

THE EPOCH TIMES

MIND & BODY

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A short bout of fear can boost immunity; ongoing fear can ruin it.

HOW Fear Sabotages Your Immune System

The only thing we have to fear is fear itself

70
PERCENT
of the immune system
is located in the gut.

Among people's mental health concerns during the COVID-19 pandemic, fear was the most prevalent issue.

During the pandemic the vaccine aroused a range of fears for different people.



TELNOV OLEKSII / SHUTTERSTOCK

MERCURA WANG

The world has been plagued by the COVID-19 pandemic for more than three years. It has profoundly changed our society, and many people have become generally more fearful. This, in turn, sabotages their immune systems and makes them more vulnerable to COVID-19 infection. According to a study by a team of

researchers from the University of Rochester who examined people's mental health concerns during the COVID-19 pandemic, fear was the most prevalent issue. "Fear" was also the most frequently mentioned word on social media, followed by keywords such as "alone," "failure," and "depressed." Prevalent fears included death, loss of family or friends, vaccine adverse events, COVID-19 infection, and long COVID. For instance,

while some people were trying to stay away from COVID-19 vaccines, some were afraid of "missing out" on the most effective brand by choosing the "wrong" ones. Several other forms of fear include panic and phobia. Some people were afraid of contracting the virus. As a result, when COVID-19 vaccines became available, they received four to five doses, including booster shots.

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Ultrasounds, Lifestyle Medicine Can Help Eliminate Heart Disease, Doctors Say

The BaleDoneen Method is streamlining fragmented medical care by optimizing arterial wellness

AMY DENNEY

A small but growing number of doctors are using the science of sound to take a peek inside a patient's arteries so they'll know whether they're at risk of a heart attack or stroke. High-frequency sound waves produced by handheld ultrasound devices allow doctors to see inside the carotid arteries that are responsible for delivering blood to the brain. The technology offers a painless real-time view of blood flow and plaque build-up, giving a rapid assessment of disease risk. Sonogram technology gives voice to the "silent killer" known as cardiovascular disease. Cardiovascular disease can develop over decades, often completely unnoticed until there's a blockage that causes symptoms—shortness of breath, fatigue, chest pains, stroke, and heart attack, or a completely blocked artery. Heart disease is the No. 1 cause of death in the United States, and it can befall those who have no outward symptoms of calcium buildup lurking in their arteries, called atherosclerosis. "It's there. We just need to reveal it and react to it," Dr. Craig Backs told The Epoch Times. An internist and founder of the Cure Center for Chronic Disease, Backs emphasized heart disease is preventable and reversible even when it runs in families. "Genetics are just the cards you're dealt, but good card players can play a bad hand into success." Backs uses gaming analogies in his practice, describing himself as a coach who offers motivation, measurement, teaching, and feedback to help his patients—the players—gain healthier arteries.

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PEAKSTOCK/SHUTTERSTOCK



Sonogram technology


gives voice to the "silent killer" known as cardiovascular disease.

EVERY
34 SECONDS

a life is lost to heart disease in the United States.

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Martin Rubenis
OLYMPIC ATHLETE


Shiyu Zhou
PH.D., USA

Zhuan Falun is the main text of Falun Gong (also called Falun Dafa). The book expounds upon profound principles of Truthfulness, Compassion and Tolerance. It addresses the long-forgotten term “cultivation,” the origins of illnesses, karma, the role of moral character on a path to spiritual perfection, and more.

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Definitive Evidence of the Gut Microbiome Role in Parkinson’s Disease

Large, high-resolution study reveals new clues about disease pathogenesis

AMY DENNEY

New research published in Nature Communications reveals widespread dysbiosis (disruption to the gut microbiome) in Parkinson’s sufferers and includes details of the specific microscopic species that are driving the imbalance.

Parkinson’s disease afflicts more than 10 million people worldwide, according to the Parkinson’s Foundation; in the United States alone, nearly 90,000 cases are diagnosed annually with an expected rise to 1.2 million by 2030, the organization says.

Parkinson’s is a disease that affects the nervous system and causes uncontrollable body movements including shaking and stiffness and difficulty with balance and coordination. Symptoms gradually increase with age and in later stages can affect brain function, causing dementia-like symptoms and depression.

In many cases, the findings confirm previous animal studies, but also may explain disease-specific mechanisms that weren’t necessarily linked to the microbiome. The metagenomics study (study of all genetic material sampled from a community) collected stool from 490 persons with Parkinson’s and 234 neurologically healthy controls.

Led by Haydeh Payami, founder and lead investigator of the NeuroGenetics Research Consortium at the University of Alabama–Birmingham, it’s the largest microbiome study conducted at the highest resolution, according to the university media office. It offers more specific insight into gut microorganisms, including a profile of the various pathogens associated with Parkinson’s, plus a chance to see the microbiomes of those who are neurologically healthy in detail.

The microbiome is an emerging field of study that’s composed of the dynamic microscopic world of organisms that, in this study, refers to the community living in the intestine. The human microbiome involves bacteria, viruses, and fungi on the skin and in organs. The gut microbiome has largely become associated with the body’s immune system and its role in pathogenic disease.

The study strengthens a hypothesis made in 2003 that non-familial forms of Parkinson’s begin in the gut. Largely considered a genetic brain disorder, Parkinson’s is often recognized by symptoms of uncontrollable movement such as tremors, as well as difficulties with balance and coordination. But it’s also associated with gastrointestinal distress such as constipation, inflammation, and a compromised gut barrier.

Among the study’s highlights as it related to those with Parkinson’s:

- More than 30 percent of species, genes, and pathways tested had altered abundances.
- Microbes tended to form polymicrobial clusters that grew or shrunk to-

- gether, and some competed.
- Microbiomes were in a state vulnerable to disease, with an overabundance of pathogens and immunogenic components.
- Microbiomes tended to have dysregulated neuroactive signaling.
- Microbiomes had a preponderance of molecules that induce alpha-synuclein pathology, a marker of the disease that’s related to cognitive functioning and implicated in neuronal dysfunction and death.
- Microbiomes had an over-production of toxicants, with a reduction in anti-inflammatory and neuroprotective factors.

Microbiomes tended to have dysregulated neuroactive signaling.

With these relationships established, it opens the door for further research on specific hypotheses. If the origin and progression of the disease can be pinpointed, that might lead to early diagnostic tools, as well as strategies to manipulate the microbiome for treatments and even prevention.



NEAR DHRASAESOM/SHUTTERSTOCK

The dataset is free and open to the public domain for use in more studies.

“We validate, in human Parkinson’s disease, findings that were observed in experimental models; reconcile and resolve human Parkinson’s disease microbiome literature; and provide a broad foundation with a wealth of concrete testable hypotheses to discern the role of the gut microbiome in Parkinson’s disease,” the study says.

In all, the researchers looked at 257 different microbiome species, and more than 30 percent were associated with Parkinson’s. Of those 84 species, 55 were abnormally high and 29 were depleted.

Bifidobacterium dentium was elevated sevenfold; Actinomyces oris was elevated more than sixfold; and Streptococcus mutans was elevated sixfold, according to the university news release. Of those with low levels, Roseburia intestinalis was reduced by more than sevenfold and Blautia wexlerae by fivefold. In all, 36 percent of the species associated with Parkinson’s had higher than twofold change in abundance, reflecting a 100 percent to 750 percent increase or decrease in Parkinson’s versus the healthy group.

Metagenomics is a relatively new field but is rapidly developing technology that’s becoming more accessible and affordable. However, the existence of information only offers inference, as the metabolic functions aren’t observed in action. In this instance, there’s a lot of data that can help direct the scope of future research toward understanding microbial life.

Ivermectin for COVID-19 and Vaccine-Induced Chronic Fatigue

Nearly 80% of patients with COVID-19 had one or more persistent symptoms post-infection and 58 percent met the case definition for chronic fatigue syndrome.



This drug has shown significant effect for many people suffering post-COVID chronic fatigue

GEORGE CITRONER

Chronic fatigue syndrome (CFS), also called myalgic encephalomyelitis, can leave sufferers feeling tired, even after sleep, and may lead to problems with memory and concentration.

CFS cases have exploded during the COVID-19 pandemic and some doctors are using novel methods to treat the condition—including ivermectin, which was called a “wonder drug” for human health before the pandemic.

Nearly 80 Percent Report Post-COVID CFS

A recent questionnaire-based study published in the journal Neurology International found that nearly 80 percent of patients with COVID-19 had one or more persistent symptoms post-infection and 58 percent met the case definition for CFS.

Another analysis published by Fair Health showed that CFS was most common in those with severe COVID-19, but even among asymptomatic infections, 1 in 5 reported the condition.

CFS had been described as early as 1934 and was associated with the Epstein-Barr virus in the ‘80s.

Before developing symptoms, patients most frequently reported experiencing severe illness, surgery, an accident, or physical, psychological, or emotional trauma.

“Post-COVID fatigue and myalgic encephalomyelitis are two disorders that have a tremendous amount of overlap,” Dr. Thomas Gut, medical director of the Post-COVID Recovery Center at Staten Island University Hospital, part of Northwell Health in New York, told The Epoch Times.

Post-COVID-19 CFS, a condition that can be a symptom of long COVID, is characterized by prolonged, generalized, and abnormal fatigue after exercise that

doesn’t resolve after rest; recurrent headaches; and problems with concentration and memory that have lasted for at least six months.

It may be accompanied by other symptoms, such as tender lymph nodes, musculoskeletal pain, sleep disruption, and psychiatric problems.

The condition has also been identified as a potential adverse reaction to being vaccinated against COVID-19.

CFS and its painful cousin fibromyalgia represent the “tripping of a circuit breaker” in the part of the brain called the hypothalamus, Dr. Jacob Teitelbaum, a board-certified internist and nationally known expert in the fields of chronic fatigue syndrome, fibromyalgia, sleep, and pain, told The Epoch Times.

Participants in the ivermectin group showed a statistically significant reduction of 72 percent in laboratory-confirmed infections between day 1 and day 28, versus a placebo.

“It is not enough to simply turn the circuit breaker back on,” Teitelbaum said. “You also need to address what caused the circuit breaker to overload, and this varies dramatically from cause to cause.”

He pointed out that CFS can occur as a result of numerous stressors or after one of many infections besides COVID-19. These include:

- A stressful job or relationship
- Hormonal issues
- Other chronic infections
- Autoimmune disease

Light Therapy May Boost Energy in People Suffering from MS

MAT LECOMPTÉ

People with multiple sclerosis (MS) have difficulty mustering up the energy to live a normal life. Extreme fatigue often tops the list of the most distressing symptoms.

Now, a new study suggests that light therapy may help people with MS get their lives back.

MS is an autoimmune disease that occurs when the body attacks the insulation around nerves, leading to fatigue, numbness, bladder problems, mood issues, and mobility problems that make every day a challenge.

Gut added that currently, the causes of long COVID and most post-COVID-19 neurocognitive changes are poorly understood and don’t have a clear mechanism to explain the symptoms.

“There are many centers for treatment in the United States that have had some promising results in helping patients cope or alleviate some symptoms, but the approaches vary widely,” Gut said. “Unfortunately, we’re in the infancy of long-COVID research, and very few established treatment options exist outside of dedicated COVID recovery programs.”

Ivermectin May Help Post-COVID and Post-Vaccine CFS

Ivermectin could help those living with post-COVID-19 CFS, Teitelbaum said.

Research finds that ivermectin can be helpful during COVID-19 infection, despite the controversy surrounding it. It shows promise for treatments specific to long COVID as well.

A recently completed clinical trial by drugmaker MedinCell evaluated the safety and efficacy of ivermectin tablets that were taken orally for 28 days, under the oversight of a U.S.-based independent data monitoring committee.

Participants in the ivermectin group showed a statistically significant reduction of 72 percent in laboratory-confirmed infections between day 1 and day 28, versus a placebo.

No adverse effects were associated with a daily intake of ivermectin of 200 microgram/kg on day 1, or of 100 microgram/kg daily from day 2 to day 28, during the study.

However, people should be careful when taking ivermectin, since some are allergic to it, and potential side effects can include nausea, dizziness, and chest discomfort.

“It was unexpected,” Teitelbaum said, “but we have found that ivermectin is often very helpful in both long COVID and in post-

COVID-vaccine CFS and fibromyalgia. “I don’t know why. I simply know from treating people that it does.”

He said he can offer speculations, but they would simply be theories.

One study published in the American Journal of Therapeutics offers a hint. It finds that ivermectin exhibited antiviral activity against a wide range of RNA and DNA viruses, such as Zika, dengue, yellow fever, and others. The drug also showed specific action against SARS-CoV-2 in lab tests, with its potential mechanism of action being that it blocks viral proteins that suppress normal immune responses.

Teitelbaum said that what differentiates post-COVID-19 patients with CFS from patients with non-COVID-19-induced CFS is that “many improve considerably with the medication ivermectin.”

Besides ivermectin, there are many other approaches to treating post-COVID-19 CFS.

Natural Ways to Fight CFS

Research published in the Indian Journal of Tuberculosis finds that an effective CFS treatment is total rest—which means relaxing with no mental stimulation.

Study authors say those who have experienced post-COVID-19 CFS described lying in a darkened room for long periods to promote mental and physical rest.

Besides relaxation, they recommend using breathing and meditation apps and reducing any sensory input that makes you feel tense, such as noise and bright lights. Instead, expose yourself to things that are restful and relaxing, such as your favorite music or fragrance.

Another study found that 1,000 mg of the supplement oxaloacetate reduced physical and mental fatigue for CFS and long-COVID patients after six weeks of treatment.

Teitelbaum pointed out common supplements to treat CFS, which include:

- NAC (N-acetylcysteine)
- Glutathione
- A multivitamin with zinc
- Anti-inflammatories, such as highly absorbed curcumin and the herb Boswellia, that “shut down” inflammation and oxidative stress caused by the virus

Using these, along with the SHINE protocol, has resulted in many people improving their fatigue symptoms and enjoying an increase in quality of life, Teitelbaum said.

SHINE is an acronym for the five main areas of health that must be tended to. It stands for adequate Sleep, optimal Hormone levels, Immunity and underlying Infections, good Nutrition, and Exercise as able.

“Whether the CFS or fibromyalgia comes from COVID or other causes, these conditions are very treatable,” Teitelbaum said.

He emphasized that the problem isn’t a lack of effective treatments but the lack of effective physician education because the conditions are complex and because these treatments are low cost.



Efficacy of Ivermectin

Despite the controversy, research has found ivermectin effective in treating COVID and some health care practitioners have observed it having an effect on symptoms of long COVID as well.

ple looking to improve energy levels.

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

Light therapy can help some people who are struggling with extreme fatigue.



ALL IMAGES BY SHUTTERSTOCK

Ultrasounds, Lifestyle Medicine

Can Help Eliminate Heart Disease, Doctors Say

Continued from Page 1

He established a proprietary program with interactive software called CureCoach, offering collaborative care to give patients the ability to see and improve their unique root causes.

It's based on an emerging field of healthcare called the BaleDoneen Method that rejects the traditional doctor-patient model of quick fixes demanded by a diagnostic-to-treatment strategy. Allopathic medicine in this arena is primarily crisis care such as surgery or medication. Instead, BaleDoneen emphasizes a self-directed, action-oriented team approach that breathes new life into the oft-unglamorous nature of preventative care.

The BaleDoneen Method

The BaleDoneen Method is holistic and root-cause driven. It leans on a thorough individual assessment of lifestyle and genetic root cause factors and offers non-invasive, inexpensive atherosclerosis screenings currently available by less than 10 percent of doctors.

Ideally, a relationship is established between physicians, dentists, and other providers with regular assessments. Another component is that patients aim to maintain wellness while continuously striving for improvements notwithstanding age.

Atherosclerosis is a specific type of arteriosclerosis, a hardening of the arteries. Atherosclerosis causes a narrowing of the arteries from the buildup of fat, cholesterol, and other substances in the blood. A fully blocked artery can cause a heart attack or stroke, but the plaque can also break off causing a blood clot.

While atherosclerosis is often associated with the heart, it can occur in arteries anywhere in the body. It can cause or worsen a plethora of diseases such as dementia, Type 2 diabetes, kidney disease, and erectile dysfunction.

"Your average doc in the box or even your average cardiologist is probably not very interested in prevention," said Dr. Ellie Campbell, an integrative primary care specialist who screens her patients for signs of atherosclerosis. "There's so much disease that needs treating, they don't have time for prevention."

It's been a decade since Backs first learned about BaleDoneen, named for the

two doctors who developed it and personally guarantee their cash membership model with full refunds for anyone who has a heart attack or stroke while in their program.

"That convinced me it was for real. I set about learning how to do this for myself and my patients," said Backs, who has a family history of arterial disease and Type 2 diabetes, and set the example by losing weight and changing many habits.

In his office, patients who have signs of atherosclerosis get further testing. They're assigned an "arterial age" to gauge the risk of stroke, heart attack, and dementia. This also helps them monitor progress as they adopt changes in what Backs calls their "CurePlan."

This customized strategy is based on a number of factors such as diet, movement, emotional health, dental care, sleep, and evidence-based supplements and medication. Arterial age and inflammation are monitored by ultrasound at regular intervals. Unlike some doctors who follow the BaleDoneen plan, Backs accepts insurance and Medicare.

While showing ordinary patients the inside of their arteries is an unorthodox technique, observing the level of plaque decrease based on lifestyle changes can be a strong motivator for behavior change—at least for those willing to get that first sonogram.

"People talk about prevention, but they only act when they feel a problem," Backs said. "A lot of it comes down to the addiction model of hitting rock bottom. People can become motivated to change. The real question is, is the person coachable?"

Research is clear that prevention-intensive programs will decrease plaque and reverse disease. A 2016 study in the Archives of Medical Science followed 324 patients over two years who were successful in using lifestyle changes and the right medications.

Reversing Arterial Age

Keith Buescher, Ph.D., already thought he was doing all he could for prevention's sake but decided to do screenings at the Cure Center after casually chatting with Backs about his risks. He had slightly elevated blood pressure, and a bother-



Antioxidant-rich foods—such as fruits and vegetables—can prevent or reverse oxidative stress.

Cardio and weight training are important to help reduce our risk of cardiovascular disease.

Nearly **70%** OF ADULTS 65 and older have chronic periodontitis.



If you're proactive about heart health, drugs aren't the only option.



some family history with his mom having a carotid endarterectomy, removal of the inner lining of the artery, in her 40s. His dad had a quintuple bypass at 75.

Still, Buescher is a self-described health fanatic who was "dialed in"—eating clean with a healthy weight and a low resting heart rate, plus exercising 15 hours a week. He was a bit shocked to find out his arterial age was 85 two years ago at age 60.

"I wasn't happy, but at the same time it was validating my concerns," he said.

With most patients, Backs starts by asking patients to avoid the four S's: sweets, starches, snacking, and sitting. Beyond that, they might work on stress, sleep, salt consumption, and smoking.

Since behavioral factors were ruled out for Buescher, Backs went to work on medication and supplements with a graduated, conservative approach. Buescher treasures the sonogram images he gets

don't eat again until the following day.

5. Plant slant. They eat more fruits and vegetables, limit meat, and incorporate beans.

6. Wine at 5. They consume a moderate amount of alcohol regularly and enjoy one to two glasses of wine a day with friends or food.

7. Belong. They become part of a faith-based community.

8. Loved ones first. They have aging parents and grandparents who live nearby or together in a home. They commit to a life partner and give their children the gifts of time and love.

9. Right tribe. They maintain a social circle that supports healthy behaviors.

Faith Plays a Role

Like all blue zone areas, Loma Linda residents follow a lifestyle that includes the power 9 principles. It also has a unique history that helps explain the longevity of its residents compared to much of the United States.

The Seventh-day Adventist Church was founded there in the 1840s and continued to grow throughout the 20th century. Today, a community of about 9,000 Adventists calls Loma Linda home.

"We value healthy; it's really part of our religion," said Dr. Gary Fraser, a professor at Loma Linda University School of



The health of our mouth can provide important insight into the health of our heart.

at each visit showing reduced levels of plaque.

"It's a good psychological boost to see that visual," he said. "You can actually see something and not just get numbers."

Buescher is taking vitamin D and anti-inflammatory supplements, as well as cholesterol-lowering and antihypertensive medications. His arterial age is now 63, a number he'd like to lower while avoiding surgery—realistic goals considering his parents are still living independently at 93 and 96.

"I want to be like them so that's another reason I'm glad I saw Dr. Backs," Buescher said. "I'm hoping to be as healthy as possible as long as possible, and this is one tool that helps me think about the future. Arterial disease can be reversed. It was a novel thought to me at the time. But I think it's happening."

Backs has worked with a patient who at 78 had a reduced arterial age of 44, a 54-year-old whose arterial age got to 27, and even one who was 70 with an arterial age of 29.

The Role of Oxidative Stress

Of all the root causes of cardiovascular disease, oxidative stress is the underlying common denominator. Understanding how choices increase oxidative stress and raise the risk of atherosclerosis can help lower the chances of health complications that extend beyond the heart.

Oxidative stress is a disturbance in the body, a type of physiological stress, caused by reactive oxygen species (ROS) in the cells that accumulate when the body is unable to neutralize them fast enough, due to a heavy toxic burden. Plaque formation is a result of inflammation in the lining of arteries that generates ROS.

"You want a doctor who is well versed in prevention of the No. 1 killer of our country, and that means seeking someone out who has skills and training to screen for oxidative stress and markers of inflammation, atherosclerosis in early stages," Campbell said.

According to a 2022 research review in

Frontiers in Cardiovascular Medicine titled "The critical issue linking lipids and inflammation" some of the causes for increased oxidative stress are:

High lipoproteins. The mode of transportation for cholesterol made up of protein and fat, lipoproteins can cause remnant cholesterol when there are too many.

Hypertension. High blood pressure is associated with inflammation. Half of Americans suffer from hypertension, and up to 90 percent of hypertension can be controlled.

Smoking. Any form of nicotine use and smoking generates systemic oxidative stress.

Type 2 diabetes. Insulin resistance is a sign of prediabetes, a state estimated to affect one-third of American adults. More than 10 percent of the population has diabetes. Insulin resistance is influenced by poor sleep, low vitamin D, high lipoproteins, autoimmune diseases, periodontal disease, psychosocial issues, chronic infections, air pollution, hypertension, nicotine exposure, gut dysbiosis, poor diet, and a sedentary lifestyle.

Diet. Food can influence oxidative stress. Antioxidant foods—such as fruits, vegetables, grains, legumes, tea, and some fish—can prevent or reverse oxidative stress. Restricting calories by 15 percent and time-restricted eating (consuming food in a 10-hour period or less) also lower oxidative stress.

“A lot of it comes down to the addiction model of hitting rock bottom. People can become motivated to change. The real question is, is the person coachable.”

Dr. Craig Backs, internist and founder, The CureCenter for Chronic Disease

Physical activity. Studies show a clear increase in cardiovascular risk from sedentary lifestyles and an obvious decrease in risk from those who are active.

"People ask me what kind of exercise, and I say 'more,'" Backs said. "There's a lot of evidence that building up muscle mass through strength training is just as important as cardio, maybe more."

Weight. Obesity is a risk factor for oxidative stress regardless of metabolic health.

Gut dysbiosis. Certain bacteria in the gut are known to lower oxidative stress, and others are known to raise it.

Periodontal disease. The pathogens that cause arterial disease are the same ones that cause gum disease. Nearly 70 percent of adults 65 and older have chronic periodontitis.

Beyond Allopathic Treatments

The BaleDoneen Method is a holistic approach that aims at root causes. Rather than a simple drug prescription, it requires a thorough assessment of lifestyle and includes diet, movement, emotional health, dental care, sleep, and evidence-based supplements and medication.



Other factors that contribute to oxidative stress are air pollution, chronic kidney disease, autoimmune disorders, HIV, chronic infections, vitamin D deficiency, obstructive sleep apnea, depression, and anxiety.

A deeper look is necessary to avoid catastrophic events caused by arterial disease. You can't typically observe a person's risks—except inside the mouth. That's why Backs and Campbell partner with dentists.

Dentists for Heart Disease Prevention

Because of the relationship between periodontal disease and atherosclerosis, a natural collaboration could lead to more screenings and streamlined care. This is the aim of the American Academy for Oral Systemic Health (AAOSH), a non-profit organization of health professionals expanding awareness of the relationship between oral health and whole-body health.

"Those same mouth bacteria make plaque. They make plaque on your teeth and they make plaque in your arteries," said Campbell, who is an AAOSH board member. "If our dentists and hygienists aren't aware of the role of the mouth in heart attack prevention, they're missing the boat."

Her at-risk patients get a saliva test at annual exams that detect periodontal pathogens. If positive, they get referred to a dental specialist in her network.

"As these consumers understand the importance of these connections, they'll drive these practitioners to become more educated," she said. "No cardiovascular prevention program is complete without a dentist and hygienist."

Backs has several dentists on his software platform, which is designed for doctors, life coaches, dentists, and hygienists to communicate with patients. His bigger vision is to get carotid ultrasounds in the hands of dentists and hygienists who can rapidly screen at-risk patients for evidence of atherosclerosis.

"A lot of people still don't realize oral health plays a big role," he said. "The overlooked issue is inflammation in the mouth. It can provoke inflammation in the arteries."

There's No Such Thing as Arteriology, Yet Despite the volume of knowledge pertaining to arterial disease, care has not exactly evolved rapidly; meanwhile, a life is lost to heart disease every 34 seconds in the United States. Preventative care doesn't come easily or thoroughly from a majority of doctors, even specialists.

The only comparison in allopathic care

tends to involve cardiology where a specialist usually intervenes at a problematic stage—possibly when irreversible damage has been done. The field relies heavily on testing for cholesterol, blood pressure, and blood sugar—contributing factors for diseases that don't reveal what's actually happening in the arteries.

"There's no financial motivation to get rid of disease. Prevention is not emphasized in mainstream and modern medicine," Backs said. "Your arteries can get younger and healthier. This has become my passion. To me, there's a moral way to take care of people, to improve their results and health."

There are 30,000 miles of arteries in the body, and while the BaleDoneen Method calls it the specialty of arteriology, there's no official subspecialty in medicine. Without one, some doctors say patient care is incomplete.

A 2019 commentary in the American Journal of Medicine calls for a new subspecialty to deal with the epidemic of obesity, metabolic syndrome, and Type 2 diabetes and their relationship to cardiovascular disease. It pointed out how desperately it's needed with obesity and sedentary lifestyles on the rise and how prevention would be key.

However, the article puts more emphasis on the number of tests, equipment, surgeries, and prescriptions that would need to be managed in this subspecialty, leaving the reader to wonder if prevention measures will ever get top billing in the current medical model. Presently, consumers who want help with arterial health will typically find more resources outside the system with functional and integrative physicians.

"In my opinion, heart attacks are optional, strokes are stoppable and dialysis is not your destiny if you have a practitioner who is willing to look for these root causes and correct them," Campbell said.



Ultrasounds can give patients a picture of their narrowing arteries and provide motivation to take action.

Why Are the People in This US Blue Zone Living the Longest Lives?

ALL PHOTOS BY SHUTTERSTOCK

Seventh Day Adventists value health and believe that they should take care of their bodies.

Loma Linda residents live a decade longer than other Americans and researchers have taken note

HEATHER LIGHTNER

Want to live to be 100? Then maybe you should take some advice from the residents of Loma Linda, California.

No, there's not something in the water, but there is something special happening in this Southern California city—a way of living that could help you live longer and better.

Loma Linda, located about 60 miles east of Los Angeles, boasts a high number of centenarians and an average lifespan that is up to 10 years longer than other Americans.

This somewhat magical city is one of

five "blue zones" in the world. The term "blue zone" was developed by researcher Michel Poulain, who holds a doctorate in demography, and Dr. Gianni Pes, a Sardinian medical doctor and researcher. The two identified a cluster of villages in Sardinia with the highest longevity and began drawing concentric circles on the map. The area inside the circle became known as "the blue zone." Later they connected with bestselling author Dan Buettner and broadened the term "blue zone," identifying four other high longevity areas: Okinawa, Japan; the Nicoya Peninsula

in Costa Rica; Ikaria, Greece; and Loma Linda, California.

The people who live in blue zone areas share many commonalities. Buettner has named these nine lifestyle habits of the world's healthiest, longest-living people "the power 9."

1. Move naturally. They live a lifestyle that encourages movement.

2. Purpose. They have a purpose in their lives.

3. Downshift. They create a strategy and daily routines to relieve stress.

4. 80 percent rule. They eat mindfully and stop when they feel 80 percent full. They also eat their smallest meal in the late afternoon or early evening and then

Medicine and School of Public Health at Loma Linda University. Fraser, who himself is an Adventist, says that maintaining good health is a "philosophy that underlies everything."

"We believe that we should look out for our bodies," Fraser said.

Fraser has undertaken many studies on the respective decrease in risk of disease and death among Adventists.

Like in all blue zone areas, Loma Linda residents follow a lifestyle that includes the power 9 principles.

"We're finding mortality rates overall are down about 30 to 35 percent in the Adventists nationally," Fraser said.

A series of five long-term studies—known as the Adventist Health Studies—has been conducted by Loma Linda University. These studies investigated the connection between diet, lifestyle, disease, and mortality among the Seventh-day Adventist population.

Researchers discovered that Seventh-day Adventists have a lower risk of certain

diseases than the general population. The Adventist Mortality Study showed that overall cancer mortality was 60 percent lower for Adventist men and 76 percent lower for Adventist women compared to non-Adventist study participants. Specific types of cancer deaths were also lower for the Adventist population—including lung, colorectal, breast, prostate cancer, lymphoma, and leukemia.

Death from heart disease and stroke were also significantly lower.

Healthy Diet, Lifestyle, and Mindset Make a Difference

Seventh-day Adventists have adopted a lifestyle that encourages vegetarianism and prohibits alcohol, tobacco, and drugs. This contributes to better health and an increased lifespan.

Adventist Health Study-1 determined that Adventist men lived 7.3 years longer and women 4.4 years longer than their Californian counterparts. Those Adventists who ate a vegetarian diet had even more significant increases in life expectancy—vegetarian men lived 9.5 years longer and women 6.1 years longer.



A loving and supportive family is an important aspect of a healthy life.

The study also identified the five main factors driving longevity:

10. No personal history of smoking.
11. Having a lower (normal) body weight.
12. Participating in more frequent exercise.
13. Eating a vegetarian diet.
14. Frequent consumption of nuts (studies have shown that eating certain nuts has health benefits).

Fraser and his colleagues have researched the health benefits of eating nuts. Those eating nuts saw significant decreases in their risk of heart disease and death from a heart attack.

"In my research, we've seen a 50 percent reduction in heart disease mortality in people who ate nuts about five times a week," explains Fraser.

Healthy behaviors have a positive effect on the quality of life and life expectancy, as does a healthy mindset.

Disconnecting from stressors is also an important part of the Adventist lifestyle. They do this on the Sabbath—a special day to worship, rest, and recover from the demands of life. This time is also an opportunity to enjoy a break from the

distractions of life. Instead of listening to music or the radio, videos, television, or reading newspapers, books, or magazines during the Sabbath, they rejuvenate their spirits by connecting with themselves, their families, friends, and nature.

Connection with self and others isn't limited to one day of the week, however. Strong social networks, a sense of purpose, and volunteerism are tenets that are encouraged every day of the week.

Outside the Zone

Loma Linda is a hub for health and longevity, but you don't have to be a resident or an Adventist to adopt its residents' practices into your own life. Implementing habits into your diet, physical activity, social network, stress management, and mindset has the potential to yield a healthier, happier, and longer life—regardless of your religious beliefs or where you live.

Buettner says that almost every centenarian his team met embodied the power 9 principles—they had some sort of faith, ate a plant-based diet, and got moderate exercise.

"But one thing Loma Linda residents may do best is 'creating a culture and environment of health,'" Buettner said. "So people should surround themselves with people who have healthy habits or the same goals as you for health."

HOW Fear Sabotages Your Immune System

Continued from Page 1

These people also wore N95 masks and strictly observed social distancing rules. Even with masks, they were fearful of entering a crowd to perform daily duties, such as grocery shopping.

Others were concerned about vaccine side effects and adverse events. They might have elected to get vaccinated as a requirement to stay employed, but they still kept worrying over the potential side effects, such as myocarditis.

These heightened fears may have negatively affected people's health in many different ways, and fear's effect on our immune systems can be detrimental.

A Bout of Fear Can Temporarily Boost Our Immunity

Fear, the unpleasant emotion that comes in response to danger, is a necessary bodily mechanism essential to our survival. In the short term, fear can actually boost our immunity.

When we sense that danger is imminent, fear sends our bodies into "fight-or-flight" mode, which equips us with the necessary energy to either flee the danger or prepare for a fight. Fear makes us more vigilant and prompts us to take protective measures that we deem useful in re-

sponse to a threat like COVID-19.

The immune system also increases its antiviral activity when we perceive a risk of viral infection. The brain's amygdala will alert the nervous system. The pituitary and adrenal glands will then increase the production of stress hormones, such as cortisol and adrenaline, and circulate them in the blood.

Cortisol is generally anti-inflammatory, and it makes glucose more available to the muscles and brain. Adrenaline, also known as epinephrine, can increase the heart rate and blood pressure, expand the air passages of the lungs, improve vision and other senses, and redistribute more blood to the muscles. Adrenaline can

Constant fear can leave the body stuck in fight-or-flight mode.

If we are unable to pull ourselves out of a high-stress state, it can wear us down.



BROTHERS91/GETTY IMAGES

also increase the number of monocytes and neutrophils, both of which are white blood cells, and send them into the bloodstream while sending another type of white blood cell, called lymphocytes, into other tissues.

Why Fear Sabotages Our Immunity

Although a bout of fear can enhance our immunity and boost our chance of survival, being in a constant state of fear for a prolonged period can also create health problems—and weaken the immune system.

Stress Hormones Inhibit Immune Cells

Cortisol and adrenaline, although helpful for short vigilance, are actually stress hormones.

If a person has consistently high levels of cortisol, the body will eventually become used to having an excessive amount of cortisol. According to a study recently published in the journal Brain Sciences, such chronic elevation of cortisol can lead to increased activation of inflammatory cytokines and promote insulin resistance. And the worsened insulin-resistance situation will, in turn, contribute to more inflammation. These incidents can lead to chronic inflammation of the body and a weakened immune system.

Consistently high levels of adrenaline, as well as cortisol induced by fear, can weaken the body's immune system because of their inhibitory effect on many immune cells. Cortisol is the primary glucocorticoid. Glucocorticoids significantly reduce the number of circulating immune cells, including T cells and macrophages.

In one study published in the journal Brain, Behavior, and Immunity, one group of people who have the trait of worry was exposed to a phobic stimulus, while another group with the same trait wasn't exposed. The results show that both groups experienced increased heart rate, but the group that was fearful due to the stimulus didn't have an increase in natural killer cells—a kind of immune cell—in their peripheral blood, while the other group did.

In a study published in the journal Nature, the authors found that the brain's fear circuit could regulate immune cells during acute stress.

The "fear circuitry" is mainly composed of the amygdala, nucleus accumbens, bed nucleus of stria terminalis, hippocampus, and ventromedial hypothalamus. According to an article published in The Journal of Neuroscience, although fear and anxiety are distinct emotions, they share the same underlying neural circuitry, as fear is a negative emotional response to a certain threat, while anxiety is the response to an uncertain threat.

The researchers of the study published in Nature discovered that during acute stress in mice, different brain regions shaped the distribution of immune cells and the function of the entire body. For instance, the researchers found that acute stress redistributed immune cells from peripheral organs, such as muscles and blood vessels, to the bone marrow, and the number of B cells (important to the adaptive humoral immune system) and T cells in the lymph nodes was also reduced.

Researchers also found that acute stress altered innate immunity by directing neutrophil recruitment to sites of injury.

Know When You Have a Problem

"You might be able to tell you're in a dopamine deficit state when you're scrolling through social media, and you feel like you can't stop," Dr. Anna Lembke wrote in her book "Dopamine Nation: Finding Balance in the Age of Indulgence."

"It doesn't necessarily feel good, and you aren't getting anything from your actions, but you just keep scrolling. When we're in a dopamine deficit, it can feel similar to depression and anxiety," she wrote.

Other signs of technology addiction can include:

- Getting less sleep due to technology or internet activities
- Compulsively checking text messages or notifications
- Losing interest in aspects of your life that don't involve the internet or technology
- Feeling guilty or getting defensive about the time we spend online
- Turning to the internet or a technology-enabled device to improve your mood, or experience pleasure, relief, or sexual gratification
- Trying but failing to cut back on internet or technology use

Symptoms of Dopamine Deficiency

A blood test can measure dopamine levels but can't determine how your brain responds to dopamine. Therefore, doctors rely on symptoms in addition to testing.

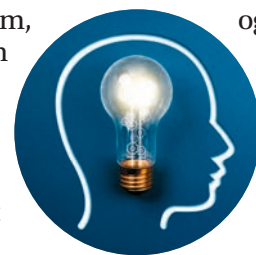
Fear Affects the Endocrine System and Can Cause Hormone Problems

When fear initiates the fight-or-flight response, the amygdala signals the hypothalamus to activate the pituitary gland, which is considered the "master gland" of the endocrine system, as it also controls many of the other glands. The endocrine system (aka, hormone system) is composed of glands that produce hormones to regulate many bodily processes, including mood, energy level, blood pressure, appetite, and immunity.

Since hormones directly affect the strength of the immune system, which works hand in hand with the endocrine system, a hormone imbalance caused by constant fear can indeed sabotage one's immunity. The major hormones that can have a significant impact on the immune system include steroid hormones (e.g., estrogen, testosterone, progesterone, prolactin, and glucocorticoids), oxytocin, and serotonin.

For instance, estrogen has been shown to boost women's immune systems, as their immune systems are generally the strongest during their reproductive years when estrogen is at its highest level. As testosterone generally inhibits the immune system, it's quite possible that women tend to have a higher prevalence of autoimmune disease than men due to the estrogen in their bodies. Autoimmune conditions can sometimes relate to hormone imbalances.

Therefore, fear can cause a hormone imbalance, which, in turn, can lead to problems with the immune system.



The nature of our thoughts can have a profound effect on our health.

3 Ways to Mitigate the Negative Effects of Fear

Since fear has so many aforementioned negative impacts on the body, especially the immune system, we need to find ways to mitigate these effects.

1. Face Fear Head-On and Release Negative Feelings

In her book "Radical Remission: Surviving Cancer Against All Odds," researcher and lecturer in the field of integrative oncology Kelly Turner, who holds a doctorate in social sciences research, mentioned an alternative healer's perspective on fear. This healer is Patti Conklin, who holds a doctorate in humanities and divinity. According to Conklin, fear is a dominant emotion for most cancer patients.

According to Conklin, a patient should face fear head-on in order to release it. One example mentioned in "Radical Remission" is about a man named Nathan who was diagnosed with a rare form of stage 4 lymphoma. Unfortunately, instead of eradicating it, several rounds of chemotherapy made his cancer grow. As a result, he decided to stop the treatment, and his doctors informed him that he only had one to two years to live. He didn't sleep for four days, fearing death.

Eventually, he decided to face his fear and accept the fact that he was going to die. To his surprise, once he made the acceptance, his fear was gone.

When he sat down to be interviewed by

During the COVID-19 pandemic, 'fear' was also the most frequently mentioned word on social media, followed by keywords such as 'alone,' 'failure,' and 'depressed.'

Turner six years later, he had been traveling, enjoying natural sceneries, and receiving help from alternative healers. He had outlived his doctors' predictions by at least four years.

2. Replace Fear With Positive Feelings

Another effective way to deal with fear is to replace it with positive emotions, such as gratitude and happiness.

According to one study published in the journal Brain, Behavior, and Immunity, gratitude can bring health benefits in women and increases in support-giving were associated with reduced amygdala activity.

The participants in the study were asked to perform a gratitude task. After the completion of this task, those who showed larger reductions in amygdala activity also experienced larger reductions in the production of pro-inflammatory markers, including tumor necrosis factor-alpha, and interleukin-6. By replacing fear with gratitude, the immune system improved.

3. Boost Immunity

Sometimes fear is inevitable, although one may try to release or replace it with another emotion. In this case, one can focus on boosting the immune system, which can somewhat offset the negative effects brought by fear.

Ways to improve your immunity include but aren't limited to maintaining a healthy diet with a lot of vegetables and healthy protein, being physically active and avoiding a sedentary lifestyle, keeping fit with a healthy weight, getting sufficient high-quality sleep, and quitting or avoiding smoking and alcohol consumption.

Fear Can Cause Other Illness

1. Fear Causes Sleep Disruption and Food Deregulation

When people are in a fearful state of mind, they tend to have poor sleep quality, which can lead to several chronic diseases and conditions.

When some people feel fearful, they want to eat sweet and fatty foods full of additives, which can cause inflammation in the body if consumed over the long term. Also, the consumption of unhealthy foods can damage the gut microbiome, and 70 percent of the immune system is located in the gut.



Eating poorly while stressed contributes to a weakened immune system.

2. Long-Term Fear Can Cause Other Conditions

Constant fear can induce anxiety, hypochondria, high blood pressure, asthma, and depression. Since fear can affect the neuroendocrine-immune system, it also has an impact on our growth and development, as well as reproductive, urinary, and respiratory functions.

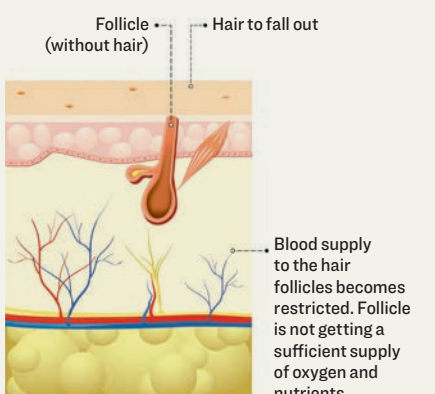
Furthermore, fear can create toxins in the brain that make it foggy and prevent it from functioning at its best. Thus the brain can't pay attention to the body's health as it should. For example, the fogginess might cause one to forget to take their medicine on time.



Increased stress can raise blood pressure and worsen health conditions.

3. Fear of Symptoms Can Trigger Those Symptoms

In a study of adjuvant chemotherapy, which was published in the World Journal of Surgery, 40 participants (31 percent) of the control group, who received a placebo injection, developed alopecia. Alopecia affects approximately 65 percent of patients who receive cancer treatment. Therefore, such a high percentage of alopecia among the control group suggests that it was their fear of chemotherapy side effects that caused the hair loss to occur.

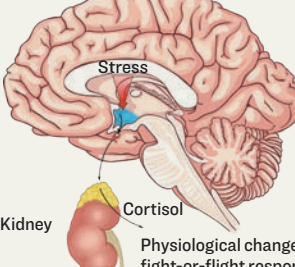


Our negative thoughts can have real negative effects on our body.

4. Fear Locks the Body Out of 'Rest-and-Restore' Mode

Constant fear can make the body stuck in fight-or-flight mode, which is controlled by the sympathetic nervous system of the autonomic nervous system. As a result, the body can't enter "rest-and-restore" mode, which is controlled by the parasympathetic nervous system. This system helps the body stay in equilibrium by activating more restful functions, such as decreasing the heart rate and relaxing the muscles.

So if fear over the long term prevents the body from entering rest-and-restore mode, the body can't relax or rest, and diseases can eventually result.



Relaxing isn't a luxury, it is a necessity so we can exit the fight or flight state.

Tech's Attack on Our Dopamine System

Understanding how our neurological reward center works is key to keeping it in balance

CHRISTY PRAIS

Tech companies hire rooms full of highly intelligent people to figure out how best to design their product to exploit the features of your brain's reward systems.

Their mission is to cause habitual addictive behavior. This process is called reward prediction error (RPE) encoding and features a neurotransmitter called dopamine.

In a 2018 interview, Chamath Palihapitiya, the former VP of Facebook responsible for user growth, spoke on dopamine feedback loops that he regrettably helped develop for the social media platform.

"The short-term, dopamine-driven feedback loops that we have created are destroying how society works. Social media companies are exploiting the psychology of people for making a profit," he said.

What Are Dopamine Feedback Loops?

A dopamine feedback loop works similarly to the method that casino owners use for slot

machines. If you've ever played slots, you've experienced the rush of anticipation while the wheel spins. The moments between the lever pull and the outcome gives time for the dopaminergic neurons of the midbrain to increase their activity, creating a rewarding charge with each pull.

In the same manner, social media companies have created a similar action, anticipation, and reward loop. The action: scrolling, writing, sharing, posting, or commenting. Anticipation: finding a new exciting piece of content or waiting for a like or comment. And the reward is receiving one of the latter.

If you've ever posted on a social media site or other apps just for the sake of getting likes or comments or have opened an app to look at the first post and then swipe to see what comes next, before you knew it 15 minutes had gone by, then you've experienced a dopamine feedback loop.

Dangers of Dopamine Feedback Loops

The dopamine-driven feedback loops will cause your neurons to dump an excess of dopamine into your system making you feel good initially. The problem is that when this happens, our brains compensate for this dopamine dump by seeking equilibrium by pushing our dopamine levels below baseline, causing

us to go into a dopamine deficit state.

The symptoms of a dopamine deficiency can cause depression, hopelessness, anxiety, and more. These man-made dopamine-driven feedback loops mimic exactly how people become addicted to drugs and can cause individuals to become trapped in a vicious chemically imbalanced cycle of highs and lows.

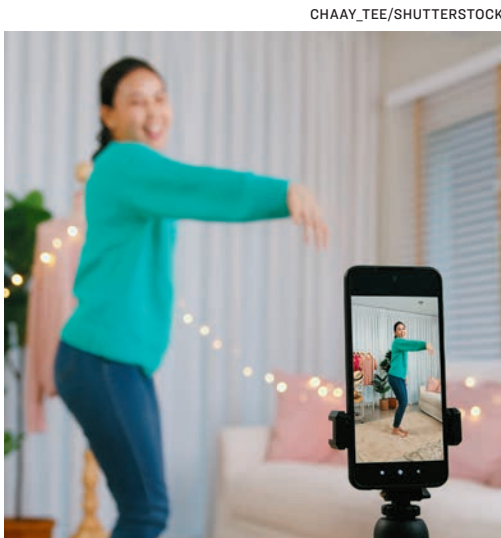
A dopamine feedback loop works similarly to the method that casino owners use for slot machines.

Our smartphones can be a helpful asset or a modern-day hypodermic needle, delivering digital dopamine 24/7 to a chemically imbalanced generation. The reality is, in the age of technology it's almost impossible to go about life and not use a smartphone or computer. For many—especially young people—social media is a preoccupation and compulsive form of entertainment. We need technology, but it's also important to understand, mitigate, and minimize the negative effects it has on our minds and bodies. So how do we take back control and find balance?

Some of the symptoms are:

- You're depressed; you feel hopeless.
- You're moody or anxious.
- You don't feel pleasure from previously enjoyable experiences.
- You can't concentrate.
- You have trouble sleeping or have disturbed sleep.
- You have a low sex drive.
- You're tired.
- You lack motivation and drive.
- You have gastrointestinal symptoms, including chronic constipation.

So, what do we do, and how can we counterbalance the effects technology has on



Social media is designed to absorb as much of our lives as possible as we scroll, post, share, and comment.

our dopamine levels?

Rebalancing Our Dopamine

If we feel we've lost control of our impulses and find ourselves experiencing addiction and low dopamine levels, it's important to first break the cycle.

Start with a dopamine fast: Take a 30-day break. Cut out the addictive behavior entirely at first, and then re-introduce it in moderation. This will help get your pleasure-pain balance back in check.

Turn off all phone notifications: Every notification, whether it's a text message, a "like" on Instagram, or a Facebook notification, has the potential to be a positive social stimulus and dopamine influx.

Change your phone screen to grayscale: Colors draw our attention, and certain ones can cause dopamine release. Findings show the colors green and blue are on top of the list of all colors for enhancing the concentration of dopamine. (Notice the blue themes of Twitter, LinkedIn, and Facebook)

Create a counter-movement: This is a physical movement you do that becomes its own conditioned response. For example when you realize you're endlessly scrolling in a dopamine loop, immediately press the home button and place the phone face-side down. A counter-movement becomes a conditioned response you can use to break the dopamine-seeking-reward loop once it has started.

A Dopamine Diet
When we're trying to get our dopamine back, some foods and lifestyle choices can help us naturally increase dopamine levels.
Eat a "real food" diet that's high in magnesium and tyrosine. These are the building blocks of dopamine synthesis. Tyrosine is an amino acid that is converted into dopamine when we eat it. Also, avoid processed sugar. Sugar is an anti-nutrient that affects and disrupts all neurological pathways.

When we're trying to get our dopamine back, some foods and lifestyle choices can help us naturally increase dopamine levels.

Foods known to increase dopamine include chicken, almonds, apples, avocados, bananas, beets, chocolate, green leafy vegetables, green tea, lima beans, oatmeal, oranges, peas, sesame and pumpkin seeds, tomatoes, turmeric, watermelon and wheat germ, Brazil nuts.

Fermented foods are high in natural probiotics. Maintaining a healthy balance of beneficial microbiota in the gut biome directly influences brain health and affects mood.

Dopamine Increasing Activities
Cold Showers: Cold showers are shown to

increase dopamine concentrations.

Exercise: Exercise boosts the production of new brain cells, increasing levels of dopamine, serotonin, and norepinephrine.

Sunlight: Sunlight increases the number of dopamine receptors, whilst the synthesis of ultraviolet rays to vitamin D activates the genes that release dopamine.

Sleep: Sleep begets dopamine sensitivity. And a lack of sleep reduces the number of dopamine receptors. Dopamine also controls the production and release of the sleep hormone melatonin.

Gut Health: The health of your intestinal flora directly impacts the production of neurotransmitters. An overabundance of bad bacteria creates toxic by-products which destroy the brain cells responsible for dopamine production.

Yoga, Meditation, and Music: These activities reduce cortisol production and enhance the production and secretion of dopamine.

Christy A. Prais received her business degree from Florida International University. She is founder and host of Discovering True Health, a YouTube Channel and podcast dedicated to health and wellness, and contributing journalist for the Epoch Times. Christy also serves on the advisory board at the Fostering Care Healing School.



When you know what is important in your life, you can be intentional about how you spend your time—and make it mean something.

Spend Your Time Intentionally

Using our time according to our deeper intentions takes self-awareness and structure

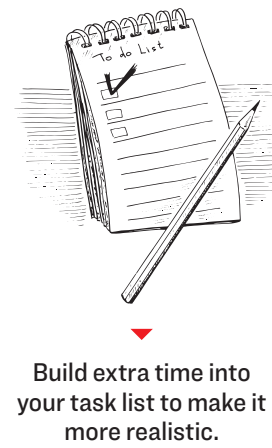
LEO BABAUTA

I've seen a lot of people with goals about changing how they spend their time. They want to spend more time with their family, have a better work/life balance, read more, or spend more time outside. These are wonderful goals. They all involve something that theoretically is pretty simple: changing how you spend your time. But it's rarely that simple, is it? Something causes us to spend our time in ways that we want to change but struggle to change. Let's look at what pulls us away from goals like this and how to shift to being more intentional about how we spend our time.

What Pulls Us Off Our Intentions Let's say you have a goal, such as spending more time with family (or friends). Why do you need a goal like that in the first place? Without any judgment, it's worth asking. Why aren't you already doing that? Or another way to ask it: What will likely pull you away from that goal? We can have the best of intentions with our time, but there are a few things that commonly pull us away from those intentions:

- **Unexpected things come up.** These things can include an urgent work situation, a new request for our time, a crisis, or really anything that needs to be dealt with that we didn't anticipate.
- **Things take longer than we thought they would.** This is very common. We think we'll take an hour to write that report, and it takes four. We think we'll just run to the store for 20 minutes for a quick errand, and it takes 45 minutes.

We can have the best of intentions with our time, but there are a few things that commonly pull us away.



- **We forget to plan for things that don't usually go on our schedule.** We forget to allocate time for things such as eating, resting, showering, brushing our teeth, folding laundry, cooking, cleaning up, and so on. So our ideal schedule rarely has everything we actually need to do, and as a result, the schedule will often be thrown way off.

My suggestion for these is to put some padding into your plan, so you can deal with the unexpected. If you have time blocked off for intentional use, don't leave it too tightly planned. Give space to rest, take care of yourself, catch up on messages, and so on. But there's one bigger reason we get distracted from our intentions: fear versus comfort. For example:

- We might want to spend time with family, but when we're getting a bunch of requests from clients (or co-workers), we might decide to work late instead of getting home on time.
- We might want to read more, but we abandon that when we're feeling stressed about a project and decide to fill our available time with work.
- Or maybe we end up scrolling on our phones, browsing the internet, or watching videos instead of doing what we planned because we're feeling stressed and want to comfort ourselves with distractions.

When we're feeling stress, fear, or resistance, we might get pulled toward work or distractions because we think that will allay the fear or comfort the stress. That's the biggest reason that we get pulled away from our intentions.

How to Spend Your Time More Intentionally The first thing is to think about what intentions

you have for your time that you're not already doing. For example, you may want to read more, get outdoors more, and spend more time with family.

Once you've got those intentions, you can get clearer: 30 mins of reading every day, an hourlong walk or hike in nature four times per week, evenings with family after 6 p.m. on weekdays, and half-day fun on both Saturdays and Sundays.

Then, block it off on your calendar and commit to others. Maybe you do your walks with your partner or best friend. Plan your weekends and weeknights with your family. Join a reading challenge or have reading time with the family.

Set a reminder to review your intentions every morning or evening.

Those are the first steps. The real work will come when you get confronted by fear, resistance, or stress and look to get out of these intentions by working or going to distractions. When this happens:

- Bring awareness to what you're feeling that's pulling you from your intentions. Can you feel it in your body?
- Find a way to calm or soothe the fear or stress. Do you need a few minutes of walking? Deeper breath? Some love? Someone to talk to?
- Once you're calmer, remind yourself of your intentions. Take a minute to remember why you wanted to do this. Is this intention more important than the temporary discomfort of fear or stress?
- Return to your intentions with love and devotion.

This is a practice, and it doesn't come naturally to most of us. But if you would like to live a more intentional life, this is the practice. What would you like to do?

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

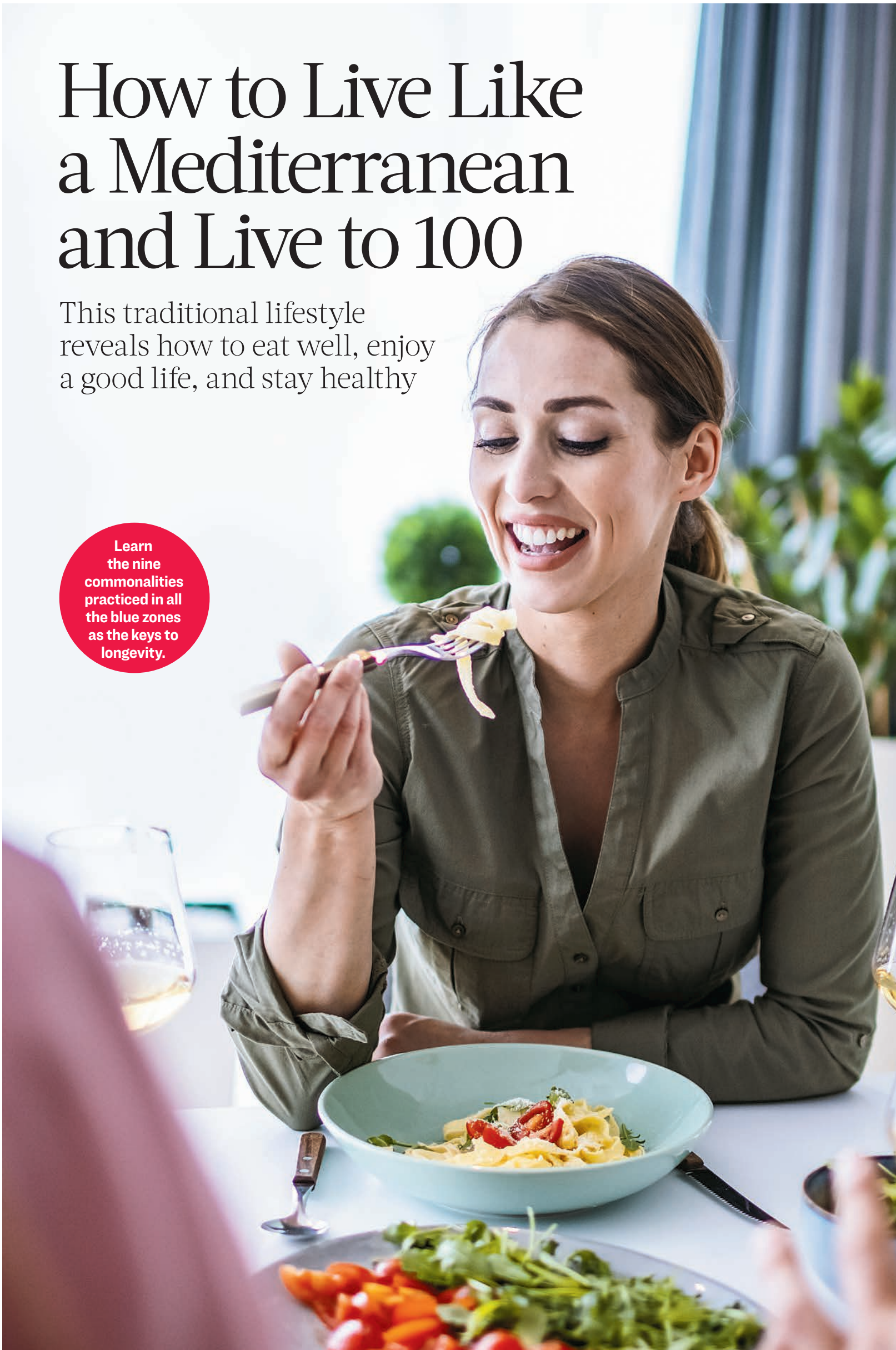


Set an alarm or reminder to review your intentions throughout the day.

How to Live Like a Mediterranean and Live to 100

This traditional lifestyle reveals how to eat well, enjoy a good life, and stay healthy

Learn the nine commonalities practiced in all the blue zones as the keys to longevity.



HEATHER LIGHTNER

What if changing your diet meant that you might be able to live to be 100? Too good to be true? Research says otherwise—and to “pass the olive oil.”

It turns out that the prescription for good health is a Mediterranean diet.

What is the Mediterranean diet? It has been touted for years by doctors, researchers, and registered dietitians as an easy and healthy way of eating to promote well-being. The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) defines the Mediterranean diet as one that's “high in fruits and vegetables, cereals and bread, potatoes, poultry, beans, nuts, olive oil, and fish while low in red meat and dairy and moderate in alcohol consumption.”

This pattern of eating comes with many potential health benefits; it can prevent heart disease and stroke and reduce risk factors, including obesity, high cholesterol,

The Danish Twin Study established that only 20 percent of longevity is based on your genes.

high blood pressure, and diabetes.

The term “Mediterranean diet” was first coined by Ancel Keys, an American scientist specializing in biology and physiology. Keys conducted research on nutrition throughout his entire career. In the 1950s, he began the Seven Countries Study—a study of middle-aged men living in seven different countries, including the United States. He observed that some countries had much lower rates of heart disease than the United States, suggesting that heart disease could perhaps be prevented.

Keys and his colleagues in their research discovered that dietary patterns in the Mediterranean region and Japan were linked with low rates of coronary heart disease and lower deaths due to any other cause (all-cause mortality). Their findings led Keys and other scientists to promote an eating model they discovered in Italy and Greece, which we now know as the Mediterranean diet.

Continued on Page 12

Finding Breast Cancer—With Fewer Risks

Avoid radiation from mammograms with these other low-risk early detection tools

EMMA SUTTIE

According to the National Breast Cancer Foundation, 1 in 8 women in the United States will develop breast cancer in their lifetime. In 2022, an estimated 287,500 women were diagnosed with invasive breast cancer, and this year, 43,550 women will die of breast cancer in the United States alone.

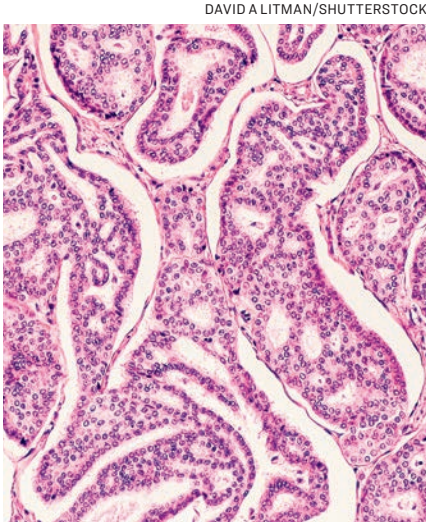
Mammograms are the screenings most often recommended by doctors in the United States to detect breast cancer. However, they do have risks. The most significant risks are radiation exposure and overdiagnosis. Mammograms use x-rays, a form of ionizing radiation that we want to avoid whenever possible. Because of advances in technology, mammography has become so sensitive that it's able to pick up a wide variety of anomalies—some of which may not be cancer, some of which may be cancers that may not progress (such as the “stage 0” cancer known as ductal carcinoma in situ), and some of which may regress on their own.

Patients can have as many thermography scans as they wish with no danger.

In the present paradigm, once cancer is detected, it's treated with surgery, chemotherapy, and radiotherapy—even without knowing if it would ever become clinically significant. This is often a form of overdiagnosis that results in many women facing significant risks due to unnecessary breast cancer treatment. To read more about mammograms and their associated risks, you can read the Epoch Times article “The Business of Breast Cancer: Mammogram Risks.”

The good news is that there are other early detection tools that can also be helpful in identifying possible signs of breast cancer—whether those are changes in breast tissue or cancer cells in the blood. These tools can be especially helpful in prevention and can be highly effective tools in a long-term prevention strategy. Each one varies in its methods and scope, but in an attempt to understand and overcome this devastating disease, being informed about all the options available for its detection and prevention seems only prudent.

Continued on Page 10



Mammograms don't identify breast cancer cells, only breast tissue anomalies.

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SCREENING RISKS

Few women are told that there are alternatives to mammograms, or that mammograms have inherent risks and problems with overdiagnosis.



Finding Breast Cancer—With Fewer Risks

Continued from Page 9

Here are six early detection tools you may not know about.

Thermography

Thermography as a screening tool was first introduced in 1956.

Thermography uses highly sensitive infrared cameras and special software to detect and visualize temperature differences in the skin. It can be used on different parts of the body but is commonly used on the breasts to see variations in temperature and increased heat, which can point to various stages of breast disease.

The principle of thermography is that metabolic activity and vascular circulation in pre-cancerous tissue and the surrounding areas are almost always higher than in normal tissue. These areas become 'hot spots' seen clearly on a thermographic scan. 'Hot spots' appear red compared to the surrounding tissue that appears yellow, green, or blue.

A cancerous tumor has a voracious appetite, needing an ever-increasing supply of blood and nutrients. As a result, it dilates existing blood vessels, resurrects dormant vessels, and creates new vessels (neovascularization) to bring blood and nutrients directly to the tumor. This increased circulation causes an increase in the surface temperature of the breast.

Unlike mammography, thermography is noninvasive—there's no radiation, no compression, the machine doesn't touch the body, and there's no pain. Patients can have as many thermography scans as they wish with no danger. The idea behind thermography scans is that they can often detect changes in the breast (increased heat) years before a tumor ever appears.

Limitations of Thermography

Thermography, like mammography, isn't a diagnostic tool and can't tell you if you have cancer. If increased heat is detected in the breast, further testing would be recommended. Thermography can be used as an early prevention tool to create a baseline and track breast changes over time, so you know when something may need attention.

A comprehensive review published in the Journal of Medical Systems in 2020 looked into various screening tools used to detect breast cancer with a focus on thermography. The review authors state that with the advances in thermography equipment and

technology, the technique has gained new traction in the past decade and has become the refocus of many biomedical researchers worldwide. The review found that thermography demonstrates a potential solution for the early detection of breast cancer, particularly in younger women.

Thermography scans in the United States aren't covered by Medicare, but some private insurance companies may cover all or part of the costs. The average price for a scan varies but is, on average, between \$150 to \$200. You generally don't need a referral from a doctor to have a scan, and there are many centers that offer thermography nationwide.

The ONCOblot Test

The ONCOblot Test was developed and created by Dr. D. James Morré and Dr. Dorothy M. Morré of Mor-NuCo, Purdue Research Park, West Lafayette, Indiana.

The ONCOblot test is a blood test used to detect the presence of a protein called ENOX2. ENOX2 is shed from the surface of cancer cells into the bloodstream and is only present in the blood if there are cancer cells in the body. The test is based on more than 20 years of research and, according to the ONCOblot labs website, can detect the presence of cancer at approximately 2 million cells—a very early stage.

In contrast, a mammogram can only detect a tumor made up of about 4.5 trillion cells, allowing the ONCOblot test to potentially detect breast cancer years before a mammogram would see it. The ONCOblot test is used to detect very early-stage cancers when they're more easily treated and before they can progress.

The test also claims that it can identify the tissue of origin and, thus, where the primary cancer is located in the body. Knowing the cancer's origin can help determine what treatments or lifestyle changes would be most effective for the patient moving forward.

According to ONCOblot Labs, the creators of the test, the ONCOblot test can detect the presence of the following 25 cancers:

- Bladder
- Breast
- Cervical
- Colorectal
- Endometrial
- Esophageal
- Gastric
- Hepatocellular
- Kidney
- Leukemia
- Non-Small cell
- Lung Small cell
- Lymphoma
- Melanoma
- Mesothelioma
- Myeloma
- Ovarian
- Pancreatic
- Prostate
- Sarcoma
- Squamous Cell
- Follicular Thyroid
- Uterine
- Papillary Thyroid
- Testicular Germ Cell

The ONCOblot labs website recommends using the ONCOblot test in the following situations:

- When a patient has had an abnormal mammogram
- A suspicious PET scan
- A high PSA test
- When the patient has gone through treatment for cancer and is monitoring for recurrence
- For finding the primary cancer if their cancer has already metastasized

Although the ONCOblot labs website states that they're presently not accepting new tests due to technical difficulties (which will hopefully be resolved soon), there are other labs and medical facilities that offer the test. The Cancer Center for Healing, an integrative cancer treatment center, offers the ONCOblot test, as well as the RGCC test (the next on the list), thermography scans, the Cancer Profile, and many others. They're located in Irvine, California.

The Greece Test (RGCC)

The Greece test, or RGCC (Research Genetics Cancer Center), is a test that measures the number of circulating tumor cells (CTCs) in the blood. Circulating tumor cells are present in the bloodstream after being released by an existing tumor. When circulating tumor cells break off from the original tumor into the bloodstream, they can form secondary tumors elsewhere and lead to metastasis, spreading cancer to other parts of the body.

(An informative video describing this process is on the Integrative Medicine Center of Western Colorado's website.)

Circulating tumor cells (single cells versus clusters) are what initiate metastasis, which is when cancerous cells take root elsewhere in the body.

In an article published in the journal Cell Reports and conducted by the University of Basel in Switzerland, researchers found that a low-oxygen environment triggers the release of CTCs from the original tumor, which are responsible for metastasis and new tumor formation elsewhere.

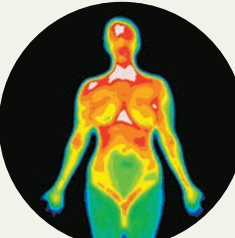
RGCC tests were launched in 2004 by Dr. Ioannis Papanotiriou, using genetics to test for different types of cancer. The RGCC Group claims that their team of scientists has developed a range of tests that give comprehen-

Less Known Cancer Tests

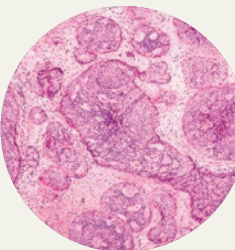
There are many credible alternatives to mammograms that are worth knowing about.



The ONCOblot test is used to detect very early-stage cancers.



Thermography scans can detect changes that can signify future cancer risk.



An RGCC test can find cancer cells and indicate the best treatment.

sive information about a person's genetics, physiology, and immune profiles, giving them a personalized approach to effective treatment. According to their website, for people with breast, prostate, pancreas, colon, and skin cancer, the tests have an 83 percent to 87 percent accuracy rate. A comparative study published in the Journal of Cancer Therapy in 2015 corroborates these numbers, with the researchers finding that it was possible to detect CTCs with higher sensitivity (86.2 percent) and specificity (83.9 percent) compared to standard clinical methodologies.

The RGCC test isolates, counts, and identifies circulating tumor cells and cancer stem cells and then tests them against a variety of chemotherapy agents and natural therapies. The results give patients information about which treatments will be effective against their specific cancer, helping to determine an effective treatment plan.

Cancer stem cells are a small percentage of malignant cells capable of creating new lines of cancer cells. They're self-renewing, have a great capacity for cell production, and possess an indefinite lifespan. Cancer stem cell longevity may explain why cancers can recur many years after an apparent cure. They're thought to be the primary driver of cancer growth and metastasis.

According to the RGCC, if you order the test through them, it's only available via their network of health care providers, which is accessible through their website. They also offer online consultations.

The Cancer Profile

The Cancer Profile is used to identify cancer in its earliest developmental stages. The test was developed by Emil Schandl, founder of American Metabolic Laboratories and Metabolic Research, Inc.

According to the American Metabolic Laboratories website, developers of the Cancer Profile, the test can identify cancer as early as 10 to 12 years before other tests detect a tumor.

The Cancer Profile consists of seven different tests, listed below:

- HCG (human chorionic gonadotropin)
- both serum and urine
- PHI (phosphohexose isomerase enzyme)
- CEA (carcinoembryonic antigen)
- GGTP (a liver test)
- TSH (a thyroid test)
- DHEA-S (an adrenal hormone)

These tests are combined to detect early warning signs of cancer, monitor cancers already present, and see if a patient's current treatments are working and how to adjust.

One of the biomarkers tested is HCG, a hormone usually produced during pregnancy. Many cancers also produce HCG, so if it's present in the blood, it could indicate cancer.

Another marker the profile measures is an enzyme called PHI, or Phosphohexose Isomerase/Glucose Phosphate Isomerase. PHI causes cells to change their metabolism to glycolysis, allowing cancer cells to produce energy in a low-oxygen environment, ensuring their survival. Elevated PHI levels create the perfect environment for cancer to thrive. If testing shows elevated PHI levels, a patient could make lifestyle changes to ensure cancer doesn't develop.

The Cancer Profile also measures thyroid hormone function. The thyroid regulates our metabolic rate, which is linked to the amount of oxygen the body uses and is available to the rest of our tissues. The more oxygen your cells have, the less cancer you're likely to have.

A study from the University of Georgia discusses that recent research suggests that low oxygen levels in cells may be a primary cause of uncontrollable tumor growth in some cancers. The study states that the findings contradict widely accepted beliefs that genetic mutations are responsible for cancer growth.

The American Metabolic Laboratories and Metabolic Research website states that the combined tests are able to detect cancer activity with an 87 percent to 97 percent accuracy rate.

The Cancer Profile test is available through the American Metabolic Laboratories and Metabolic Research website at a cost of \$654. They'll ship you a test kit, which you return to them with one tube of blood and a small sample of your first morning urine for testing. Their labs are located in Hollywood, Florida,

although their site states that they accept international orders. The Cancer Center for Healing also offers the Cancer Profile test.

The Breast Cancer Risk Assessment Tool (The Gail Model)

Health care practitioners use the Breast Cancer Risk Assessment Tool to assess a woman's risk of developing breast cancer over the next five years and within her lifetime—until the age of 90—calculating a lifetime risk. The tool uses seven main factors to determine a woman's risk of developing breast cancer:

- Age
- Age of the first period (menarche)
- Age at the time of the birth of the first child (or if she hasn't given birth)
- Family history of breast cancer (mother, sister, daughter)
- Number of past breast biopsies
- Number of breast biopsies showing atypical hyperplasia
- Race/ethnicity

Perhaps the best preventative tool all women possess is being aware of their bodies and doing regular breast self-exams.

According to the Susan G. Komen organization's website—which claims the title of the world's largest nonprofit of funding for the fight against breast cancer—women with a risk of 1.67 percent or higher are considered "high-risk". A five-year risk of 1.67 percent or higher is the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) guideline for taking a risk-lowering drug to reduce the risk of developing breast cancer in the future. The risk-lowering drugs used are Tamoxifen and Raloxifene, each taken as a daily pill for five years. As with all medications, there are health risks. The health risks associated with Tamoxifen are blood clots, cancer, cataracts, and stroke. The risks of Raloxifene are blood clots and stroke.

Tamoxifen (brand name Soltamox) was approved for breast cancer prevention in high-risk women by the FDA in 1998. The FDA approved Raloxifene for breast cancer prevention in 2007.

Breast Cancer Risk Assessment Tool Limitations

The Breast Cancer Risk Assessment Tool does have limitations. The tool can't accurately estimate the breast cancer risk for women who carry the breast cancer mutation BRCA1 or BRCA2 or women with a previous history of in situ or invasive breast cancer. The test also doesn't consider a family history of breast cancer beyond first-degree relatives, any other cancers, or any paternal relatives with cancer.

Body Awareness and Breast Self Exams

Perhaps the best preventative tool all women possess is being aware of their bodies and doing regular breast self-exams. There's a lot of information out there that can help guide you on how to do a breast self-exam, and there are even many apps that have been developed to guide you through the process and help you know what to look for.

Knowing the shape and consistency of your breasts and normal changes throughout your cycle is one of the best ways to ensure that everything is in order and keep a little peace of mind. If you notice any changes or feel that something isn't right, go and get it checked out by a doctor you trust.

As with anything, finding problems early on is the best way to ensure a good outcome, and dealing with things and not avoiding them is the most desirable way to handle any health challenges that may come up.

Final Thoughts

All of this is intended to give you information about other tools you can use if you suspect breast cancer or want to begin a preventative strategy. As always, do your research and decide which methods suit you and your specific circumstances. Used in combination, many of these tools could provide a comprehensive prevention strategy that will help you stay ahead of the game, remain in good health, and ultimately, stay cancer free.

In the Western model, we tend to wait until a disease has manifested before we take meaningful action. If we take a more holistic approach by living preventatively—eating well, managing stress, getting enough sleep, and balancing emotions—we're creating a healthy environment in our bodies and lives in which cancer can't thrive.

Although prevention may not be possible if you're facing a cancer diagnosis, knowing the options available to you for testing and treatment, as well as living naturally, listening to your body, and taking good care of yourself on every level, will help bring your body back the balance it needs to flourish.



Finding cancer in the early stages through low-risk tests can provide important information. Ask your doctor about these options.



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The basic principles of the Mediterranean diet are easy to follow and make for great meals.

How to Live Like a Mediterranean and Live to 100

Continued from Page 9

The second phase of the Seven Countries Study also found that a healthy Mediterranean-type diet and exercise could delay cognitive decline and reduce the risk of depression.

It's no coincidence that a lifetime of studying health and nutrition reaped benefits for Keys; Keys continued to work into his 90s and died two months short of his 101st birthday.

The Lyon Diet Heart Study assessed the benefits of a French version of the Mediterranean diet on patients who had already suffered from a heart attack. Researchers decided to include rapeseed oil, which is rich in omega-3 fatty acids, along with olive oil to simulate a Greek diet. The study yielded a 50 percent to 70 percent decrease in recurrent heart disease-related events (such as heart attacks, strokes, blood clots, and so forth), as well as a reduction in the

number of new cancer cases. This study resulted in a heightened awareness among the medical community regarding the potential health benefits associated with a Mediterranean diet.

A Swedish study published in 2015 concluded that following a Mediterranean diet reduced the risk of heart attack, heart failure, and ischemic stroke. The researchers went on to say that the Mediterranean diet was considered "beneficial in primary prevention of all major types of atherosclerosis-related CVD (cardiovascular disease)."

Following Mediterranean Diet to Help Promote Longevity

Much research has been focused on Italian centenarians. A well-performing immune system along with an elevated expression of anti-inflammatory and immunity genes have been identified as longevity markers in Sicilian centenarians.

Although genes are an important factor

in longevity, lifestyle factors such as nutrition and diet also influence health and the possibility of a lengthened lifespan.

Researchers at the University of Palermo studied centenarians living in the villages of the Sicani Mountains in central Sicily. Out of 18,328 residents, they discovered 19 men and women between the ages of 100 to 107. When researchers did the math, they learned that the percentage of centenarians living in the Sicani Mountain villages was greater than four times the national average.

An assessment showed that these centenarians had followed a Mediterranean diet and consumed foods low on the glycemic index (foods that don't cause insulin levels to spike).

The centenarians were given a physical exam and had fasting blood lab work done. Their height was also measured, and their weight was taken so that a body mass index (BMI) could be calculated. They were also given a nutritional assessment. They were assessed for competency with physical tasks (such as bathing, toileting, and dressing), life management capacity (for instance, managing finances), sensory items (visual acuity and vision), and cognitive abilities (comprehension and the ability to express self).

Not surprisingly, the centenarians were physically active and had normal BMIs. The assessments showed that the centenarians were "moderately independent" with physical and life management tasks. All the centenarians lived in a family home, usually with relatives, making it

possible for loved ones to fill in any gaps in self-care.

The study subjects didn't have any cardiac risk factors or significant age-related diseases, such as heart disease, severe cognitive or physical impairment, clinically evident cancer, or renal disease. Most lab test results, including cholesterol and triglycerides, were within normal limits.

Of note, the centenarians' lives revolve around socialization, appropriate physical activity, small amounts of food containing small amounts of carbohydrates and meat, and copious amounts of seasonal fruit and vegetables divided among three meals.

What's for Breakfast, Lunch, and Dinner?

So what would someone who would like to follow a Mediterranean diet eat in terms of actual meals? Registered dietitian Kelly Bakes advises clients to try to follow a diet made up of whole foods as much as possible and to incorporate more vegetables into all three meals.

Since the Mediterranean diet is big on whole grains, Bakes says oatmeal is a good breakfast option. For those who prefer eggs in the morning, adding some vegetables and some whole-grain toast can also be a healthy choice. Greek yogurt or kefir (unsweetened) and fruit or even Cheerios are also foods that could be eaten for the first meal of the day.

For snacks, she suggests eating yogurt with fruit, seeds, and nuts.

At lunch, Bakes says she has "super motivated clients" make bowls of quinoa, farrow, or barley and vegetables, such as spinach, an undressed coleslaw or broccoli slaw mix, arugula, kale, tomatoes, and cucumber.

"If you don't have to do an animal protein, beans or lentils is going to be healthier," she said.

“For every client, I always say, if you hear nothing else I say, eat more vegetables.”

Kelly Bakes, registered dietitian

If you're not feeling super motivated, however, steaming a bag of broccoli with lunch or incorporating some rinsed, low-sodium chickpeas are some foods that can make your meal a little more nutritious.

For sandwich lovers, a sandwich made with freshly cooked chicken (or even deli chicken or turkey) on whole grain bread is fine—just add some vegetables on the side to complete the meal.

According to Bakes, a dinner meal include a protein (such as fish or seafood), roasted vegetables, and maybe a grain or starch at night—for instance, a small sweet potato or some butternut squash.

Weight loss is an inevitable result of those following the Mediterranean diet, even if



Greek food is a tasty way to eat a lot of fresh vegetables and whole grains with a reasonable amount of meat.



Sharing meals with family and friends is an important part of the Mediterranean lifestyle.

that isn't the goal, since foods that might otherwise be eaten are replaced by low-calorie, high-fiber foods.

"If you're eating five cups of vegetables, that is going to displace other foods you would be eating," Bakes said.

Eating a lot of fiber comes with benefits, she said. Fiber "keeps things moving" in your gastrointestinal system and contains prebiotics, which help feed healthy gut bacteria.

Bake's clients report that their energy level is improved and that they have less bloating and "feel thinner."

Down the road, cholesterol and blood sugar levels also improve.

"I have had many clients completely go off cholesterol medications, go off diabetes medications," she said.

Some with inflammation in their joints and other places also see a decrease in inflammation.

"They just feel better," Bakes said.

Stepping Into the 'Blue Zone'

Dan Buettner, the bestselling author of "The Blue Zones Solution," has studied research on the diets, eating habits, and lifestyles of communities that he calls "blue zones"—places with the oldest and healthiest residents in the world. Blue-zone locations include Okinawa, Japan; Ikaria, Greece; Sardinia, Italy; Costa Rica's Nicoya Peninsula; and



Lebanese food also offers many healthy Mediterranean flavors.



Stuffed grape leaves are a popular Mediterranean dish.



Fresh salad with walnuts and eggs makes a nice light lunch.

Loma Linda, California.

Through his research, Buettner discovered that blue-zone residents followed a unique Mediterranean eating pattern referred to as the Blue Zones Diet. These people, particularly Ikarians (Greece) and Sardinians (Italy), ate a diet that included a lot of vegetables, olive oil, small amounts of dairy and meat products, and moderate amounts of alcohol, he wrote in an email to The Epoch Times.

What set these areas apart from places in other regions is their emphasis on certain foods, according to Buettner. These foods include potatoes, honey, legumes (especially garbanzo beans, black-eyed peas, and lentils), wild greens, some fruit, and relatively small amounts of fish.

"Their diets are predominantly (90 percent to 100 percent) plant-based," he wrote.

Blue-zone residents also eat little to no dairy, fish, or eggs and rely heavily on beans, greens, nuts, and whole grains for nutrition, Buettner said.

"Sourdough bread and red wine are also staples of four of the five blue zones," he said.

Not Just a Diet, But a Lifestyle

The Danish Twin Study established that roughly 20 percent of longevity is based on your genes.

"That leaves 80 percent for you to impact through your eating, moving, environmental, and social habits," Buettner said.

He noted in his book that it's not just what blue-zone residents are eating but how a Mediterranean-type diet is lived.

He said that there are nine commonalities practiced in all the blue zones that may be behind their inhabitants' longevity. These are known as the "Power 9":

- 1 Move Naturally**
Living a lifestyle that naturally encourages movement is a major component of the blue-zone lifestyle.
"The world's longest-lived people don't pump iron, run marathons, or join gyms," Buettner said. "Instead, they live in environments that constantly nudge them into moving without thinking about it."
- 2 Purpose**
Having a sense of purpose is worth up to seven years of extra life expectancy.
- 3 Down Shift**
Stress leads to chronic inflammation, which is associated with every major age-related disease.
"Even people in blue-zone areas experience stress, but they have daily routines to shed that stress," Buettner said.
In other words, by creating a strategy for relieving stress, disease processes could be reversed.
- 4 80 Percent Rule**
It's important to eat mindfully and stop when 80 percent full.
"The 20 percent gap between not being hungry and feeling full could be the difference between losing or gaining weight," Buettner said.

- People living in blue zones eat their smallest meal in the late afternoon or early evening and then don't eat any more the rest of the day.
- 5 Plant Slant**
Adding more fruits and veggies to your plate can add years to your life. Beans, including fava, black, soy, and lentils, are the cornerstone of most centenarian diets.
- 6 Wine at 5**
For people who have a healthy relationship with alcohol, enjoying a glass of red wine with good friends each day during dinner is part of a blue-zone lifestyle.
- 7 Belong**
"Research shows that attending faith-based services four times per month will add four to 14 years of life expectancy," Buettner said.
- 8 Loved Ones First**
Centenarians in blue zones put their families first.
- 9 Right Tribe**
"The world's longest-lived people also choose—or are born into—social circles that support healthy behaviors. Research shows that smoking, obesity, happiness, and even loneliness are contagious. The social networks of long-lived people favorably shape their health behaviors," Buettner said.
It has been suggested that by 2050, the number of centenarians will approach 3.2 million worldwide, representing an 18-fold increase from the past century.

If You Can Only Do 1 Thing

For the average person who may not be willing or for some reason is unable to fully change their eating habits, what small daily actions can one take to increase his or her chance of living to 100 years?

Buettner says just making a small effort to eat more plant-based meals during the week can have a huge effect.

"Maybe having a few meals a week where there is no meat or it's simply a side would be a great start," he said.

Bakes agrees with Buettner.

"For every client, I always say, if you hear nothing else I say, eat more vegetables," she said.

A meta-analysis that followed hundreds of thousands of people for decades found that switching to a blue-zones-type diet (from a standard American diet) can add an average of a little more than 10 years of life for women, or 13 years for men.

For those people who aren't ready to change their diet quite yet, implementing aspects of the Power 9 can help promote the chance of longevity.

Get more natural movement each day, volunteer, eat less, and enjoy time together with friends and family.

"Adding small nudges each day adds up over time," Buettner said.

Nails May Provide Insights About Our Health

In traditional Chinese medicine, the nails can provide clues to health issues

AMBER YANG

The mystery of the human body is vast and profound. Traditional Chinese medicine (TCM) believes that as fingernails and toenails are connected to the viscera through the meridians, monitoring their condition can help to interpret health signals of the body, and provide an early response to and relief of physical illnesses.

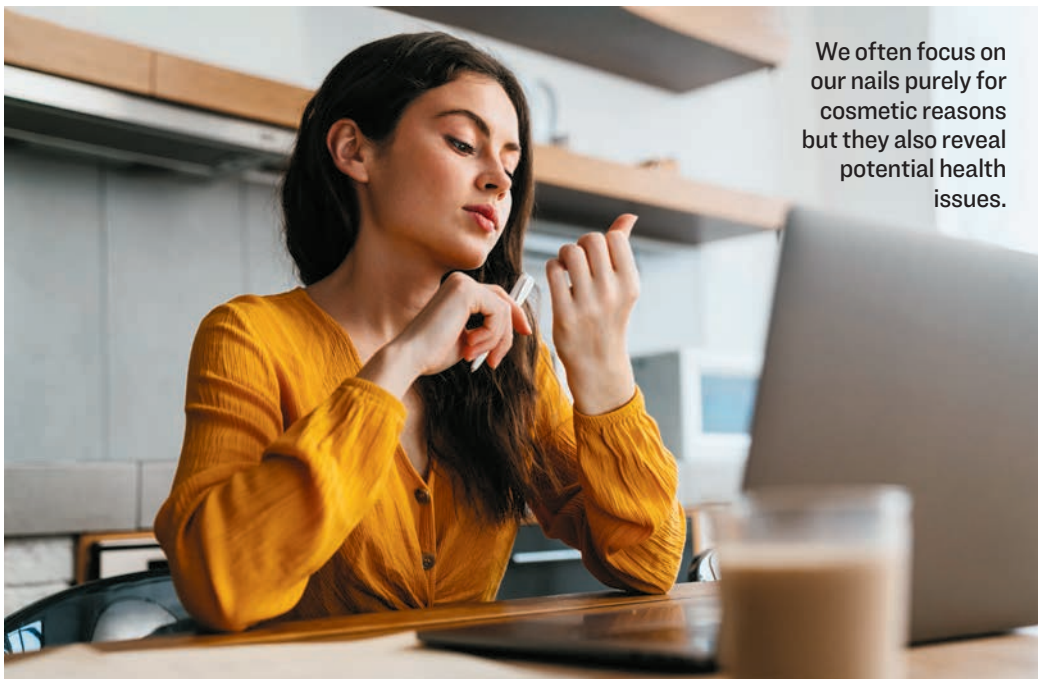
Jonathan Liu, a TCM practitioner and a professor of traditional Chinese medicine at Georgian College, Canada, explained the insights behind nail observation on the show "Health 1+1."

In TCM, it's believed that nails are the extension of sinews—the part that extends furthest to the outside. Sinews in Chinese medicine include fascia, ligaments, muscles, and tendons and are governed by the liver.

Therefore, the condition of the sinews can reflect the physiological function of the liver, and vice versa—problems with the liver system are often manifested in the nails.

The junction of the 12 meridians of the human body also convenes at the fingertips and the toes. For example, the big toe is the junction of the spleen, stomach, and liver meridians, and the thumb is where the lung and the large intestine meridians meet.

Therefore, by examining the color, texture,



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and degree of cleavage of the nails, we can decipher—to a certain extent—the physical condition of the body as a whole.

Long ago, TCM discovered that the body has a "meridian" system, with 12 main meridians corresponding to the 12 viscera, which circulate further to the hands, feet, head, and face, transporting "qi" and "blood" to the whole body.

Qi and blood are interdependent, flow throughout the whole body, nourish various tissues and organs, and maintain the vital activities of the body. When there's a problem with one of the viscera, all the acupuncture points on the corresponding

meridian path will experience discomfort.

Nail Color

Liu said that normal nails should appear light red and shiny. If the nails have any of the following six unusual colors, it means that there are corresponding physical problems.

Blue

Blue nails are a reflection of insufficient blood circulation and local blood stasis.

Green

Green nails reflect a pseudomonas aeruginosa infection, which is relatively rare.

Nail Texture

Liu pointed out that the seven patterns on the nails can also reveal the health status of the body.

White Spots

White spots mean that the nails have suffered trauma, and the person suffers from allergies with zinc deficiency. In adults,

ifested as headache, dizziness, or suffering from high blood pressure and heart disease.

Black

The nails are hypoxic and may have poor localized small circulation, small artery blockage, or excessive fatigue and obesity.

Yellow

Yellow nails occur mostly in patients with liver and gallbladder diseases, such as jaundice, or are caused by cigarette tar.

The junction of the 12 meridians of the human body convenes at the fingertips and the toes.

Broken Nails

Excessive drinking can cause liver damage, which can cause nails to break.

Nail Shape

Liu also said that in addition to the texture and color, observing the shape of the nails can reveal health issues.

Eagle Beak Shape

An indication of stasis in local blood circulation manifested as stagnation of liver qi caused by stress, cardiovascular disease, or diabetes.

Spoon-Shaped (nail curled up)

Spoon-shaped nails are mainly caused by insufficient yang qi, usually accompanied by insomnia.

Nails Too Small

Those who have small nails may have delayed development, and it's considered blood deficiency in Chinese medicine.

Horizontal Stripes

These are likely to occur in those who are overworked and stressed.

Vertical stripes

Those with chronic neurasthenia, staying up late, and suffering from insomnia will have more longitudinal nail lines, and may also present with chronic organ disease.

Brittle Nails

The nails may be prone to breakage due

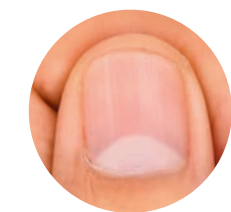
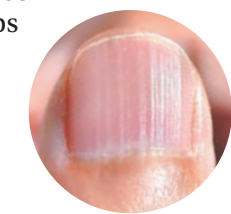
to chronic iron deficiency, thyroid problems, or impaired kidney function, as well as poor blood circulation that prevents the blood from providing sufficient oxygen and nutrients to the nails.

Beau's Line

This means that the nails are sunken and have horizontal lines at the front, an indication that you may suffer from certain serious diseases, such as tumors, autoimmune diseases, and long-term chronic diseases. In addition, people facing severe stress or severe zinc deficiency will also present as such.

Vertical lines may indicate chronic fatigue arising from poor sleep.

The half-moon mark on the nail is usually no more than one-fifth of a nail.



to chronic iron deficiency, thyroid problems, or impaired kidney function, as well as poor blood circulation that prevents the blood from providing sufficient oxygen and nutrients to the nails.

The half-moon mark is too large (more than one-third of the nail): TCM believes that this is a deficiency of qi and blood, which may cause symptoms such as headache, dizziness, and high blood pressure; or a deficiency of kidney qi, which may cause inability to become pregnant in women, and infertility in men.

The half-moon marks turned black or blue: Normal half-moon marks should be white. If they turn black or blue, it may be a reflection of chronic pain, severe hyperlipidemia, arteriosclerosis, and similar conditions.

No half-moon marks: Liu said that 8 out of the 10 nails of an average person should have half-moon marks, though it's normal for baby fingernails to have none. If all the nails don't have half-moon marks, the person is considered, in TCM, to have a cold body, which consumes a lot of yang energy and is prone to serious illnesses.

Chinese medicine believes that people's constitutions are different, and the two common constitutions are cold and hot. People with a cold constitution are more affected by wintry weather, more likely to have cold hands and feet, and their tongues are usually enlarged with a white coating. People with a hot constitution are more affected by heat, and prone to dry mouth, constipation, and red tongue.

Moreover, Chinese medicine has discovered that all phenomena in nature have corresponding characteristics of "yin" and "yang." For example, earth and sky, cold and heat. The two energies of yin and yang are interdependent. If yin and yang are balanced, people will be healthy and energetic, and things will be well-coordinated and stable.

As for the reasons why some don't have half-moon marks on their nails, Liu shared his observations from his practice over the years and believes that it's mostly caused by modern-day lifestyle habits.

Excessive Desire

Being too competitive at work and having too strong a sexual desire will likely harm the body and damage vitality.

Eating Too Much Cold Food

Cold food will transmit chilly air to the lower abdomen, which can cause symptoms such as stomach pain and menstrual cramps. TCM believes that food has different attributes of being cold, cool, or warm. Eating too much cold and cool food for a prolonged period can deplete the body's yang qi causing a loss of energy.

Being Easily Excited

When emotionally excited, energy and yang qi will be consumed.

As for ways to solve the problem of "no half-moon marks," Liu suggested one keep a peaceful and calm mind and try to avoid eating cold food. In addition, one can apply pressure and moxibustion on the Zusanli and Shenque acupoints.

Younger Generations Prefer Pharmaceuticals to Lifestyle Changes

Viewing a healthy lifestyle as burdensome may lead people to look to medication to get or stay well

SUSAN C. OLMSTEAD

The preference for managing health through medication—rather than through lifestyle changes—has increased dramatically among Americans in the past decade.

That’s according to the 2022 Food and Health Survey by the International Food Information Council (IFIC), which each year examines Americans’ eating and health habits over the previous year.

The 1,005 online-survey participants were asked, among many other questions, if they agreed or disagreed with the statement “I would rather take a medication for a health condition than change my lifestyle.”

From 2012 to 2022, the overall number of adults who agreed with this statement shot up by 22 percent—to 38 percent from 16 percent.

The younger the respondent, the more likely he or she was to express that preference. Interest in a medication option went up most notably among those younger than 50, according to the IFIC report.

About half (49 percent) of adults ages 18–34 said they’d choose the medication, a huge increase of 35 percent from 10 years ago.

“The reason for this shift isn’t entirely clear, though increases in prescription medication and dietary-supplement use over the past decade, coupled with a rise in direct-to-consumer medical marketing, may be a major contributor,” the report’s authors wrote.

Sixty-two percent of Americans were taking at least one prescription drug in 2021, with a quarter taking four or more, according to the Kaiser Family Foundation. Fifty-nine percent said they believe that prescription drugs produced over the past 20 years have made life better for people in the United States.

Dr. Patricia Muehsam, a holistic health educator who wrote “Beyond Medicine: a Physician’s Revolutionary Prescription for Achieving Absolute Health and Finding Inner Peace,” isn’t surprised that younger people may be more eager to rely on pills for wellness.

“We’re inundated in the media in our culture with [the idea of] fixing things quickly,” she said. “With a magic potion, a pill, a pharmaceutical, that can be a magic potion for fixing things quickly.”

The people who seek out her care tend to be older, she told The Epoch Times.

“They’ve journeyed through life and they’ve had experiences, and they’ve learned that maybe quick fixes don’t work,” she said.

For Many People, ‘Wellness’ Means ‘Work’
When asked a hypothetical question about a pill that can solve health problems, many people are tempted to take the “easy” route. Muehsam said she un-

Interest in a medication option went up most notably among those younger than 50.

62%

of Americans were taking at least one prescription drug in 2021, with a quarter taking four or more, according to the Kaiser Family Foundation.

Developing a habit of self care throughout one’s day can make self care natural and easy.



Growing up in a culture of wellness will make it easier for children to carry healthy habits throughout their lives.

ALL PHOTOS BY SHUTTERSTOCK

derstands this propensity.

“We have to do whatever works. I don’t have any judgment there. When we’re feeling discomfort, we want it to be better,” she said.

But many people may opt for this route because they view eating well and exercising as complicated and burdensome. And they may overestimate what medication can do.

Patients underestimated risk and overestimated the benefits of medical interventions in a 2018 study published in the journal Risk Analysis. The researchers called this “unrealistic optimism.”

Participants’ underestimation of the risks of medical treatment was much greater than their overestimation of the benefits, suggesting that people may not understand the extent to which all medical interventions, including medications, carry risks or potential side effects.

But according to one research group, 22 percent of drugs have more than 100 side effects. Another 69 percent of drugs have between 10 and 100 different side effects, and only 9 percent of drugs have fewer than 10 side effects.

From 2018 to 2022, the U.S. Food and Drug Administration received more than 10.5 million reports of prescription drug adverse events (side effects), as reported on the agency’s Adverse Events Reporting System (FAERS).

Those who underestimate the risks and overestimate the benefits of medication may be tempted to neglect their health when prescribed a drug.

For instance, when people begin taking medication for high blood pressure, they tend to let their healthy habits slide, becoming more likely to gain weight and less likely to exercise, according to a study published in 2020 in the Journal of the American Heart Association.

“Our culture and our Western medical culture are ones that promulgate quick fixes and symptom treatment, rather than getting to the root cause [of illness],” Muehsam said.

The view that wellness takes hard work also contributes to an over reliance on medication, she said.

In the “wellness community,” she said, there’s a “culture of work” around healthy living. We often hear “you should eat this, you shouldn’t eat that, you should do this workout or that,” she said.

But we may be making health too difficult, Muehsam said.

“It’s not about work. It’s about cultivating self-care throughout the day ... If we were able to communicate it to people differently, perhaps it might be more appealing.”

For many people, illness arises from individuals not taking care of themselves. They remain in a stressed state throughout much of their day, eat poor-quality food in a rush, and fail to find time for meaningful social connections and activities that leave them feeling restored and energized. Many people are so overwhelmed by the false urgency of modern life and its cacophony of distractions that they can’t even tell when their body is stressed, when they need time outside, when they need to spend time with friends, or when they need to drink a glass of water.

That loss of basic self-awareness is at the root of many of today’s chronic conditions.

In her book, Muehsam writes of “four primary medicines” that can reduce our reliance on pharmaceuticals: food, lifestyle, relationships and community, and purpose.

And while many people may be looking for a quick fix, others understand that a healthy lifestyle is key to well-being.

Among the respondents to the IFIC survey, 52 percent reported following a diet or eating plan, an increase of 13 percent from 2021.

The desire to feel better and have more energy was the most sought-after benefit (37 percent) of adhering to a diet. Thirty-five percent of dieters in the survey said their primary motivation was to protect their long-term health and prevent future health conditions. This was followed closely by the desire to lose weight (34 percent).

“Clean eating” and “mindful eating” topped the list of popular diet plans, perhaps signaling that people are looking for ways to improve their health without struggling with complicated regimens.

Our lifestyle, including our diet, can be better than most medicines since a rejuvenating and meaningful lifestyle preserves our health and uplifts us while keeping us free of disease. For those who are already ill, lifestyle is an essential element of healing and navigating life, said Muehsam.

Staying healthy is about “mindfully slowing down and being present,” she said. “Your body will tell you what you’re needing.”

Susan C. Olmstead writes about health and medicine, food, social issues, and culture. Her work has appeared in The Epoch Times, Children’s Health Defense, Salvo Magazine, and many other publications.

Study Links Brain Cancer to GDP and Other Unexpected Factors

VINCENT LAM

A study by the School of Medicine of the Chinese University of Hong Kong discovered that the incidence of primary brain cancer was linked to affluence and that early cancer detection may be beneficial among high-risk populations in wealthier countries.

Although primary brain cancer isn’t common, the survival rate is much lower than any other type of cancer. The medical community still doesn’t understand the primary cause of brain cancer.

According to the data of the Hong Kong Hospital Authority, an average of 240 new cases of primary brain cancer and 115 deaths in Hong Kong were recorded every year between 2011 and 2020.

The university research team referenced international databases from the Global Cancer Observatory, the World Health Organization Mortality Database, and the World Health Organization Global Health Observatory for their research. Using the collected data, they calculated and analyzed the age-adjusted incidence, mortality rate, and prevalence of various brain cancer risk factors.

The study found the burden of disease

caused by brain cancer varied in different regions. Among the countries, the incidence rate in southern Europe is the highest, while the mortality rate in West Asia topped the analysis.

The incidence rate for young males in developed countries has been increasing.

The research showed that brain cancer is directly proportional to per capita gross domestic product, the human development index, traumatic brain injury, occupational carcinogen exposure, and cellphone usage. Countries or regions with more of these significant risk factors have higher mortality rates.

The study also found that the incidence rate for young males in developed countries has been increasing. Using the Average Annual Percentage Change (AAPC) for comparison, the largest increase in incidence rate among males was found in



GYORGY BARNÁ / SHUTTERSTOCK

Cellphone use is one of several factors that appear to be linked to a proportional increase in rates of brain cancer.

Slovakia (4.4). Among females, the largest increase was found in Denmark (3.4).

The AAPC is a measure of the overall changes in cancer incidence or mortality during a specific period. For example, if the incidence AAPC of certain cancer in a country is five for the past 10 years, it means that the incidence in that country increased by 5 percent on average each year over the 10-year period.

Notably, a relatively larger increase was

found in males aged 50 years and younger, which was most pronounced in Slovakia again. The trend in mortality from primary brain cancer has been stable rather than showing an obvious decreasing trend.

“The incidence of and mortality from primary brain cancer varies by region, which may be related to detection and diagnosis ability and the prevalence of risk factors in each place. However, the causes have not been established yet and require further investigation,” said Dr. Jason Huang Junjie, the first author of the study and research assistant professor from the Jockey Club School of Public Health and Primary Care at the Chinese University of Hong Kong Medicine.

Professor Martin Wong Chi-sang, the senior corresponding author of the study, added, “Policy makers in different regions should implement evidence-based, targeted prevention strategies to control relevant risk factors.”

The brain cancer research, carried out by the Chinese University of Hong Kong in conjunction with the Association of Pacific Rim Universities, was published in the internationally authoritative medical journal Society of Neuro-Oncology on Sept. 1, 2022.

The Critical Effect of Timing in Self-Improvement

Making a personal breakthrough takes heart, the right conditions, and a clear sense of our internal season

AMY DENNEY

Tyler Todt was faced with some of his biggest temptations when he moved across the country to Las Vegas four years ago.

It would be seven weeks before his wife and daughter would join him in their new home, and he was ruminating about the last time he was in Vegas, when he drank and gambled a lot. Plus the 39-year-old was feeling demoralized about a new banking job, a pay cut, and demotion after his former position as a branch manager.

For weeks leading up to the move, Todt was convinced he would be caving into his addictive nature and jumping back into former habits. Before marriage, he had won more than \$1 million as a professional poker player, and he envisioned winning big money again, quitting his job, drinking, and accumulating wealth.

“I almost felt like I wasn’t in control of my life,” he said. “I didn’t like the banking job at all at the time. I wasn’t really created to be a banker.”

Instead of yielding to his fantasies, Todt ended up discovering deep, unshakable joy after implementing daily prayer, 5 a.m. workouts, and a gratitude practice. He got three promotions at his job and revived his relationships with his wife and daughter.

Change can be a peculiar thing. Often, the breakthrough comes to those who spend a great deal of time preparing, including mentally wrestling over the cost of change, including facing worst- and best-case scenarios. A popular model that explains how we go through change psychologically shows readiness trumps resolution when it comes to lasting change.

Trans theoretical Model of Change

The Transtheoretical Model of Change (TTM), also known as the stages of change, is a psychological tool that has proven useful for clinicians and coaches to help guide patients and clients through complex health behaviors such as addictions. It holds that there are certain predictors of behavior that can be hung on distinct stages.

For instance, the very reason most people don’t achieve New Year’s resolutions or end up back in rehab is simply that they prematurely jumped into action—either because they weren’t ready or they didn’t truly want to change.

“To stay in action is very hard,” said Janice Prochaska, co-author of “Changing to Thrive.” “You need to have social support. You need to get rid of the stimuli that led to the bad habit.”

Her husband, James Prochaska, helped create the stage model of change to determine how he could best direct help to those who crave massive transformation. He was initially intrigued by smokers who were able to quit on their own. He supposed that if there was something to be learned by DIYers, it could be applied in practice by addiction specialists, psychologists, and even health coaches. The subject of countless studies, TTM has been used internationally for more than 25 years.

You can think of these stages as seasons. If a person isn’t even thinking about making personal changes, their internal seasons are like the frozen ground of winter. When a person begins to contemplate change, it’s like the soil warming in early spring. And when the sun and rain have finally arrived, that is when a person is ready to take action and grow.

Of course, a person can’t just throw some seeds on the ground. Sometimes they need to prepare the soil. Someone who sets a New Year’s resolution to quit smoking but only sets the date might find failure if they don’t first prepare, Janice Prochaska said. That might involve decisions such as establishing a support system, knowing how triggering situations will be handled, picking out replacement behaviors, and deciding whether medications are needed.

“The thing that’s tricky is depending on what stage the person is in, there are different interventions for them to do to get to the next stage,” she said.

TTM has been used for alcohol and substance abuse, anxiety, delinquency, eating disorders, medication compliance, panic attacks, physicians practicing preventive medicine, and many other applications. A 2019 study in BMC Public Health reported

MINDSET MATTERS



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Often, the breakthrough comes to those who spend a great deal of time preparing, including mentally wrestling over the cost of change.

About 20%

of people are truly ready for change at any given time, according to research done by the Prochaskas.

We tend to be very hard on ourselves and get disappointed when we are not able to accomplish what we want, but perhaps the timing was simply not right.



how it was even used to increase blood donations in Spanish-speaking adults.

Weighing Pros and Cons

An often overlooked technique when it comes to change is an honest assessment of what life will look like if a habit is changed. Envisioning a new future can be motivating, but it sometimes requires an honest look at what someone is forfeiting, too.

For instance, someone who gives up alcohol may also need to stop meeting friends at a bar, even if just for a season. While it may seem painful to lose relationships, Prochaska said it’s also an opportunity to be inspired by new people you’ll be supported by in a healthier lifestyle. A support system of encouraging, positive people can help someone view the tradeoff as valuable.

“You want to help them look at how would their life be, how would their life change,” she said.

This was a huge motivator for Todt, who sat in his quiet house with no television or furniture and made one committed decision—in his case, to surrender his life to God. He opened a blank journal and began to envision a different life with massive shifts in his career, health, and marriage.

That vision is central to everything he does and he “reverse engineered” it to set up little systems in his day to reach his goals—even with two more children, 2-year-old boys, in his home. He has now quit his banking job to coach and lead retreats for men who crave change.

“Everybody has the same 24 hours. I won’t allow my clients to ever say, ‘I’m going to try to get to that.’ You either decide right now you’re going to do it or you’re not, because you are in full control of that,” Todt said. “There’s always a way ... everything in life is about choices.”

But only about 20 percent of people are truly ready for change at any given time, according to research done by the Prochaskas. A study applying the model on college student sedentary behavior published in PLOS ONE in 2017 validated that those in the early stages were much less likely to change their behavior. Energy is better invested in those who are ready, lest the effort feel like talking to a brick wall.

Often, it takes a major life event such as a heart attack, Prochaska said, to stir people into action. If someone is looking to change but lacks inspiration, she suggested examining life situations or people who might be able to serve as motivation.

In Todt’s case, his crisis of belief came while he was already living in the midst of massive geographical and career change. That clean slate, and a lot of prayer, gifted him introspection to imagine an entirely new life for himself. It gave him the push to examine whether he was indeed ready to pivot drastically in his life.

Reframing Addiction

Because many people often try multiple times to change their behavior, Prochaska said using the model can help them understand why they failed and give them hope to try again.

“Changing to Thrive” was written by Prochaska and her husband specifically to make the model accessible to people who are looking for self-help but aren’t likely to seek psychiatric help.

Many health coaches are also trained on the TTM, but even those employing other methods can add a layer of accountability and support that helps people move through the stages. Todt said hiring a coach also helped him reframe his perspective.

He was surprised when he confessed to being addicted to pornography and his coach responded by saying, “What a gift! Now, all we have to do is get you addicted to the right things.”

That one statement empowered him in making better choices. Todt wrote down what he wanted to get addicted to: learning about Jesus and growing in his faith, being a great father and husband, health and fitness, and multiple streams of income so he would never again have to settle for a job he doesn’t love.

Every month he does a self-audit of all his new additions, giving himself a grade and deciding what he needs to do to improve.

“Now, I see God gifted me this awesome addictive personality, and I can really use that for good,” Todt said. “We have the power to choose our addictions. Life is a lot the story we choose to tell ourselves.”

The 6 Stages of Change

- 1. Precontemplation.** There’s no plan for taking action. Someone in this stage would be unmotivated and perhaps resistant.
- 2. Contemplation.** The benefits and costs are relatively the same. The person who’s contemplating will appear ambivalent. Many people spend their lives in chronic contemplation over all sorts of issues, acknowledging their shortcomings but feeling no real value to do anything about them.
- 3. Preparation.** A commitment has been made. Someone in this stage is determined and has dabbled with their change, perhaps stopping smoking for a day, or has taken a step such as joining a gym.
- 4. Action.** There is a lifestyle change. The person has been applying willpower to make the change and they are fully mentally invested.
- 5. Maintenance.** The work being done is to prevent relapse. The person here has been living their new lifestyle for about six months.
- 6. Termination.** New habits are fully integrated. Someone in this phase isn’t at risk of backsliding.

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MADE TO MOVE

Sitting All Day? A New Study Finds Relatively Easy Way to Counteract That

Going for a short walk every hour was enough to lessen feelings of fatigue and boost mood.



KEITH DIAZ

To reduce the harmful health effects of sitting, take a five-minute light walk every half-hour. That’s the key finding of a new study that my colleagues and I published in the journal *Medicine & Science in Sports & Exercise*. We asked 11 healthy middle-aged and older adults to sit in our lab for eight hours—representing a standard workday—over the course of five separate days. On one of those days, participants sat for the entire eight hours with only short breaks to use the bathroom. On the other days, we tested a number of different strategies to break up a person’s sitting with light walking. For example, on one day, participants walked for one minute every half-hour. On another day, they walked for five minutes every hour. Our goal was to find the least amount of walking one could do to offset the harmful health effects of sitting. In particular, we measured changes in blood sugar levels and blood pressure, two important risk factors for heart disease. We found that a five-minute light walk every half-hour was the only strategy that

We found that a five-minute light walk every half-hour was the only strategy that reduced blood sugar levels substantially compared with sitting all day.

reduced blood sugar levels substantially compared with sitting all day. In particular, five-minute walks every half-hour reduced the blood sugar spike after eating by almost 60 percent. That strategy also reduced blood pressure by four to five points compared with sitting all day. But shorter and less frequent walks improved blood pressure, too. Even just a one-minute light walk every hour reduced blood pressure by five points. In addition to physical health benefits, there were also mental health benefits to the walking breaks. During the study, we asked participants to rate their mental state by using a questionnaire. We found that compared with sitting all day, a five-minute light walk every half-hour reduced feelings of fatigue, put participants in a better mood, and helped them feel more energized. We also found that even a walk just once every hour was enough to boost mood and reduce feelings of fatigue.

Why It Matters
People who sit for hours on end develop chronic diseases, including diabetes, heart disease, dementia, and several types of cancer, at much higher rates than people who

move throughout their day. A sedentary lifestyle also puts people at a much greater risk of early death. But just exercising daily may not reverse the harmful health effects of sitting. Because of technological advances, the amount of time adults in industrialized countries such as the United States spend sitting has been steadily increasing for decades. Many adults now spend the majority of their day sitting. This problem has only gotten worse since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic. With the migration to more remote work, people are less inclined to venture out of the house these days. So it’s clear that strategies are needed to combat a growing 21st-century public health problem. Current guidelines recommend that adults should “sit less, move more.” But these recommendations don’t provide any specific advice or strategies for how often and how long to move. Our work provides a simple and affordable strategy: Take a five-minute light walk every half-hour. If you have a job or lifestyle where you have to sit for prolonged periods, this one behavior change could reduce your health risks from sitting. Our study also offers clear guidance to employers on how to promote a healthier workplace. While it may seem counterintuitive, taking regular walking breaks can actually help workers be more productive than working without stopping.

What Still Isn’t Known
Our study primarily focused on taking regular walking breaks at a light intensity. Some of the walking strategies—for example, one-minute light walks every hour—didn’t lower blood sugar levels. We don’t know if more rigorous walking would have provided health benefits at these doses.

What’s Next
We’re currently testing more than 25 different strategies for offsetting the health harms of prolonged sitting. Many adults have jobs, such as driving trucks or taxis, where they simply can’t walk every half-hour. Finding alternative strategies that yield comparable results can provide the public with several different options and ultimately allow people to pick the strategy that works best for them and their lifestyle.

Keith Diaz is an associate professor of behavioral medicine at Columbia University. This article was originally published by The Conversation.

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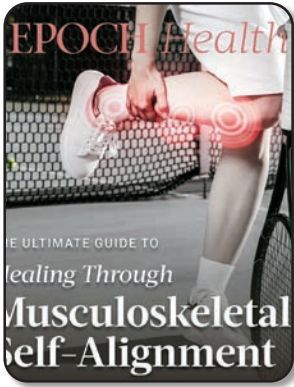
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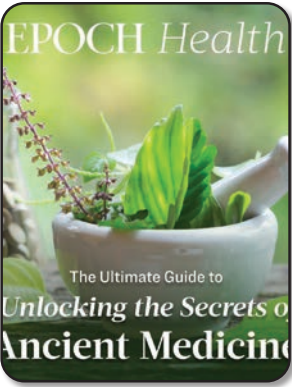
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