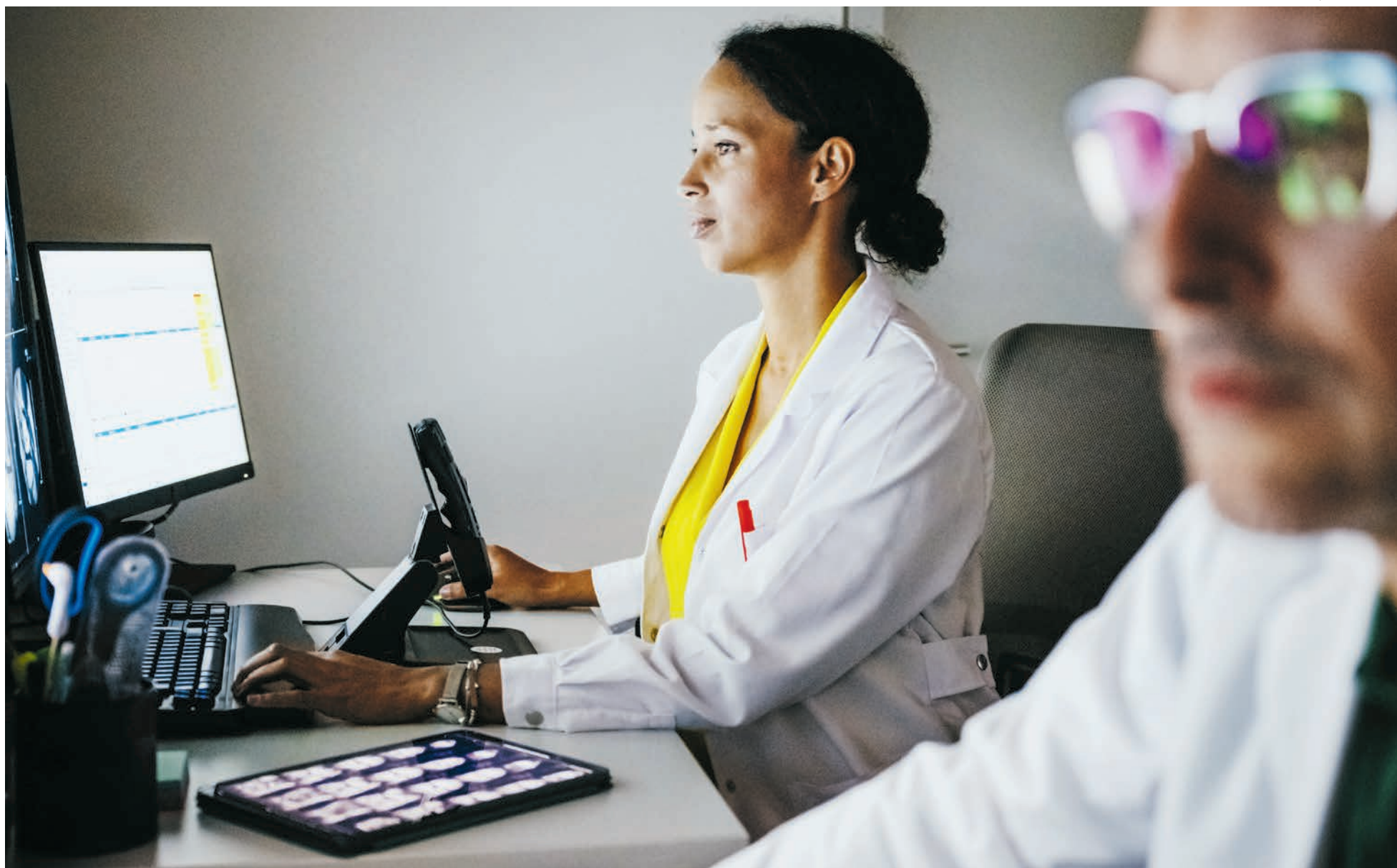


THE EPOCH TIMES

MIND &

BODY

TOM WERNER/GETTY IMAGES



▲ Doctors are the target of immense marketing efforts by pharmaceutical companies attempting to steer how patients are treated.

Pharmaceutical Companies Help Pay for Doctors' Continuing Education

Digestive Disease Week sponsorships put drugs front and center, but research says lifestyle should lead the way

By Amy Denney

Claire Davidson was socializing with colleagues at the Digestive Disease Week conference when the group realized the table they were gathered around was covered with advertisements.

Anywhere else, a table wrapped in brightly colored pharmaceutical branding might stick out, but this small table fit in amid the sea of advertising in its enormous home. McCormick Place, with its 170 meeting rooms and 2.6 million square feet of exhibit halls, is North

America's largest convention center, a small town inside the city of Chicago.

Greeting thousands of guests in the grand concourse were larger-than-life vinyl banners—one just inside the main entrance hanging 75 feet by 30 feet—and vinyl advertisements on the stairs, the stair rails, windows, and stacked cubes. Sitting areas beckoned weary conferencegoers with comfortable seats, tables, and charging stations all plastered with company colors and logos. Even the information booth was wrapped in branding.

"You can't get away from it. I think it's a little out of hand," Davidson told The

Epoch Times. She's the research lead with Mindset Health, a company that researches and develops hypnotherapy solutions for disease. "The amount of money they spend on it is unbelievable."

Together with registration fees, sponsorships help cover conference costs for doctors, students, researchers, and industry professionals from more than 100 countries to gather and learn about the latest studies and products that can help people with digestive problems. Many also attend to earn necessary hours of continuing medical education (CME).

An Epoch Times review found that sponsorships for the Digestive Disease

Week (DDW) conference—predominantly from pharmaceutical companies—appear to represent more than half of conference funding. In contrast, the research presented over the course of the event seemed to favor lifestyle solutions rather than drugs. Events such as DDW reflect an ongoing concern in health care that's not being addressed: Pharmaceutical companies dominate health care, reinvest profits in marketing, and continue to influence patient care in a feedback loop that runs counter to the bulk of evidence

Continued on Page 6

AGE WELL

Longevity Isn't Really About Our Genes, Study Reveals

A new study adds to mounting evidence that our health and longevity are primarily a result of our environment and lifestyle

By Emma Suttie

How often have you pondered your dad's diabetes or the heart disease that runs in the family and thought, "Am I going to get that? Is it inevitable?"

With all we've learned about genetics, it seems reasonable to think that some of our health outcomes will be determined by those invisible forces buried deep in our DNA. But a new study has shown that how long we live has more to do with our behavior than with our genes, implying that our choices may have a much more profound impact on our longevity than we may have thought.

The Study

The authors of the study, published in the Human Kinetics Journal, sought to analyze the relationship between physical activity and sedentary behavior, and their associations with mortality based on a score that evaluated genetic risk factors. The study involved 5,446 postmenopausal women 63 years of age or older. The women were put into three groups based on their genetic risk factors. These risk factors were measured by a "small selection of single-nucleotide polymorphisms" that are well-known to affect longevity.

Single-nucleotide polymorphisms

(SNPs) are variations in a genetic sequence that affects one of the sequence's basic building blocks—adenine, thymine, cytosine, or guanine. SNPs help predict an individual's response to certain drugs, his or her susceptibility to environmental factors such as toxins, pesticides, or industrial waste, and his or her risk of developing certain diseases.

The study authors conclusively found that, regardless of their genetic risk factors, participants who had a higher rate of physical activity showed a lower risk of mortality, and those who had a higher level of sedentary behavior increased

Continued on Page 6

▲ Our parents affect our longevity mainly by teaching us a lifestyle that either improves or undermines our health.



GROUND PICTURE/SHUTTERSTOCK

Easy Exercises to Combat Chronic Pain

PART I CHRONIC PAIN SURPASSES OTHER COMMON CHRONIC DISEASES

Resolve many forms of chronic pain by strengthening the body and improving the underlying condition

In this series, “Easy Exercises to Combat Chronic Pain,” occupational therapist Kevin Shelley focuses on common issues associated with chronic pain and simple and exercises to strengthen weak muscles and enhance joint mobility, with the goal of helping you become pain-free.

By Kevin Shelley

Pain is a constant background noise of the human experience, and the volume is unfortunately rising.

A new study published in JAMA Network on May 16 using data from the 2019–2020 National Health Interview Survey from about 10,000 U.S. adults shows a startling trend: the prevalence of chronic pain is growing and shows no signs of slowing down.

Chronic pain currently affects more than 50 million adults (20.5 percent) in the United States, including 17 million (almost 7 percent) with high-impact chronic pain—pain reported to limit life or work activities on most days or every day.

In fact, chronic pain was found to exceed the incidence of other chronic ailments like depression, diabetes, and high blood pressure.

The JAMA Network study found that women are affected more than men, but both demographics are experiencing a consistent rise in reported cases. High-impact chronic pain was the highest among women.

While chronic pain has traditionally been associated with individuals over the age of 65, recent statistics show that all age groups are experiencing increases, with the younger populations demonstrating increases proportionately comparable to their older peers.

In all age groups, women lead men in reported cases of chronic pain.

Dealing With Chronic Pain

Within the framework of human existence, pain is a constant companion. All of us will experience many different types of pain in the course of our lives, and all of us will experience a range of pain from mild to severe, and from short-lived to longer-lasting.

Prescription pain medications are often used to treat pain. From 2015 to 2018, over

10 percent of American adults reported using prescription pain medications within the past 30 days, both opioid and non-opioid 5.7 percent of U.S. adults used one or more prescription opioids.

Pain is a leading indicator of internal disease, and the nature and intensity of that pain can help health care practitioners assess many health problems more accurately.

Pain is also one of the most consistent ways to get even the most stubborn people to seek needed medical attention.

50 MILLION ADULTS

More than 50 million adults (20.5 percent) in the United States suffer from chronic pain.

The Cost of Chronic Pain

Chronic pain, defined as pain lasting three or more months, can have a debilitating effect on a person's ability to work and perform daily activities. It's been linked to depression, increased suicide risk, substance abuse, and dementia.

Pain is expensive. In fact, medical and economic costs associated with pain easily exceed half a trillion dollars a year, more than the annual costs for heart disease, cancer, or diabetes.

About 10.4 percent of adults with chron-

ic pain in 2019 reported being pain-free in 2020, showing that chronic pain can be resolved.

Exercise Can Often Improve Chronic Pain

Not all chronic pain is directly associated with a specific medical diagnosis. Research increasingly shows a correlation between chronic pain not only with well-defined medical diagnoses but also with postural and lifestyle factors. Many of us are not as active as we should be, allowing joints to stiffen and muscles to grow weak.

A consistent regimen of safe, effective, and easy-to-perform exercises can help increase joint flexibility and muscle strength, having a positive effect in reducing and preventing chronic pain.

Next Week: Being proactive about strengthening your hip muscles is the best way to prevent hip problems from occurring in the first place. Simple exercises that target the hips can help minimize chronic pain and get you back on your feet more quickly.

Kevin Shelley is a licensed occupational therapist with over 30 years of experience in major health care settings. He is a health columnist for The Epoch Times.

8 Easy Home Exercises to Help Relieve Back Pain Fast

Back pain is one of the most common medical complaints in the United States. Eight out of 10 people experience back pain during the course of their lifetime, and over half will experience symptoms severe enough to seek medical intervention.

“The spine is complex and is designed for a range of functional movements,” Mike Palmer told The Epoch Times. Palmer is a physical therapist and specialist in industrial rehabilitation. Given that the back is responsible for so much, it isn't surprising that many problems arise, he said.

Fortunately, there is help for those experiencing chronic back pain through safe, effective, and simple exercises you can perform in the comfort of your own home.

Causes of Chronic Back Pain

Chronic back pain is defined as pain that continues for 12 weeks or longer, despite treatment of the underlying cause.

Two of the most common causes of chronic back pain include poor posture and a sedentary lifestyle.

Poor Posture: We often sit in lumbar flexion where we're bending forward, due to computers, televisions, and phones. The key things people lose with poor posture are back extension and spinal mobility.

Sedentary Lifestyle: Our bodies are designed to move, but many of us are too sedentary. The back can easily lose flexibility and strength over time.

Many people find they can substantially increase their back health and decrease pain by implementing

safe and effective exercises on a routine basis.

Exercises for Chronic Back Pain

While being more intentional about our movement is important—such as taking breaks from sitting for long periods of time while working—regular exercise is essential for maintaining back flexibility.

Here are some stretching exercises to strengthen and balance your spine. They're organized by how easy they are to incorporate into your day, but they are all excellent.

Walking

According to Palmer, walking is the best overall exercise you can do for your back as a whole.

It introduces small rotations into the spinal column and provides mobility

for the back. Walking with an upright posture also encourages back extension. “15-20 minutes is all it takes, but try to do it at least daily,” said Palmer.

People who walk consistently often present much better in the clinic, and therapists can always tell who has been walking and who hasn't.

Consider Professional Help

Everyone is different, and getting a handle on back pain can be challenging. If you are struggling with chronic back pain, consider the professional services of a physical therapist, personal trainer, or chiropractor who is specifically trained to help. They can also provide individualized home exercises for the particular issues you're experiencing. Back pain can worsen over time so be diligent about taking care of yourself.

SINGLE KNEE-TO-CHEST

The single knee-to-chest exercise focuses on the muscles of the low back and hips and is great for arthritis and tight muscles. It can even be performed in bed. Most people experience a pleasant stretching sensation along the back of the bent leg, and the stretch works well with lumbar pain.

Step 1: Lie flat on your back with your legs out straight.

Step 2: Bend one knee towards your chest, using the arm on the same side to help elevate it.

Step 3: Grasp the back of the knee with both hands and ease into the stretch.

Step 4: Switch legs and repeat.

Try to stretch each leg for 30 seconds and attempt three sets. Be sure to keep your lower back in contact with the surface to maximize the stretch. It's important to listen to what your back tells you—do not push into or through pain. If things start feeling uncomfortable, stop where you are.



PLANK

A plank is similar to the prone-on-elbows stretch, except that you lift your entire body off of the floor. This exercise focuses heavily on the core muscles of the trunk, which provide better support to the whole trunk. The plank movement can be challenging at first, but it is pound-for-pound one of the best bodyweight exercises you can do.

Step 1: Start in the prone-on-elbows stretch.

Step 2: Lift your body off of the floor and lockout with straight legs and back.

Step 3: Try to hold the position for one minute before lowering back down into the prone-on-elbows position.

Although the goal is to be able to hold the stretch for one minute, do what you can at first, even if it is only for seconds. Have someone observe you from the side to provide feedback on your posture, because you want your body as straight as possible, without arching or sagging.



Repetitive movement, disease, and too little exercise have contributed to the rise of chronic pain.

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LOWER TRUNK ROTATIONS

Lower trunk rotations target the lumbar multifidus muscle—a series of long, narrow muscles that run along both sides of the spinal column and help extend and stabilize the lower spine, said Palmer. This exercise is great for providing core strengthening and flexibility for the low back.

Step 1: Lie on your back and bring your knees up until your feet are flat on the floor.

Step 2: With your knees together and your shoulders flat, bring your knees to one side and hold for 30 seconds.

Step 3: Bring your knees back up and move them to the other side and hold for 30 seconds.

It's important to keep your shoulders flat during this exercise to maximize the stretch. The goal is not to get the knees all the way down to the ground. Instead, simply progress into the stretches as far as you comfortably can. This is another exercise you can do in bed. Try doing three total sets.



PRONE PRESS-UPS

This exercise starts like the prone-on-elbows stretch and then moves past it. Train in this exercise after you have mastered the prone-on-elbows stretch.

Step 1: Lie face down on the floor.

Step 2: Come slowly up on your elbows with your arms straight up and down.

Step 3: Start with your head down, and then slowly raise your head as high as you can.

Step 4: Then push up with your arms until your elbows are fully extended.

Move slowly into the full stretch, listening to what your back tells you. Intensify the stretch by keeping your hips firmly in contact with the floor. Try to hold the position for two minutes before lying back down again. Try doing three total sets.



HIP BRIDGE

The hip bridge engages several muscles, including the transverse abdominis, the deepest layer of the abdominal muscle. It's a bigger muscle group that attaches directly to the spine, said Palmer. You don't have to lift your hips high. Only lift until you feel your muscles engaging and then hold there.

The hip bridge starts like lower trunk rotations but then goes up instead of to the sides.

Step 1: Lie on your back and bring your knees up until your feet are flat on the floor and your arms are to your sides.

Step 2: Lift your hips off of the ground while stabilizing with your arms and feet. Hold for 10 seconds, or for as long as you can.

Step 3: Return your hips to the surface and rest for as long as you need.

Try doing three sets for 10 seconds at first, working up to a longer period over time. This is an excellent core strengthening exercise.



Note: The hip bridge can be an aggressive exercise for the lower back when chronic pain is present, which is why you should only lift up until your muscles engage.

PRONE ON ELBOWS STRETCH

This stretch focuses heavily on extending the lower and middle back. It is a very direct, assertive way to move into back extension, and is easy to hold.

Step 1: Lie face down on the floor.

Step 2: Slowly come up on your elbows with your arms straight up and down.

Step 3: Then slowly raise your head up until you are looking forward.

Ease into this exercise while listening to your back. Although this stretch provides you with a lot of control, don't force it. Instead, allow the stretch to develop slowly and comfortably. Try to hold the position for two minutes before lying back down again. Try doing three total sets.



DOUBLE KNEE-TO-CHEST

The double knee-to-chest is a modification of the single knee-to-chest stretch. It provides the same benefits with a better overall stretch. Most people quickly move from the single knee-to-chest to the double knee-to-chest exercise due to its superior low back stretch.

Step 1: Follow steps 1-3 for the single knee-to-chest exercise.

Step 2: Once one leg is up, bring the other leg up, using the hand on that side to assist.

Step 3: Hold this stretch for 30 seconds before lowering first one leg and then the other.

This exercise can also be performed in bed. Avoid trying to lift both legs at the same time and avoid trying to lift your legs by themselves without help from your arms. Keep your back flat at all times and listen to what your back tells you. If it hurts, ease off. Try doing three total sets.



TRUTH and TRADITION

In Our Own Words

The Woman Behind the Hotline (Part 1)



Dear Epoch VIP,

I started working for The Epoch Times back in 2011 as a reporter for the Chinese-language edition of the paper. In 2017, I switched over to the customer-facing side of the business. Having been a psychology major back in college, I wanted to go back to people and relationships.

Like many career moves, this one came with a huge learning curve.

When a lot of people talk about customer service, maybe they think it's talking to customers on the phone, or maybe over email, but it's actually more complicated than that. So many dots have to be connected to make it work—from hiring, to training, to quality control, to keeping up with changes in the entire company. In short, things were a lot more complicated than I first thought.

We've grown in the last few years because of the support from readers like you. On the hotline, we've been trying to hire more people to reduce wait times which then create more efficient workflows to better accommodate our customers. We're also trying to provide more technical support for problems with our digital products, like our Epoch Times app. We've also been working on more self-service tools to help you better help yourself, like the online Help Center and your subscriber Account Portal.

And your feedback has been super valuable in telling us whether we're heading in the right direction.

We take your feedback very seriously. Usually when you send feedback (or if other departments forward us your feedback), we read your messages one by one and give serious thought to areas for improvement. We don't want to be just any other company doing customer service: we hope to really get connected with every one of our readers, every one of you.

You are so important to us. And because of that, we really value making you happy.

One of my favorite parts of the job is being able to get the firsthand feedback from you, our readers—including hearing your support and seeing your reaction to our media.

For example, a subscriber sent us a letter saying that when he first saw our newspaper he sat down for a while because of being in shock—he couldn't believe that a newspaper like this still existed! And his letter isn't the only one I remember. We keep all your letters and put them up around our New York office so we don't lose sight of why we do what we do.

For me, my job is not about money or fame or power. It's about the subscriber who calls in, and we can hear his concern for this country in his voice. It's about the subscriber who breaks into tears on the phone because she was so worried about things that she couldn't sleep.

I can relate to these subscribers because I came from a communist country: China. My parents, who had been arbitrarily detained in China, sent me here to the United States at the age of 17 because they wanted me to enjoy this country's freedom. I don't want the same things that have happened to the Chinese to happen to people here—even though in some ways, I think they already have.

I want to end by telling you that especially because I am an immigrant from China, I really appreciate the freedom I enjoy in this country. Because of that, I want the best for this country and its people, and I will do my part by supporting a media that I believe has the interests of this country and its people at heart: The Epoch Times.

In Truth and Tradition,

Teresa You
The Epoch Times



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Teresa You
Manager, Customer Service

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PROSTOCK-STUDIO/SHUTTERSTOCK

NATURAL THERAPIES

Natural Remedies for 5 Types of Pain

Avoid ibuprofen and other NSAIDs by treating pain with scientifically proven herbs and supplements

50 MILLION AMERICANS suffer from chronic pain.

SASIMOTO/SHUTTERSTOCK

VANCE VOETBERG

For 50 million Americans, the picture of life is tarnished by chronic pain. Whether it's a migraine, knee pain, or backache, chronic pain restricts what we aspire to accomplish.

Grandparents can attest to this. Middle-aged professionals realize it. Stay-at-home moms know this all too well. High school athletes are faced with it, too.

Millions of Americans rely on nonsteroidal anti-inflammatory drugs (NSAIDs)—such as ibuprofen, naproxen, and aspirin—to reduce pain's effect on their quality of life.

What often goes untold, however, are the side effects that can come from relying on NSAIDs to manage pain. Extensive research shows that NSAIDs can cause gastrointestinal ulcers, serious cardiovascular events, hypertension, and acute renal failure, and can exacerbate pre-existing heart failure.

A Major Drawback

It's important to know what causes pain if you want to understand how to reduce it. Of course, causes vary, but we often experience pain while the body is working to heal from an injury or sickness, because of an inflammatory response.

"In most cases, the inflammation is the healing. It's our body's way of clearing out dead cells in the area and preventing infection," Dr. Courtney Kahla, a chiropractic doctor, told The Epoch Times.

Continued on Page 16

Is Mouthwash Ruining Our Health?

7 alternative mouthwash solutions that can do the job without the risk

CHRISTY PRAIS

Harsh ingredients such as alcohol contained in mainstream mouth rinses can break down composite tooth fillings and cause more frequent visits to the dentist.

The Evolution of Mouth Rinses

The origins of formal oral rinsing as a practice can be traced back to traditional Chinese medicine (TCM) to around 2700 B.C. when it was first used for treating gum diseases.

A May 2023 study published in The Journal of Ethnopharmacology notes that "The Book of Rites" ("Liji," written around 221 B.C.) from the period of the early Qin Dynasty recorded that rinsing with salt water was used as a tooth cleaning method during that time.

But our modern-day mouth rinse products are far from a simple salt water rinse. In fact, they were originally not even intended for oral rinse purposes.

The antiseptic mouth rinses Listerine, acquired from Pfizer by Johnson & Johnson in 2006, was originally developed as a surgical antiseptic in 1865 and named after Joseph Lister who performed the first antiseptic surgery.

According to the book "Health & Drugs, Disease Prescriptions & Medication" by Nicolae Sfetcu, after its use as a powerful antiseptic, it was distilled and sold as a floor cleaner and as a cure for gonorrhea. In the 1920's it was rebranded and sold as a cure for "chronic halitosis," and was the first over-the-counter mouth rinse to receive

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THE EPOCH TIMES

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FOOD AS MEDICINE

The Magnificent Mango

This delicious tropical fruit has medicinal properties few people even know about

SANDRA CESCA

The mango (*Mangifera indica*), a member of the cashew family, originated in the Himalayan foothills of India more than 5,000 years ago. The mango has been prized in indigenous medicine for its myriad healing properties. All parts of the mango, including leaves, bark, flesh, peel, roots, and flowers, have pharmacological potential. There are more than 300 different varieties of mangos in the world.

Benefits of Mango

Phytonutrients are substances produced by plants to protect themselves. They include carotenoids, flavonoids,

coumarin, and indols. Many are bioactive compounds known to promote human health and manage chronic diseases and include anticancer, antioxidant, anti-inflammatory, antibacterial, and antiviral properties.

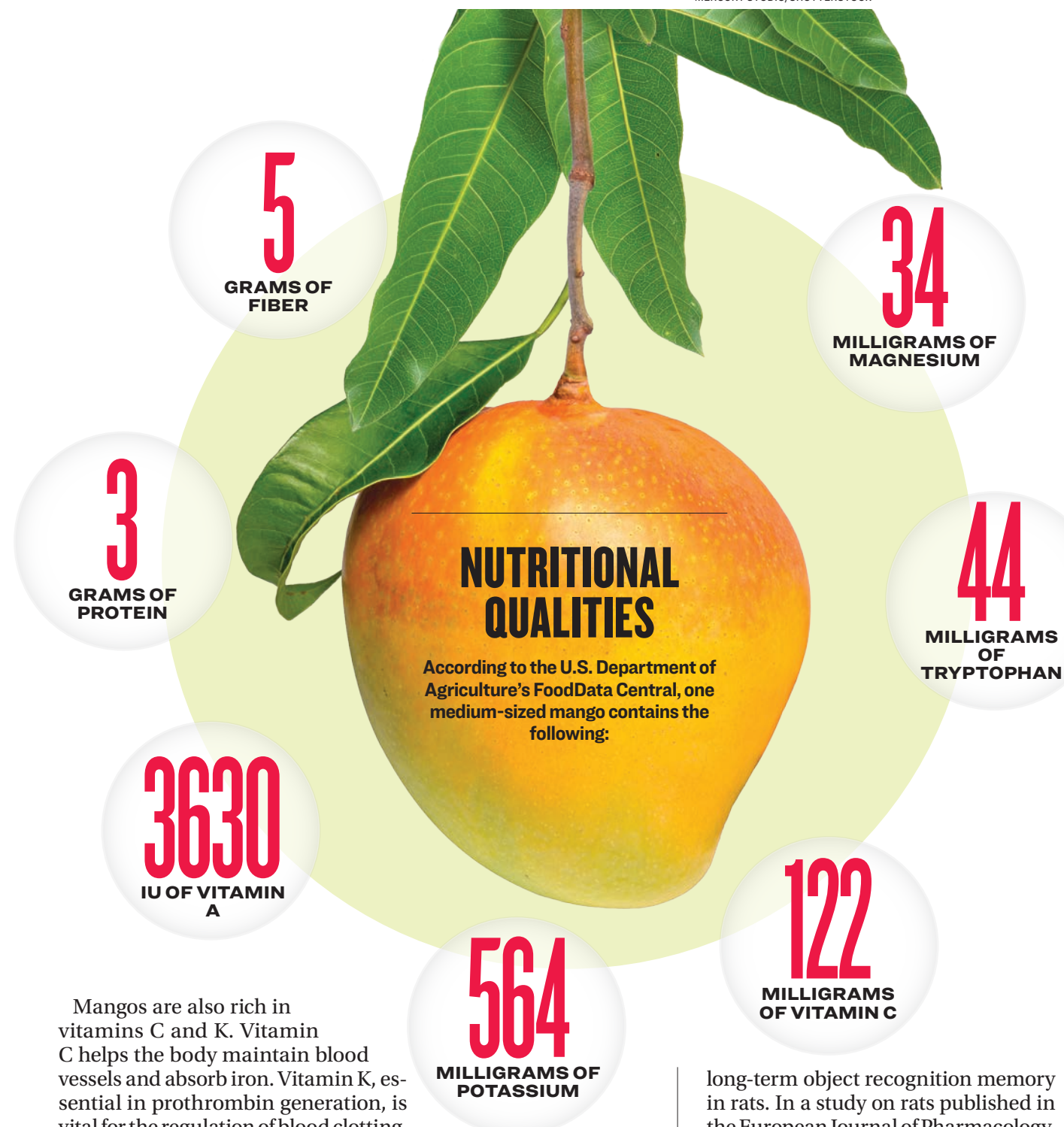
These compounds play an essential role in addressing the increasing prevalence of metabolic syndrome—a cluster of risk factors associated with the development of heart disease, heart failure, stroke, and diabetes. Nearly 1 in 3 Americans have metabolic syndrome, according to Dr. Chiadi E. Nduemele, a cardiologist at Johns Hopkins.

A Healthier Heart

According to the American Heart Association, this juicy fruit's fiber, vitamins, potassium, and magnesium help reduce the risk of heart disease, including high blood pressure. Mangiferin, a potent antioxidant found in high concentrations in mango leaves, is linked with reduced heart inflammation.



Beyond tasty, the brightly hued mango is worthy of superfood status with more than 20 different vitamins and minerals.



Mangos are also rich in vitamins C and K. Vitamin C helps the body maintain blood vessels and absorb iron. Vitamin K, essential in prothrombin generation, is vital for the regulation of blood clotting.

Anti-Cancer

Mangos are rich in beta carotene, a pigment responsible for their bright yellow-orange color. Beta carotene is an antioxidant known to fight cell-damaging free radicals that can potentially lead to cancer.

According to a study in the *Journal of Lipids*, published in 2017, mangiferin protects against a variety of human cancers, including lung, colon, and breast cancer, by suppressing tumor necrosis. Studies suggest that mango extracts containing phytochemicals inhibit breast cancer cell growth, proliferation, migration, and invasion. More research and clinical studies are needed to explore its potential as a therapeutic agent.

Better Brain Health

Mangiferin has been shown to improve

A high concentration of tryptophan, an amino acid that converts to serotonin, makes mangos a happy fruit while being a precursor to melatonin.

long-term object recognition memory in rats. In a study on rats published in the *European Journal of Pharmacology*, scientists suggested that mangiferin has the potential for preventative and therapeutic use in memory impairment diseases, such as schizophrenia, dementia, amnesia, and Alzheimer's.

The vitamin B6 in mangos may help with brain function by lowering high levels of the chemical homocysteine, which is linked to a higher incidence of dementia, Alzheimer's, and cognitive decline, according to the Harvard School of Public Health.

Weight Loss

In addition to being low in fat, mangos can aid in weight loss because their rich fiber content helps to promote the sensation of satiety. One study reported that mangiferin protected rats against weight gain from a high-fat diet and improved glucose and insulin responses, thus lowering the risk of obesity.

Healthier Gut Microbiome

The fiber and water in mangos can help stabilize the digestive system, thus preventing constipation and reducing the risk of colon and rectal cancer. In a recent study published in the *Journal of Food Science and Nutrition* in 2023, researchers at San Diego State University found that consuming fresh mango improves gut health by increasing the population of certain important gut bacteria.

Improved Sleep Quality

When eaten at night, mangos can help improve sleep quality. Mangos are rich in vitamin B6, which stimulates serotonin to produce melatonin, the sleep hormone. A high concentration of tryptophan, an amino acid that converts to serotonin, makes mangos a happy fruit while being a precursor to melatonin. Mango's high magnesium content has been linked to helping combat insomnia.

Healthier Skin

In addition to vitamins A and E, vitamin C helps the skin's natural aging process by shielding it from UV rays and pollution impurities. Vitamin C also promotes collagen production, allowing the skin to maintain elasticity. Potent antioxidants in mangos inactivate the free radicals known to damage skin.

Mango Skin—Handle With Care

Mango skin contains a compound called urushiol, an oil that can cause the skin to erupt in rashes in some people. The oil is found in the leaves, stems, roots, and skin, particularly around the stem. Before peeling a mango, it's wise to wash and lightly scrub the skin in warm water.

Tips for Eating Mangos

- To obtain the best nutritional qualities, flavor, and taste, eat tropical fruit fresh and raw.
- If you're eating dried mango, keep in mind that drying fruit concentrates the sugar content.
- Though mango skin is edible, it has a strong bitter flavor and is difficult to chew and digest.
- Keep mangos at room temperature and eat them in their prime, because overripe fruit loses much of its nutritional value and disease-fighting qualities soon after picking.
- Eating mangos can be very messy—or an art form worth learning.

Sandra Cesca is a freelance writer and photographer focusing on holistic health, wellness, organic foods, healthy lifestyle choices, and whole-person medical care. Her background includes allopathic medicine, naturopathy, homeopathy, organic and biodynamic farming, and yoga practices.

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— DARRYL AGEE

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MD or DO? It's All the Same in the Hospital Room, Study Finds

New research asserts that allopathic and osteopathic physicians' quality and cost of care in hospital settings are virtually identical

SHERAMY TSAI

An age-old debate quietly rumbles on in the hushed corridors of hospitals across the nation. Which qualification is best: MD (doctor of medicine) or DO (doctor of osteopathic medicine)?

A recent study, monumental in its scope, dared to ask this question, delving into more than 300,000 Medicare hospital cases. The verdict was startling: When it comes to the quality and cost of care in a hospital setting, MDs and DOs provide the same value.

Unveiling the Intricacies of the Study With support from the National Institute on Aging, a diverse team of researchers from various institutions rolled up their sleeves and joined hands. Their shared mission? To explore the potential ties between a doctor's type of medical degree and how it might reflect the quality and cost of care they offer hospitalized patients.

Adopting a retrospective observational design, the researchers ventured into the depths of Medicare fee-for-service data. The data were meticulously selected, focusing on a random 20 percent sample of beneficiaries hospitalized with medical conditions from 2016 to 2019. These patients were under the care of hospitalist physicians, either allopathic (MDs) or osteopathic (DOs).

The team assessed key indicators of health care outcomes and costs, including 30-day patient mortality, 30-day readmissions, length of stay, and

health care spending (Part B spending). These parameters, adjusted for patient and physician characteristics, painted a comprehensive picture of the care delivered by the two types of physicians.

The Verdict

Dr. Atsushi Miyawaki and his team found that when it comes to caring for patients, the distinction between a doctor having an “MD” or a “DO” after his or her name makes very little difference. The team's work highlighted the finding that the adjusted 30-day mortality rates were strikingly similar between the two groups—standing at 9.4 percent for MDs and 9.5 percent for DOs. Mortality rates reflect the proportion of patients who didn't live past 30 days following their hospital admission.

In their extensive analysis, the researchers cast an eye on the rates of 30-day readmission, a key indicator tracking the frequency of patients' return to the hospital within a month of their initial departure. They found that MDs and DOs performed equally well, clocking in readmission rates at a strikingly similar 15.7 percent and 15.6 percent, respectively.

The uniformity in the quality of care spread beyond mere mortality and readmission figures. Be it an MD or a DO at the helm of a patient care team, the average duration of a hospital stay hovered around the same mark—about 4 1/2 days.

And as for the bottom line—the impact on health care expenditure—the differ-

ences were practically negligible. On average, patients under the care of MDs accounted for a health care expense of \$1,004, while the costs of those treated by DOs came in at a dollar less, at \$1,003.

A Closer Look at MDs and DOs

Allopathic medicine, the path of study taken by doctors of medicine (MDs), has its roots in a traditional medical curriculum. The National Cancer Institute defines allopathic medicine as “a system in which medical doctors and other health care professionals treat

symptoms and diseases using drugs, radiation, or surgery.” Tracing its origin back to the ancient Greeks, this pathway adheres to the Hippocratic Oath, a pledge to “do no harm.”

Osteopathic medicine, the study of which results in a doctor of osteopathic medicine (DO) degree, supplements traditional medical education with specialized training in touch-based diagnosis. This manual medicine uses hands-on work to treat various health issues in the joints and tissues.

“Osteopathic physicians, or DOs, be-



With its “whole person” philosophy, osteopathic medicine is attracting a growing number of medical students.

lieve there's more to good health than the absence of pain or disease. Their whole-person approach to medicine focuses on prevention, helping promote the body's natural tendency toward health and self-healing,” the American Osteopathic Association states on its website.

According to a 2020 census conducted by the Federation of State Medical Boards, approximately 90 percent of licensed physicians in the United States at that time were MDs, while the remaining 10 percent were DOs. However, the 2022 Osteopathic Medical Profession Report shows that the number of DOs is growing dramatically. In 2022, 7,300 new DOs joined the workforce. Moreover, in the past decade, the number of osteopathic medical school students has grown by 77 percent.

Rethinking the Future of Health Care

“Although often described as two distinct philosophies, modern osteopathic and allopathic medicine have more commonalities than differences,” wrote Dr. Charlie M. Wray, a DO, and Dr. J. Bryan Carmody, an MD, in a collaborative editorial published in the *Annals of Internal Medicine*.

Regardless of the pathway chosen, both MDs and DOs are fully qualified physicians, and both are required to complete a residency in their chosen specialty after graduation. Both have equal opportunities to apply for residencies, and the privileges and scope of care granted to them are the same.

And, according to the editorial, both specialties attract academically outstanding students, with average Medical College Admissions Test scores well above the national average.

Moreover, according to the authors of the observational study report, the curricula of both allopathic and osteopathic medical schools have evolved to be substantially similar, requiring accreditation from governing bodies recognized by the U.S. Department of Education.

The professional divide between MDs and DOs is fast narrowing. This parity in performance not only demonstrates the evolving landscape of medical practice in the United States, but also reaffirms the idea that quality patient care isn't determined by the specific medical degree a doctor holds.

Ending on a note of unity, Wray told *The Epoch Times*, “Studies like this will continue to solidify the bonds between allopathic and osteopathic physicians while [they] also signal to patients that the care they receive is not dictated by the letters after their doctor's name.”

Sheramy Tsai, BSN, RN, is a seasoned nurse with a decade-long writing career. An alumna of Middlebury College and Johns Hopkins, Tsai combines her writing and nursing expertise to deliver impactful content. Living in Vermont, she balances her professional life with sustainable living and raising three children.

FOOD AS MEDICINE

Fermented Foods Improve Brain Health: Study



Fermented foods have been shown to benefit our mental health and cognitive function.

Another study adds to findings that bacteria-rich foods can help us preserve mental and neurological health

EMMA SUTTIE

Fermented foods, which we all know are good for the gut, are also beneficial for our brains, preliminary findings from a new study out of Ireland suggest.

Foods can significantly impact our mental health, and certain foods in particular can positively affect the brain.

For example, according to a review published in Preventive Nutrition and Food Science, fermented foods may improve cognitive function by modulating the release of neurotransmitters like brain-derived neurotrophic factor (BDNF), glutamate, gamma-aminobutyric acid (GABA), and serotonin, which are involved in learning and memory.

Sauerkraut, a type of fermented cabbage, contains choline, an amino acid essential for the production of acetylcholine. Acetylcholine is a neurotransmitter involved in muscle control, circadian rhythm, and memory, and research shows it may have a protective effect against Alzheimer's disease.

Fermented foods are also a source of tryptophan—an important amino acid. The body can use tryptophan to make the hormone melatonin (which regulates our sleep-wake cycles).

Tryptophan is present in milk, tuna, and many types of meat, such as turkey.

Tryptophan is also an essential precursor for serotonin, a neurotransmitter that influences a huge variety of brain functions, including mood.

Research has also shown that eating fermented foods may have long- and short-term impacts on brain function, resulting in improved mood and reduced stress.

Researchers from APC Microbiome, University College Cork, and Teagasc (Ireland's Agriculture and Food Development Authority) in Moorepark, Cork, Ireland, are conducting a large study to figure out which fermented foods are best for the brain. The research team is comparing data from more than 200 foods from all over the world in search of a variety of metabolites that are known to be beneficial for brain health.

Fermented Foods for Brain Health

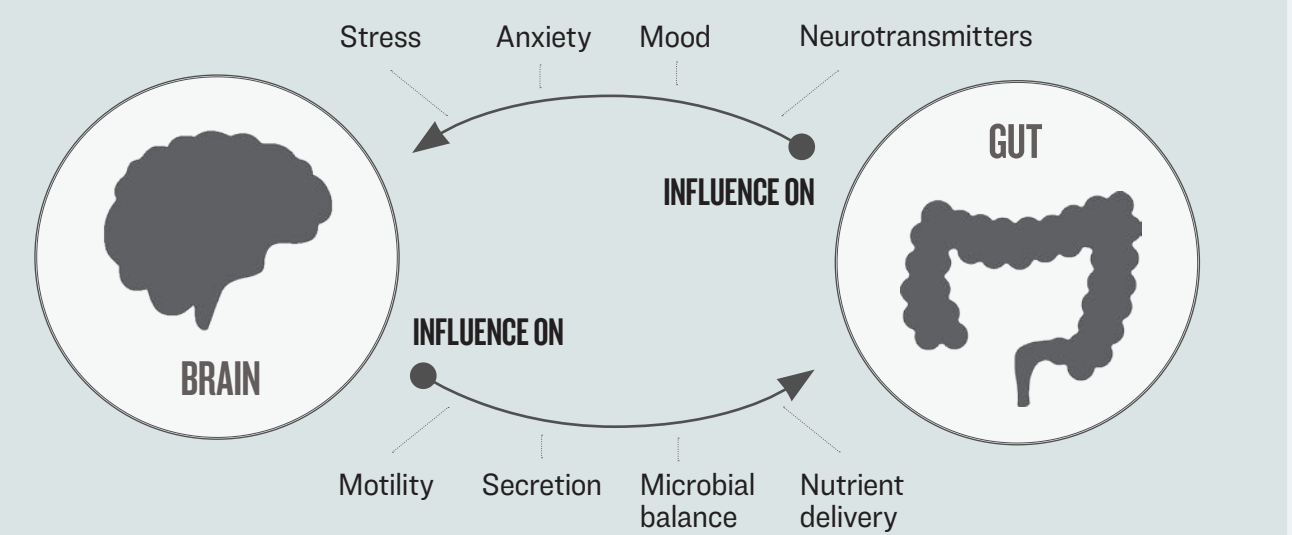
Although the study is still in its preliminary stages, researchers have been surprised and delighted at the results thus far.

"I expected only a few fermented foods would show up, but out of 200 fermented foods [tested], almost all of them showed the ability to exert some sort of potential to improve gut and brain health," Ramya Balasubramanian, one of the study authors, said. More research is needed to determine

THE GUT-BRAIN AXIS

The gut-brain axis is quickly becoming known as the microbiome-gut-brain axis because of the important role microbes in the colon have in producing certain neurotransmitters and other key metabolites.

The axis is mediated by a significant number of neurons that are conveying a tremendous amount of information between the gut and the brain, allowing each to meaningfully respond to messages from the other and regulate several functions.



which foods have the most significant impact on brain health, but a couple already stand out.

"Fermented sugar-based products and fermented vegetable-based products are like winning the lottery when it comes to gut and brain health," Ramya said.

"For all that we see on sugar-based products being demonised, fermented sugar takes the raw sugar substrate, and it converts it into a plethora of metabolites that can have a beneficial effect on the host. So even though it has the name 'sugar' in it, if you do a final metabolomic screen, the sugar gets used by the microbial community that's present in the food, and they get converted into these beautiful metabolites that are ready to be cherry-picked by us for further studies."

Fermented sugars can include those found in fruit, many vegetables, other carbohydrates, and the lactose found in dairy products.

As the study moves forward, Ramya said she hopes the public can use their preliminary results and consider including fermented foods in their diet to support their mental health and general well-being.

How the Gut Affects Mental Health

The microbiome is the collection of all the microorganisms, such as viruses, bacteria, and fungi, that live in a particular environment, such as in a human body. The gut is the most populated residence of the human microbiome. The gut microbiome helps with digestion, destroys harmful bacteria, protects against pathogens, and produces countless important metabolites.

In recent years, there has been considerable interest in the gut microbiome, and scientists are learning that it affects an enormous number of health issues. Our understanding of mental illness is also evolving based on new studies involving the microbiome. Rather than seeing mental health as localized to the brain,

Fermented foods with live bacteria are called probiotics and they are a simple, cost-effective way to improve digestion, mood, and brain health.

Fermented sugars can include those found in fruit, many vegetables, other carbohydrates, and the lactose found in dairy products.



research demonstrates that our gut plays an active role in affecting mood and behavior through the microbiome-gut-brain axis.

A research article published in Microbial Ecology in Health and Disease discusses how research into the gut microbiome is disrupting the long-held assumptions in disciplines such as psychiatry.

"Research into the active role that the microbiome-gut-brain axis plays in affecting mood and behaviour may lead to the conclusion that mental health is more than an internalized problem of individual brains," it notes.

One example is how studies have linked a disruption of the gut microbiome (dysbiosis) with stress, anxiety, and depression.

In a research review published in Clinics and Practice, the researchers from Texas Tech University note that the two-way communication between the central nervous system and gut microbiota, referred to as the microbiome-gut-brain axis, has been of significant interest in recent years.

"Dysbiosis and inflammation of the gut have been linked to causing several mental illnesses including anxiety and depression, which are prevalent in society today," they note.

The researchers also note that probiotics can restore normal microbial balance, giving these foods and supplements a potential role in preventing and treating mental disorders.

Fermented Foods for Mental Health

Foods are fermented by bacteria that can then continue living in foods as long as they aren't killed off by additional processing, a common occurrence with many foods, such as lower-end yogurts. Fermented foods

with live bacteria are called probiotics and they are a simple, cost-effective way to improve digestion, mood, and brain health.

While the findings from the Irish study above may provide a wider scope of insight into the brain-boosting metabolites in fermented foods, other studies have also explored the benefits of eating fermented foods on cognitive function and brain health.

Much research has focused on the role of strains of Lactobacillus (L.) bacteria that break down sugars, including those in milk.

A study involving older adults aged 60 to 75 who ate Lactobacillus helveticus in the form of mediated fermented milk found that the fermented milk improved the subjects' cognitive function.

In healthy middle-aged adults in Japan, a study found that participants who consumed probiotic milk (L. helveticus CM4) also had improved cognitive performance.

In a study of 60 Alzheimer's patients aged 60 to 95 in Iran, participants consumed probiotic fermented milk (Bifidobacterium bifidum, L. casei, L. fermentum, L. acidophilus). The study concluded that the patients who drank the probiotic milk had improved cognitive abilities.

A review in Clinical Nutrition and Metabolic Care published in 2022 states that dietary changes to the microbiome impact brain health and behavior but that this knowledge is seldom incorporated into clinical practice.

That means that even though researchers have proven the therapeutic benefits of these foods, that information isn't being acted upon by doctors. The result is that our medical treatments rarely reflect the impact food has on our overall health. Current and future research into the microbiome will inevitably give us more details about fermented foods and how they improve the health of the body, including the brain.

For now, adding fermented foods such as yogurt, kimchi, miso, and sauerkraut to your diet is an excellent way to enhance your gut microbiome and improve brain health.

Look for Joy to Find Well-Being

New book says caring for your health can be fun and filled with joy

CATHERINE YANG

There may be a glut of health information currently available, but the best things in life—and health—are free, according to mindbodygreen founders Jason and Colleen Wachob. Their new book, "The Joy of Well-Being," is a realistic, ultra-practical guide to good health that cuts through the cacophony of wellness information out there.

Health advice often focuses on what one should do or not do, eat or not eat, and can often contain confusing contradictions. Sometimes the science supporting a certain practice is clear, but to actually carry out the recommendations is too difficult for the average person.

"We are at the forefront of this health and wellness movement, but we can't even do these protocols that have a lot of rigidity, and it's not just because of our life-stage as parents and entrepreneurs. It's a lot, and it can be overwhelming," Colleen said.

Jason and Colleen had been busy, active entrepreneurs and executives when they had health scares that led to the

building of mindbodygreen in 2009.

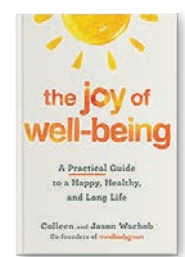
"The Joy of Well-Being" was two years in the making, and the advice included had to meet three key criteria: be backed by science, be accessible, and offer the possibility of joy.

In the Wachob's view, joy is not just a happy byproduct of one's wellness journey; instead, it should be a starting point and accompany you throughout the journey. In fact, the first chapter includes this takeaway: "If you only remember one sentence from this book, let it be this one: Any healthy change you make has to be a joyful one."

"So much of [health and wellness] is about adding and restriction and scarcity. We believe in abundance," Jason said. Rather than take things away, it is about what you can add, revise, or integrate, he suggested. That includes in discussions about longevity. People are now focusing less on "lifespan," the number of years you live, than on "healthspan," the number of healthy years you live.

Jason added that it's worth looking at "joyspan" as well. "What's the point of living that long and being healthy, fit, and mobile, if you're not having fun?" he said.

"We feel like our world has gotten a little bit too serious with the biohackers and all of the things—it's just a little too much."



"The Joy of Well-Being: A Practical Guide to a Happy, Healthy, and Long Life" by Jason and Colleen Wachob, May 2023.

Small changes can create momentum and lead to a wellness wave that helps other parts of your life fall into place.

80 Percent Health

The Wachob offer eight main pieces of advice that can take you to about "80 percent of maximum well-being." Why 80? By any measure, Americans are not healthy. We suffer from stress, live sedentary lifestyles, and have one of the least healthy diets in the world. At 80 percent, you wake up energized and feel good about the day, joyful even. That's a major improvement.

Breath, sleep, food, movement, stress, regeneration, connection, and purpose each get a chapter in the book with the science and statistics needed to support simple, actionable takeaways that can take you to 80 percent health. There are also tips for optimizing for that last 20 percent if you so wish.

"The beauty of having been in this business for 14 years and being obsessed with health is that though the science has evolved, so much of the science points to the practices and modalities that require very little time and are low cost or zero cost," Jason said. The book focuses on the biggest "needle-movers" in health, tips that give you the greatest yield.

"And they tend to be time-tested and a lot more simple than the things that get a lot of airtime on TikTok," Colleen added.

For instance, the chapter on breath reveals that a startling 50 to 80 percent of adults have dysfunctional breathing patterns, which in turn can ruin sleep, throw off psychological stress state, change blood chemistry, and create a

whole host of other factors that impair health.

The solution? Breathe through your nose. Do so consciously for a few minutes per day and you train yourself to do so automatically, even in your sleep. Then you can enjoy the improved immunity, cardiovascular health, stress management, and other benefits that come with optimal breathing.

The rest of the chapters are similarly practical, scientific, and potentially joy-inducing.

"In the chapter [on stress], we mentioned sauna because there's a lot of great science on sauna, but, look, saunas are not that accessible, because buying a sauna is expensive, unless you can get into a gym or YMCA that has one. Unlike cold therapy," Jason said. "You can hack it with a cold shower."

Start With Joy

When the Wachob started writing the book, a statistic that stood out to them was that half of Americans reported not having meaningful daily interactions. That was bad enough, but this was a 2019 poll and the numbers had likely worsened during and after the pandemic.

Recently, the surgeon general reported that three hours of social media a day doubled incidence of depression. Amid a widely recognized mental health crisis, the Wachob have also seen some positive signs. With the growing awareness, more people are taking charge of their health.

"I think we're at the beginning of what's

going to be an exciting tidal wave of re-awakening our relationship to all of these topics, but most importantly redefining and reclaiming how we want to live," Colleen said.

"We have a series of questions that people can ask themselves [in the book], and one of the ones I think is so important is: What is it that brings you joy? And there's a lot of times in life when we're unable to answer that question, but I think getting closer to the things that make your heart sing, that make you realize the uniqueness of the human spirit, that bring us joy, are going to get us closer to the answers."

"When you do things that bring you joy, you're more likely to find more community, more people who have shared connections and shared values."

The following are some of the questions posed in "The Joy of Well-Being."

- What about your life feels sweet and fulfilling?
- What about your life feels rushed and chaotic?
- How does your body feel?
- Are there any health issues that you are working with?
- What could be better: energy levels, sleep?
- How about that big brain of yours? Are you challenged and engaged? Or are you on intellectual autopilot?
- Would you say your days are filled with purpose? How does that manifest for you?

Colleen said small changes can create

momentum and lead to a wellness wave that helps other parts of your life fall into place.

"The Wachob's book isn't meant to be a checklist. One needn't try to complete every one of the tips. Instead, the reader should pick the ones that bring them joy and fit into their lifestyle and make them their own."

"Make wellness work for you; don't work for wellness," Jason said.

"We all deserve to be healthy and happy, and you can do it. It doesn't have to be time consuming or a pain in the butt. It doesn't have to be expensive. There are so many great things you can do for your health. Pick the ones that bring you joy."

The pathway to joy and well-being is paved by celebrating life with family, friends, and community.



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INTENTIONAL LIVING

The Rewards of Mindful Parenting

Being present with your children creates the emotional security needed to pass along your love and values

MIKE DONGHIA

Something I really hate is the feeling of lying in bed at night, thinking back through my day, and knowing I really blew an opportunity to be present with my kids. I love being a dad, so it's hard for me to admit that these days are far more common than I would like.

Being present with the people you love, particularly young children, still requires intentionality. The everyday chaos of life, work commitments, and daily chores compete for our attention, and their seeming urgency can easily consume our focus if we're not making space for what we value most.

But there's good news in all of this that I hope you'll take to heart. We don't have to be perfect parents to have a positive effect on our children.

Admitting our failures and speaking openly about them can be a growing opportunity for everyone. And guess what: For those of us still in the thick of raising kids, every day is a new opportunity to practice being present with them and connecting more deeply.

What does it mean exactly, to be present with children? I've come to believe that it's as simple as patiently giving them our undivided attention. When you do this, you'll naturally be more attentive to

◀ Listening to children and letting them explain their thoughts and emotions is a good way to practice mindful parenting.

their needs, emotions, and experiences. And in doing so, you'll be creating an environment of emotional security where they can flourish. The bond between you and your children will grow as you invite them to connect with you on a deeper level.

The Art of Mindful Parenting

All right, so we know what it means to be present with our children and the benefits of living this way—let's talk about some practical tips for embracing a more mindful approach to parenting that you can start applying today.

Put Away Your Phone

When given the choice between an effortless and pleasurable activity, such as checking my phone, and one that requires my engagement but is more meaningful, such as playing with my kids, my mind too often prefers what is easy. This is especially true if I'm physically or emotionally tired.

Knowing this about myself, I know that one of the best things I can do is to leave my phone out of sight when it's family time. When I do this, and I resolve to do it more often, I find it immensely easier to be present and savor the company of my little friends.

Listen Intently

Children aren't wired for efficiency like many adults seem to be. Their stories and explanations tend to take a long and winding path toward a conclusion. One thing I like to remind myself is that I have a choice whether to see this "feature" of children as an annoyance or as an invitation to slow down and appreciate that productivity is far from the highest value in life. Try really paying attention when your children speak, and resist the urge to interrupt or speed them along.

Practice Empathy

Spend some time with young children and you'll quickly see that their emotions have a much wider range than adults'. It's easy

to let yourself feel annoyed by their lack of self-control.

Compared with yours, their behavior probably makes no sense. But what if instead of dismissing them as being immature, you really tried to see the world through your child's eyes? What if you cultivated curiosity around this aspect of your kids and spent time trying to understand them?

I think this approach would result in more calm and less stress. And it's a lot easier than simply telling yourself to stay calm. All of us are curious in some areas of our lives, and it's not hard to expand that interest into a new area.

Challenges and Rewards

Mindful parenting isn't a cure-all for every challenge a parent faces, but I do consider it to be the foundational attitude with which nearly everything else starts taking care of itself. What's the opposite of being mindful? It's being stressed, rushed, and distracted.

Parenting in all its complexity simply doesn't work well under those conditions. It's hard to convey your love and values to your children when there isn't a calm base of emotional security for those interactions to occur within.

Of course, it's not easy to change your family culture overnight. Like any meaningful life change, the key is a long, sustained effort in a new direction. Start small by practicing mindful presence at particular times in the day, and build until it becomes your default response.

Your kids be grateful for your newfound patience, and I think you'll find that parenting itself is so much more fun when you approach it in this way.

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



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