gone down a path that's more monetary based rather than looking at the whole person and how you can get them better," Thompson said.

But he's quick to point out that while some patients will still need surgery, a functional approach can make operations a last resort. Plus, learning foot exercises helps people recover from surgery and prevent further problems.

Who Needs Toe Spacers?

Podiatrist Dr. Emily Spilchal recommends toe spacers to about 95 percent of her patients.

Because toe spacers are good for preventing foot problems, just about anyone could experience benefits from using them. Both Spilchal and Thompson regard foot education as an important part of their responsibilities.

Here are seven situations in which Spilchal says toe spacers can help:

1. They naturally align the toes, which is helpful for bunions. Bunions are bony lumps on the outside of a big toe joint caused by compression of the toes. When the big toe starts to gravitate toward and sometimes overlap the second toe, the bottom joint juts outward to compensate for the pressure. Bunions can be caused by narrow shoes, arthritis, and foot deformities.

2. They straighten and lengthen toes, which helps correct and prevent hammertoes. This is a condition where a toe bends downward and the middle joint sticks out, creating deformities in tendons and joints. The most common cause of hammertoes is wearing shoes that are too tight.

(Spilchal doesn't recommend a popular exercise of gripping and scrunching a towel with the toes. Even though it seems like it would strengthen smaller muscles, it actually trains the toes to curl under rather than to straighten into the preferred position that's necessary for gait.)

3. They spread and splay the toes, relieving pressure on nerves. This is especially helpful for neuromas, nerve "tumors" that are caused by trauma from high-arched feet, flat feet, and high heels that squeeze and compress nerves.

4. They allow toes and feet to reset, "breathe," and open up. Recovery for feet that have been in shoes all day is something everyone can do to prevent deformities. Spilchal

recommends her patients wear toe spacers while cooking dinner or eating, because it's a simple, passive way to create a habit.

"I try to create easy foot recovery techniques for patients that they can actually implement successfully," she said.

5. They stretch out and release pressure and tightness caused by plantar fasciitis and arch pain. The plantar fascia is connective tissue that runs from the heel and inserts into the base of the toes, supporting the arch and playing a mechanical role in walking. Toe spacers can improve circulation and restore function to this vital, sensitive tissue. Plantar fasciitis, an inflammation of the tissue, is common in people with flat feet, high arches, and those who put a lot of stress on their feet. Insufficient foot strength and excessive foot stress are risk factors for inflammation.

"You always have to make sure you're balancing stress with recovery," Spilchal said.

6. They create stronger toe flexion, which improves balance for anyone with equilibrium problems. Toe flexion, the ability of toes to bend at the joints, improves balance, leg stability, athleticism, and peak vertical jump. Besides athletes, those with neuropathy or recovering from a stroke may also need to improve toe flexion.

"Balance exercises are really good for your feet because it requires them to contract and engage," Spilchal said. "I want them to be done barefoot."

7. They optimize the lever mechanism of the foot by lengthening toes. Longer toes create more torque and power.

"I want athletes, as an example, to have long, flat, straight digits so they can really catapult and push off of the foot," Spilchal said. "Strong toes do not grip like the hand does. The foot is very different from the hand. People will make analogies but they are actually very different in mechanics."

Exercise Is Everything

Rehabilitation, though not easy, has more sticking power. When Thompson explains the benefits, he said most patients actually prefer it to surgery. "You have more control over your treatment rather than putting all your treatment in my hands," he said. "I find if you take accountability and you understand what we're trying to achieve, you get a better result, and it will last you longer."

He recently saw a patient who previously had surgery to correct a bunion. Though his toes looked perfectly straight because of four screws, his foot was unable to move correctly and had functional problems.

"It might fix that particular issue, but if you aren't looking at function ... it can lead to a lot of other problems as well," Thompson said. Exercises are designed uniquely for patients, he said, depending on the diagnosis. But there are three basic ones anyone can do:

- Vertical "toe yoga": Lift the big toe up while the other toes stay down and then lift the smaller toes while the big toe stays down. This engages toe and arch muscles.
- Horizontal "toe yoga": Move the big toe out away from the other four toes.
- Short foot: Put equal weight on a triangle of points on the heel, the big toe pad and pinky toe pad. Then create an arch by gently pulling (but not curling) the toes toward the heel.

"Sometimes those three can be just enough to wake things up for people, giving them feedback and feeling when they're using their feet," Thompson said.

Spilchal said basic, easy exercises work best, done with bare feet. She also said people should walk barefoot at least 30 minutes daily.

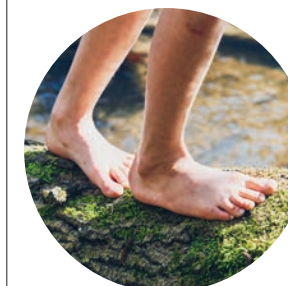
"There's more and more validation, more and more barefoot training research," Spilchal said. "Research has shown minimal shoes actually strengthen the foot muscles."

An Individual Approach

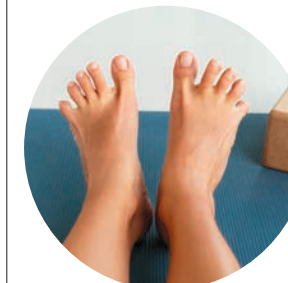
In addition to unlimited styles of shoes that influence foot development and functionality, how we spend our time, our



Toe spacers can help stretch out and realign toes that are beginning an inward compression.



Walking barefoot is a great way to relax and has additional benefits on foot health.



Practicing spreading your toes, a kind of "toe yoga" is a great way to support your feet.

anatomy, and the surfaces we walk and run on can impact foot health.

Movement done on hard tile and concrete is less forgiving than walking on surfaces that are more natural, like wood and dirt.

Also, feet can become passive over time and degrade structures like tendons, nerves, and bones. The degree of insult can also influence the approach podiatrists take with rehabilitation. Even though barefoot therapy is critical, it can be too abrupt for someone with severe bunions and hammertoes. Better footwear and toe spacers may need to be introduced gradually.

Spilchal said variability of surfaces, in addition to foot posture, should all be taken into account in recovery.

"It's an overly rigid foot that cannot withstand the pressure," she said. "An otherwise neutral or sufficient foot should be able to meet the demands of movement without too much structure or support."

Thompson, whose podiatry practice has evolved to offer workshops and preventative care products, changed his own views when the orthodox approach wasn't working for his own feet.

"I couldn't figure out why I couldn't get my own feet better," he said. "I tried lots of different pairs of orthotics, different shoes, and materials of orthotics."

The relief was temporary until Thompson began to study the biomechanical issues of feet that weren't taught in medical school. He realized he needed to stop wearing traditional shoes, even athletic sneakers because the heel is slightly raised and the toe box often curls up.

"They have features that are detrimental to how the foot functions," he said. "That changes everything, how your muscles in your glute work. It changes the position of your calves, your ankles, and puts more pressure on your knees."

Now you can find him hiking with his young children barefoot—unless the location might be dangerous. When they wear shoes, they are flat, flexible, and have a wide toe box.



Many people are suffering foot problems because they're cramming their toes into narrow shoes for most of each day.

6 Books That Will Rewire Your Brain (in a Good Way)

Books have the power to lead us to truth or conceal it from us

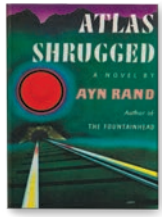
JON MILTIMORE

The novelist Alice Hoffman once observed that books “may well be the only true magic.”

Hoffman isn't the only person to recognize the power of the written word. C.S. Lewis observed that books reveal to us that we're not alone, while Frederick Douglass saw their liberating power.

I've long observed that you can learn a lot about people by looking at their bookshelves. Some might say this is because books are a reflection of us, and this is partly true; but books also shape who we are. They have the power to lead us to truth or conceal it from us.

Here are six books that can change how you see the world and reality—in a good way.

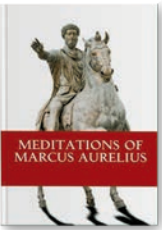


1. Atlas Shrugged, by Ayn Rand (1957)

“Atlas Shrugged” is one of the most influential books ever written—it has sold more than 10 million copies worldwide—and for good reason.

Rand's magnum opus is a visionary work of art that details the struggle of the individual against collectivist forces seeking to control and rob him—all in the name of a greater good. Part mystery, part romance, and part polemic, “Atlas Shrugged” tears down the curtain hiding the wizards who control society in the name of fairness.

When I first read “Atlas Shrugged,” I was stunned by how clearly Rand “saw the future,” until I realized she lived through the New Deal. That's when I realized Rand wasn't a prophet as much as a shrewd author who had ascertained how the collectivist machine (and grift) works.



2. Meditations (A.D. 161–180), by Marcus Aurelius

A friend bought me a copy of “Meditations” when I was in college, and it's been one of the books that has remained near my bedside over the years. Written by one of the few great Emperors of Rome—

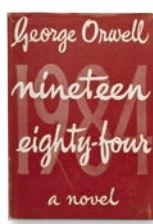
Marcus Aurelius (A.D. 121–180)—“Meditations” is more like a series of philosophical

reflections than an organized book. But its insights are beautiful and powerful, and it's perhaps the single greatest work of Stoic philosophy ever written.

“Meditations” is a fountain of reason that will teach you how to control your mind, and through that your habits and actions. Written at a time when the greatest civilization of antiquity was collapsing, it's essentially a road map for self-control and self-improvement that will teach you individual progress is still achievable in a crumbling world.

I've long observed that you can learn a lot about people by looking at their bookshelves.

Life is a precious gift, but Aurelius understood it's also filled with challenges: pain, suffering, and injustice. Few books can better prepare you and your mind to meet these challenges than “Meditations.”

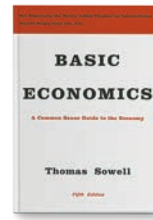


3. 1984 (1948) by George Orwell

“Nineteen Eighty-Four” is perhaps the most terrifying book on this list—largely because George Orwell saw the future so well. Dubbed “the definitive book of the

20th century,” his masterpiece depicts a totalitarian future where people are constantly surveilled, manipulated, lied to, and sometimes tortured. While Big Brother's totalitarian tendencies and surveillance techniques speak a clear warning and remain highly relevant today, Orwell's most impressive literary insight was how postmodern philosophy combined with state power and mass propaganda would torture not just people, but truth itself.

After reading “Nineteen Eighty-Four,” the more subtle psychological terror of our own time becomes more acute, and the book is sure to change how you see the world today.



4. Basic Economics (2000), by Thomas Sowell

Thomas Sowell's bestselling work “Basic Economics” is arguably the best introductory economics book ever written. It's packed with history that shows the power of incentives—good and bad—and the danger of focusing on the intention of public policies rather than their results.

Sowell, unlike most professional economists, is a talented writer and storyteller. His historical anecdotes and punchy prose will be an eye-opener for new readers trying to understand why so many problems exist in the world today despite our prosperity.



5. Brave New World (1932), by Aldous Huxley

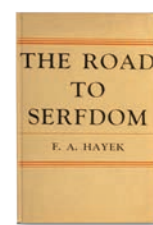
Aldous Huxley's terrifying work “Brave New World” is one of the few books that some argue is more prophetic than Orwell's masterpiece.

Imagine a world where a small group of central planners engineer a drugged-out society and use education as a means of conditioning pupils with class consciousness to control everyone.

That's basically the setting of “Brave New World.” Huxley's dystopia is more seductive than Orwell's, which is what makes it more real in some ways. The English writer understood that humanity would come to love the chains it wore, especially in the presence of opulence, sex, and drugs.

Huxley believed the world's governments would slowly but surely grow more totalitarian, and the only thing that could prevent this was a “large-scale popular movement toward decentralization.”

After reading “Brave New World,” you'll likely agree with him.



6. The Road to Serfdom, by F.A. Hayek (1944)

Nobel Prize-winning economist F.A. Hayek's most popular and influential book, “The Road to Serfdom” was written and published during the height of World War II, in

response to the global rise of fascism and socialism. Hayek saw that most Western governments in the world, including the United States, were making a grave error as they sought to control ever more private activity.

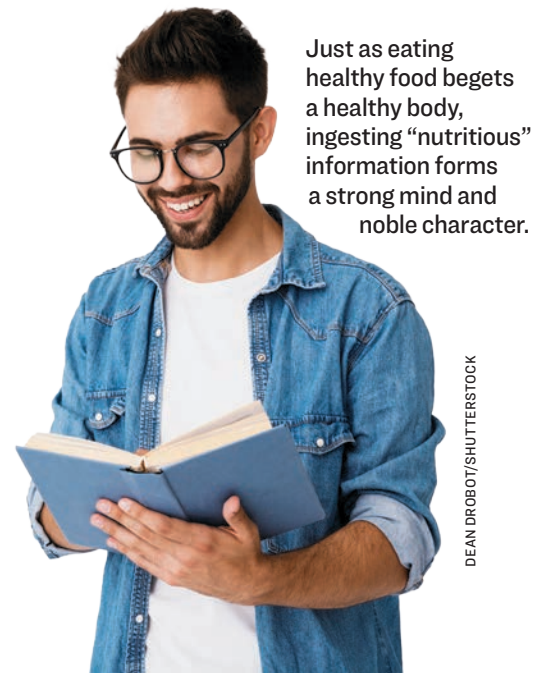
“We have progressively abandoned that freedom in economic affairs without which personal and political freedom has never existed in the past,” he wrote.

An honest, meticulous, and unapologetic defense of laissez-faire capitalism and classical liberalism, Hayek pulled no punches, pointing out that the “increasing veneration for the state, the admiration of power, and of bigness for bigness' sake” was scarcely different in countries such as England than it was in Nazi Germany.

Few books will help readers better understand that fascism wasn't actually defeated in 1945, but lives on today in various incarnations.

This article was originally published on FEE.org

Jonathan Miltimore is the managing editor of the Foundation for Economic Education. His writing/reporting has been the subject of articles in TIME magazine, The Wall Street Journal, CNN, Forbes, Fox News, and the Star Tribune.

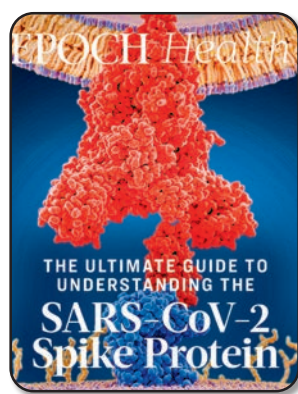


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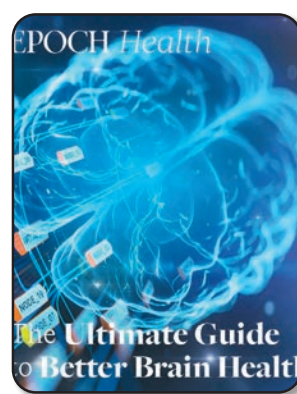
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