

January/February 2018

The art of growing young[®]

Overcoming Seasonal
Affective Disorder *Naturally*

Feature Article



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Avoiding Sickness
During the Winter

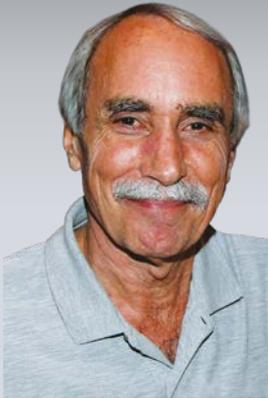
Around-the-Clock
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Be Kind

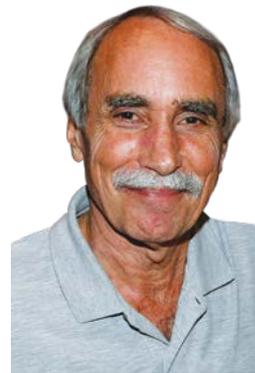
There is a wonderful article in this issue of *The Art of Growing Young* that delves into the amazing health benefits of thinking positively. It's really quite astonishing how our bodies react to good deeds, acts of kindness and positive thinking. While you can read for yourself about changing your life for the better through the power of thought and what we choose to focus on, I want to touch on something similar here: the concept that kindness attracts kindness.

There is a famous quote that states, "Be kind, for everyone you meet is fighting a hard battle." It doesn't matter if that battle is fighting to pay rent to keep a roof over one's head or striving to meet a deadline at work. It could even be something like trying to avoid binge eating junk food, or breaking an addiction to sugar, alcohol, tobacco or drugs. We all have struggles day in and day out, and we're often unaware of the struggles that people we meet, even those whom we know well, may be going through. When faced with kindness, it is much easier to fight our battles, both large and small.

Would you rather be met with kindness, indifference or meanness while interacting with friends, family, coworkers and strangers? Of course, you would rather experience kindness. And so would all the people you interact with on a daily basis.

Being kind helps keep your thoughts and feelings aligned with positive frequencies. This, in turn, helps us attract more positive thoughts, feelings, people and experiences into our lives. Being kind to others is, in effect, being kind to yourself. Kindness may actually be one of the most important tools we have for shaping our lives.

We don't know what battles other people are facing. And they don't know what we are dealing with either. But if we can all just act a little kinder, everyone on earth would benefit from the positive energy we can create.



Dwight L. McKee M.D.

Dwight L. McKee
Scientific Director

Nutritional News

Breathe easier with vitamin D

People with asthma may find breathing a little bit easier if they increase their vitamin D levels by spending more time in the sun or taking supplements. Recently, scientists found vitamin D can help boost the immune system's response to respiratory viruses and dampen harmful inflammation in the airways—two critical components to helping asthmatics keep their airways clear.



Tea drinkers have a leg up in weight loss

Nutrients in tea may create a weight loss effect by altering gut bacteria in a positive manner. Research published in the *European Journal of Nutrition* found that drinking black tea can alter energy metabolism in the liver by changing gut metabolites, which may contribute to good health and weight loss. It appears both black and green tea can help with weight management.

Sunlight protects eyesight

Playing outdoors may help kids avoid needing glasses later in life. According to new research, even if both parents are nearsighted, when children spend about 14 hours per week playing outside, they can almost completely neutralize that genetic risk for developing nearsightedness.

Avoid smokers and the places they congregate

Thirdhand smoke may be more damaging to our bodies than previously believed. Thirdhand smoke is classified as the residue left by cigarette smoke on curtains, fabrics, clothing and furniture. Scientists at the University of California, Riverside, exposed mice to thirdhand smoke via curtains and upholstery. Within a month, the mice experienced about a 50 percent increase in inflammatory molecules in their blood and liver. Inflammation is a major contributor to a wide array of diseases and health problems.

Exercise for happiness

According to a new study coming out of Australia, regular exercise may help protect against future depression. The decade-long study found that when people exercise at least one to two hours a week, they are less likely to develop depression later in life.



Living longer by vacuuming more

The latest research on living longer by exercising more uncovered good news for people who feel like they spend a lot of time cleaning the house. Researchers found that it isn't necessary to run, swim or work out at the gym in order to stay healthy. Household chores such as vacuuming or scrubbing the floor provide enough exercise to protect the heart and extend life. The World Health Organization recommends adults get at least 150 minutes of moderate physical activity throughout the week. Now you can count vacuuming and other medium-level cleaning activities as part of that time.



Teamwork: Get Fit Together, Stay Fit Together

Human beings are naturally social and tribal creatures. From the time we are very young, our peer group influences our activities, perspectives and habits.

Multiple studies suggest a plethora of benefits to those who exercise in groups versus just going at it alone. Group exercise can be an informal gathering of fellow fitness seekers or a more formal class led by an instructor. Find out how you can use the power of peers to help you attain your fitness goals this new year.

Social opportunities and fun

Group exercise activities can be a fun way for adults to be physically active with others, to move their bodies differently than they do in their everyday life (often seated at work), and socialize and spend quality time with others.

In other words, group exercise can serve as play for adults—it can provide a way for adults to feel young again.

In fact, a study revealed that exercise with others can produce a greater sense of calm after the exercise, compared to exercising alone.¹

When adults participate in group exercise, they are more inclined to try something fun and new. Boredom is stated by many as one of the top reasons they quit exercising. Exercising in a group can help encourage stepping outside of your comfort zone and trying a new class, and fellow group members can encourage different goals or strategies.

For example, in some jogging and running groups, members may do a slower, longer run one day and then another time, shorter, more intense sprints.

Or in a dance or movement class, having to change dance partners or trying several types of dance can keep people engaged. Even in yoga classes, instructors often try to switch up the order, sequence and variety of postures and intensity.

Physiological benefits

A research study at Oxford's Institute of Cognitive and Evolutionary Anthropology looked at the physiological differences between members of the university's rowing team. The members were divided into two separate groups—part of the team was assigned exercises to do together, and the other part of the team was assigned to do the same exercises individually. The divided crew members were then asked to report their level of pain when getting their blood pressure taken post-workout. The outcome revealed that the group that exercised with their teammates tolerated pain at a level twice as high compared to those who went at it alone. Researchers believe that the crew members experienced a “heightened endorphin surge compared with a similar training regime carried out alone,” similarly to other social activities that bring us joy, like dancing, eating and laughter.²

² Cohen, Emma E. A., et al. “Rowers' high: behavioural synchrony is correlated with elevated pain thresholds.” *Biology Letters*; Oxford University, The Royal Society, 15 Sept. 2009, rsbl.royalsocietypublishing.org/content/early/2009/09/14/rsbl.2009.0670.

³ Hanson S., Jones A. Is there evidence that walking groups have health benefits? A systematic review and meta-analysis. *Br J Sports Med*. Published Online First: 19 Jan. 2015. doi: 10.1136/bjsports-2014-094157.



According to a study conducted by the medical school at University of East Anglia in the United Kingdom and published in the *British Journal of Sports Medicine*, adults who took outdoor walks in groups had lower resting heart rates, more optimal blood pressure readings and lesser levels of body fat.³

Motivation and focus

Our thoughts and feelings are interdependently linked to our actions. Our intentions and thoughts will become our actions and will therefore dictate our reality. Surrounding yourself with other active adults who are participating in positive changes for their health will help motivate you as well. Those people will help motivate you to stick to your goals and hold you accountable to show up and do your best.⁴

⁴ Irwin, B. C., Scorniaenchi, J., Kerr, N. L., Eisenmann, J. C., & Feltz, D. L. (2012). Aerobic exercise is promoted when individual performance affects the group: A test of the Kohler motivation gain effect. Retrieved from <http://krex.ksu.edu>.

¹ Plante, Thomas G., et al. “Does Exercising with Another Enhance the Stress-Reducing Benefits of Exercise?” SpringerLink, Kluwer Academic Publishers-Plenum Publishers, July 2001, link.springer.com/article/10.1023/A:1011339025532.



We are more likely to act when we feel a connection to others or an obligation to other people beyond ourselves. Knowing that people depend on us to show up for exercise can be the motivational nudge that prevents us from pressing the snooze button in the morning instead of meeting our walking group. One study demonstrated that adults who went to the gym with their spouses dropped out at a rate of only 6.3 percent, while those who went separately dropped out at a rate of 43 percent!⁵

In another study, adults were asked to perform planks either alone, with a virtual partner or with a real-life partner. Of the three options, the people with a real human being working out with them could hold the plank position for a minute and 20 seconds longer than those who did it alone.⁶



⁵ Wallace, J. P., et al. "Twelve month adherence of adults who joined a fitness program with a spouse vs without a spouse." *The Journal of Sports Medicine and Physical Fitness*. U.S. National Library of Medicine, Sept. 1995. www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/8775648. Accessed 1 Sept. 2017.

⁶ Feltz Deborah L., Forlenza Samuel T., Winn Brian, and Kerr Norbert L. *Games for Health Journal*. April 2014, 3(2): 98-105. <https://doi.org/10.1089/g4h.2013.0088>.

In the previously mentioned study of the rowing team, the authors proposed that one reason why group exercise triggers more endorphins is that it provides a shared goal and a sense of comradery. When people are working toward a goal they have in common, there is a sense of being able to more easily accomplish it versus trying it alone. In other words, it provides a sense of external accountability and more determined focus, which, in turn, can help toward individual motivation.

In short, humans are social creatures, and we do almost everything that's good for us better together than we do alone. The power of small groups in supporting lasting behavior change, from health-depleting to health-repeating practices, is truly amazing and increasingly being supported and proven by scientific research. Community is powerful medicine!

Overcoming Seasonal Affective Disorder *Naturally*

Winter can be a time when we naturally feel low in energy, with a strong desire to hibernate. The cold, dark days can be particularly difficult for those of us who struggle with seasonal affective disorder (SAD)—many people begin to feel depression or deeper sadness during the winter.



SAD is a form of depression that occurs during the time of year when there is less sunlight—in most cases, during the fall and winter. The belief is that your circadian rhythm—your body's internal clock—is disrupted by decreased sunlight exposure, which can lead to feelings of depression and anxiety. Less sunlight can also decrease your levels of serotonin (a brain chemical that affects moods) and melatonin (a hormone that plays an important role in sleep and in immune system function).

To deal with SAD, getting outside on sunny days is important when you are able, and some health care providers recommend light therapy, using a special light that is supposed to mimic the light of the sun. There are also ways to work toward a greater inner peace so that SAD isn't as difficult this winter. One of the most essential tools is the power of intentionally cultivating positive thoughts.

Daily we interact with a variety of people and experience circumstances that range from very positive to very negative. How we respond to those things is a lot more in our control than we often realize. Our feelings, thoughts and actions are all intricately dependent on one another. When we realize how connected those three things are, we can alter one of them and it directly affects the other two.

Bringing mindfulness into our thought patterns can be one of the most transformative actions we can take toward altering our feelings and distancing ourselves from the symptoms of SAD.

When we more intentionally become aware of our thoughts, we can have more control over what we are attracting into our lives.

Start by observing your thoughts. Do not judge your thoughts or shame yourself for negative thoughts—we are socialized to worry and critique. Simply notice your thoughts and create awareness around them. If you notice there are a lot of negative feelings, practice reframing the thought. Make a habit of it. It may help at first to set an alarm on your phone a few times a day to remind yourself to check in with your thoughts.

Be kind to yourself as you observe the negative thoughts and gently work through a thought to get to a more positive perspective.

Just like any practice in life—such as playing an instrument or beginning a new exercise routine—cultivating positive thoughts is a skill that needs to be learned and habituated.

This is particularly important during the winter months, when SAD is more prevalent. You may notice that you need to check in with yourself and reframe your thinking more often during the winter or on particularly gloomy days. You may also need to add more reminder alarms or incorporate a gratitude journal into your daily routine.

Other actions you can take include limiting interactions with people in your life who complain a lot or beginning a meditation practice. Some families have a gratitude time during nightly dinners or before going to bed, during which each family member speaks about a feeling of gratitude and a positive experience that occurred that day.

When you find yourself feeling lighter in spirit, content and not as worried, you will know you are focusing on the positive parts of your life.

It doesn't mean you have to ignore what is wrong in your life. Rather, it means you're attempting to transform the negative into a positive or that you are seeing the good even amid the bad. It simply means you're putting a greater emphasis on that which is good.

Bad things happen in life. Maintaining a positive outlook toward those difficult things doesn't mean you ignore them. Allow yourself to recognize the problems, name them and lean into the feelings that you feel. It is important to acknowledge and process the negative emotions for what they are; be realistic. But instead of festering in the bad, move your energy beyond and away from it.





Aside from making cognitive changes, there are simple things you can do to ensure you are getting more sunlight and natural light exposure. Open your curtains and your blinds, and get outside first thing in the morning light whenever possible. Take a long walk outside or eat lunch in the park. Sit near a window during daylight hours. Spend more time in the rooms in your house that are the brightest. Visit your local indoor botanical garden and sit on a bench in the greenhouse. Even when it is overcast in the winter, exposure to the natural daylight will help, especially when surrounded by verdant greenery.

Not surprisingly, a long walk will expose you to two things—much-needed daylight and physical activity. Exercise is an essential element for healthy living in general but is particularly important when it has to do with emotions and mental health. Yoga is a good option to practice mindful gratitude while also incorporating exercise and movement into your life. If you're finding it hard to motivate yourself, even a simple and relaxing stretching session in the morning and before you go to bed can be beneficial to improving SAD symptoms.



Nutritionally, make sure you are getting enough mood-boosting nutrients, such as omega-3 fatty acids. Studies often show that these healthy fats are helpful in mood boosting.

Vitamin D is also an important mood booster that can decrease naturally in the body in the colder, cloudier times of year. Since vitamin D is made in the body in conjunction with sunlight, it is particularly important to make sure you are not deficient in it if you feel that you are suffering from SAD. Because of this, some health care providers will order a blood test to check vitamin D levels when patients report feelings of more intense sadness during the winter.

While not entirely understood, B-12 is a vitamin that, when low, is associated with depressive symptoms. B-12 also is helpful in augmenting the immune system response and giving people added energy.

It is imperative to be patient with yourself and give yourself grace to experience the changes in mood and emotions when you have SAD. Understand that it is something that is, hopefully, temporary—as the season changes, your mood may as well. That said, make sure you gently push yourself to take a few actions to work with the feelings that SAD brings. You may not be able to do all of the discussed ideas, but even just one tweak can make a positive impact. Because our feelings, thoughts and actions are interdependent, doing an action as simple as reflecting on one positive moment before bed will affect your feelings. Or stretching for five minutes when you wake up in the morning could affect your thoughts about how the day will go.

Small changes in our thoughts, feelings and actions can invite more positive experiences into our lives. It is particularly important to focus on this when the season challenges our inner spirit. It doesn't have to be an intimidating project you take on—even a small step in the direction of positive thoughts will bring about change.

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New Year, New Goal, New Path to Attainment

It's the familiar conversation around the beginning of the year—you ask people what their New Year's resolution is, and they heartily laugh, saying they won't make one because they never keep it.

Or maybe you have even said that yourself! But setting an intention for the new year is a powerful, personal force for constructive change. By setting an achievable goal, nurturing a community of accountability and focusing on the positive, you can help attract wholeness and goodness to your life.¹

Perhaps the most essential element of achieving a goal is setting one that is important to you and your lifestyle and is realistically attainable. S.M.A.R.T. goals criteria—a helpful acronym that is often utilized in forming health-related research projects—could also be used for personal goal success. S.M.A.R.T. stands for specific, measurable, attainable, realistic and time-bound.² Instead of setting a goal that is vague, such as “I want to eat more healthfully,” go for more specific, like “Half my dinner plate will be vegetables.” Incidentally, the “half” in this goal also covers the aspect of measurability.

Whether or not you want to fill your plate with vegetables, ask if your goal is truly attainable and realistic for you.

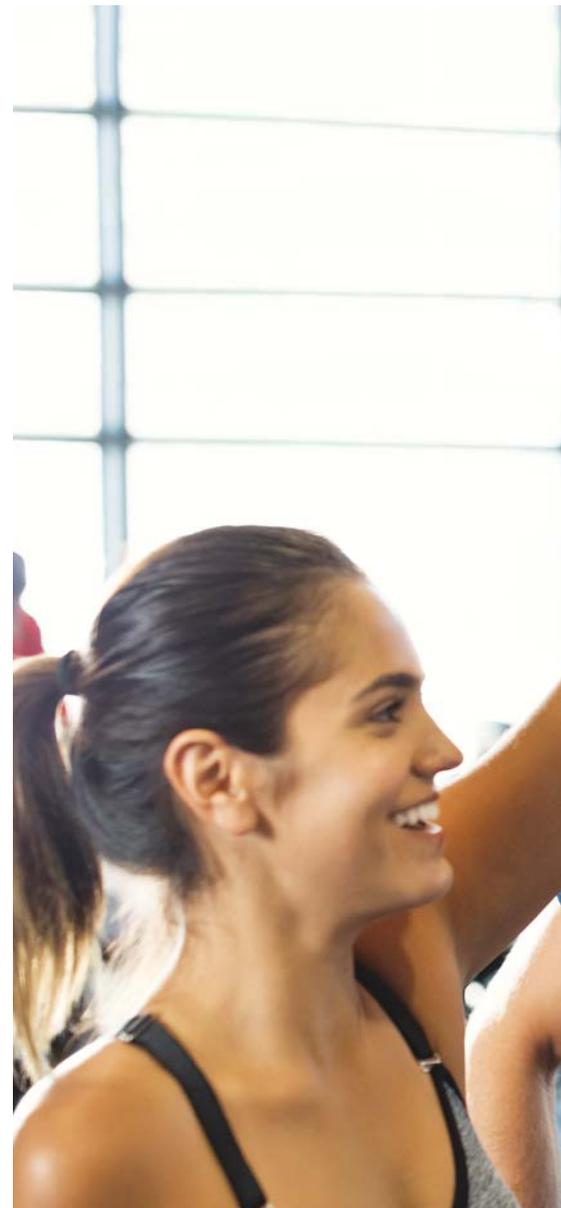
Look at where you are starting to take a small step toward your progress. Perhaps you never cook vegetables for dinner, in which case a more attainable and realistic option would be to simply include a vegetable in each dinner preparation.



The time-bound component could include something like “Half of my dinner plate will be vegetables three times a week” or “I will include a leafy green vegetable with my dinner for the remainder of the winter.”

When winter is over, you can look at a variation on the theme for a spring resolution, or perhaps you can add to what you've accomplished. Knowing there is a time expectation helps keep us accountable.

Something that helps with accountability even more is leaning on others for support. Committing to a group goal helps us have an external, positive force checking in on our achievements. If you set an achievable, realistic New Year's resolution, consider sharing it with others so they can ask and check in on you.



Better yet, consider teaming up with others to participate. If your goal is to walk a certain number of miles three times a week, pair up with a local walking group at least once a week. This will help you in terms of accountability, and sharing in the same goal can be a bonding and social time—a way to connect with other people in a positive way. When working with others to stick to your goals, give someone the permission to hold you accountable. Another idea is to post your goal and how you are working toward it on social media.^{3,4} This creates incentive because people will post words of encouragement or congratulations.

¹ “Motivation through conscious goal setting.” *Applied and Preventive Psychology*, Elsevier, 2 Mar. 2005, www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0962184996800059. Accessed 2 Sept. 2017.

² Shahin, Arash, Mahbod, M. Ali (2004). “Prioritization of key performance indicators: An integration of analytical hierarchy process and goal setting.” *International Journal of Productivity and Performance Management*. Emerald. 56 (3): 226-240. doi:10.1108/17410400710731437. Retrieved 2 Sept. 2017.

³ DeBar L. L., Dickerson J., Clarke G., Stevens V. J., Ritenbaugh C., Aickin M. (2009). Using a Website to build community and enhance outcomes in a group: Multi-component intervention promoting healthy diet and exercise in adolescents. *Journal of Pediatric Psychology*, 34, 539-550.

⁴ “Harnessing Social Media for Health Promotion and Behavior Change.” *Health Promotion Practice*, 10 May 2011, journals.sagepub.com/doi/abs/10.1177/1524839911405850#articleCitationDownloadContainer. Accessed 2 Sept. 2017.



Not only do the words of affirmation from others affect our goals, but so do our own thoughts and feelings. Think of your own thoughts, feelings and actions as a triangle—each point or angle is entirely interdependent on the others. In a triangle, if one angle opens, it affects the angles of the other two. And so it is with our thoughts and how they affect our actions. Studies show that by focusing on the positive, our actions (and our physical well-being) are also positively affected.⁵ When we actively work on the belief that we can achieve a realistic goal, we are more likely to be able to do so. Similarly, when we are positive with and kind to ourselves about slip-ups along the way (e.g., last week I walked two days instead of three), we are more likely to not give up the next time.⁶ In other words, nurturing positive thoughts within and toward ourselves along our life's path builds resilience.



⁵ Fredrickson, Barbara L. et al. "Open Hearts Build Lives: Positive Emotions, Induced Through Loving-Kindness Meditation, Build Consequential Personal Resources." *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 95.5 (2008): 1045–1062. PMC. Web. 2 Sept. 2017.

⁶ Tugade, M. M., and B. L. Fredrickson. "Resilient individuals use positive emotions to bounce back from negative emotional experiences." *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, U.S. National Library of Medicine, Feb. 2004, www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/14769087. Accessed 2 Sept. 2017.

While the intrinsic reward of setting healthy goals is nice, having time for reflection, evaluation and review is essential to positive change. Think of ways that you can affirm yourself along the way while remaining focused on your goals. Put a reminder in your calendar that every Sunday evening you'll take five minutes to reflect on your resolution actions during the past week and determine what you'll bring into the coming week. Another idea is to treat yourself. Perhaps bake your favorite dessert, or have a day during which you treat yourself to a massage—which both feels good and relieves stress.

The new year brings an opportunity to reflect on the past year. This year, instead of claiming defeat before you even try, focus on the positive and set a healthy goal. Be clear with your intentions. Collaborate with others in your community. Envision your success. You will have it!



Spice for Life!

During the long, dark winter months, we naturally crave comfort and warmth. Certain spices added to everyday eating not only can bring comfort but also add a much-needed boost to our immune system. For centuries, humans have used ginger, turmeric, cayenne and oregano to treat certain ailments.

Now science is showing how helpful they are in helping our bodies stay healthy, which is particularly helpful during wintertime, when respiratory infections and other illnesses are more prolific.¹

Ginger

Gingerbread oatmeal cookies, ginger apple pumpkin soup, orange and ginger mulled red wine—don't all those sound warm and comforting for cold winter days? As the days become shorter and the sun less bright, ginger can be a warming element that both adds an interesting element to comfort foods while, more important, boosting your immune system.

Conventionally used for digestive support and other gastrointestinal symptoms, physiologically ginger is a warrior against inflammation in the body. Ginger creates a sense of inner heat that helps comfort aches and pains that come along with common colds or the flu, which are especially prevalent during the winter cold season.

But more than just the feeling of heat and warmth, studies show how ginger can help combat free radicals in the body by creating an important immune system response. Additionally, ginger can help activate T-cells, which are an essential part of the immune system utilized to fight off a whole host of ailments.^{2,3}

¹ Mourtzoukou, E. G., and M. E. Falagas. "Exposure to cold and respiratory tract infections [Review Article]." Latest TOC RSS. International Union Against Tuberculosis and Lung Disease, 1 Sept. 2007. www.ingentaconnect.com/content/iatld/ijtld/2007/00000011/00000009/art00002. Accessed 1 Sept. 2017.

² "Ginger prevents Th2-Mediated immune responses in a mouse model of airway inflammation." International Immunopharmacology, Elsevier, 8 Aug. 2008. www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S1567576908002270?via%3Dihub. Accessed 1 Sept. 2017.

³ Tripathi, Sudipta, et al. "Ginger extract inhibits LPS induced macrophage activation and function." BMC Complementary and Alternative Medicine, BioMed Central, 3 Jan. 2008. bmccomplementaltermmed.biomedcentral.com/articles/10.1186/1472-6882-8-1. Accessed 1 Sept. 2017.

Turmeric

The vibrantly colored, orange-yellow spice, particularly popular in Indian cooking, has seen an influx in popularity recently for the health conscious. Research shows turmeric has a long laundry list of health advantages, including antioxidant, anti-inflammatory, antimicrobial and antifungal properties.⁴

Similar to ginger, turmeric is actually not a root but a rhizome—a plant's underground stem. Typically found in the dried spice aisle at general grocery stores, it is becoming more popular to find the fresh, whole rhizome in grocery produce sections.

Whether using dried or fresh, you can blend it into smoothies, add it to stir-fries and curries, shake it on top of roasted winter vegetables or even mix it into baked goods. Turmeric and dietary fat have a synergistic relationship, which means the body absorbs turmeric much more efficiently when eaten with fats, such as whole milk yogurt in your smoothie, sesame oil in your stir-fry or olive oil on your winter vegetables.⁵

Cayenne

Cayenne is a spicy chili pepper that takes its name from the capital of French Guiana, a small South American country. This immune-boosting pepper is most often used in kitchens to add a big punch of heat and complex flavor to any dish. That spice boost also comes with a host of nutritional benefits.

⁴ Prasad S, Aggarwal B. B. Turmeric, the Golden Spice: From Traditional Medicine to Modern Medicine. In: Benzie IFF, Wachtel-Galor S, editors. Herbal Medicine: Biomolecular and Clinical Aspects. 2nd edition. Boca Raton (FL): CRC Press/Taylor & Francis; 2011. Chapter 13.

⁵ Staff. "Curcumin." Mary S. Easton UCLA Alzheimer Translation Center, UCLA Neurology, alzheimer.neurology.ucla.edu/Curcumin.html. Accessed 1 Sept. 2017.

Cayenne peppers are rich in vitamins A, B-6, E and C. They are also good sources of riboflavin, potassium and manganese.⁶ Other nutrients in cayenne appear to help boost metabolism, which plays a role in regulating weight. Many people are concerned about their weight during the winter holiday months, when we eat more and exercise less. Cayenne may be especially beneficial during the winter because of its capsiate content. Capsiates are non-spicy nutrients that have been shown to help fight inflammation, a condition associated with many health problems.⁷

Oregano

Nearly synonymous with Italian cuisine, oregano is now becoming increasingly recognized in its role in Mexican dishes. Oregano is a strongly aromatic herb that is hardly recognized for its large amount of antioxidant activity.

In fact, oregano has one of the highest ORAC ratings. ORAC, which stands for oxygen radical absorbing capacity, is a scale developed by the USDA as a means to measure the antioxidant activity in foods, spices and drinks. A higher ORAC rating means there is a higher amount of antioxidants—which results in stronger potential for fighting the oxidation process caused by free radical attacks. For example, when grilling meat, oxidation is a natural occurrence. Scientists believe that adding oregano when cooking meat may help protect against the negative health effects associated with this process.

⁶ "Nutrition Facts: Spices, pepper, red or cayenne." Nutrition Data. Condé Nast Digital. 2011. Retrieved 13 July 2011.

⁷ Macho, Antonio, Concepción Lucena, Rocio Sancho, Nives Daddario, Alberto Minassi, Eduardo Muñoz, and Giovanni Appendino. Non-Pungent Capsaicinoids from Sweet Pepper; European Journal of Nutrition 42, no. 1 (February 01 2003): 2-9.

Everyday Smiles

The importance of good oral health is sometimes lost in the shadow of good physical health or good nutritional health. Yet your mouth is the largest orifice, or opening, to your inner body. Keeping your teeth, gums and mucus membranes clean and healthy is essential.





Some of our favorite beverages, such as coffee and red wine, not only can stain our teeth but also wear away at the enamel, the protective coating that keeps teeth hard. Luckily, there are everyday foods you eat and practices you do that are already being kind to your body's largest opening. Increasingly, research shows that oral health, especially the oral microbiome (bacteria, fungi, viruses), and the health of our teeth and gums are directly related to our overall health, particularly the health of our cardiovascular and our neurovascular (brain) systems.



Apples

An apple a day keeps the dentist away? While apples cannot substitute for twice-yearly dental checkups and oral hygiene appointments, apples have long been regarded as “nature’s toothbrush.” The fibrous flesh and skin of the apple provide a gentle scrub-down of the teeth. Keep in mind that apple juice, which is often stripped of nutrients and high in sugar, does not substitute for the fresh fruit itself.¹ Lower-sugar apples, such as the green, tart Granny Smith variety, are particularly good for dental and oral hygiene.

Pears

Many fruits have high acidity levels, which could wear on your tooth enamel. Pears, however, have high water content. The fibrous flesh of the pear can gently scrub or wipe your teeth as you chew it.

Carrots

Like apples and pears, carrots are full of fiber. The effort of chewing carrots stimulates an increase in saliva production, which helps protect the mouth. Another benefit of carrots is that they are lower in sugar than are fruits such as apples or pears.

¹ “Apples and the Teeth—‘Nature’s Toothbrush’ Reappraised.” *British Medical Journal* 1.6069 (1977): 1116. Print.

² Mickenautsch, Steffen et al. “Sugar-Free Chewing Gum and Dental Caries—a Systematic Review.” *Journal of Applied Oral Science* 15.2 (2007): 83-88. PMC. Web. 2 Sept. 2017.

³ Ravishankar Lingeshha Telgi, Vipul Yadav, Chaitra Ravishankar Telgi, Naveen Boppana. In vivo dental plaque pH after consumption of dairy products. *General Dentistry*, 2013 May;61(3):56-59.

Sugarless gum

Chewing sugar-free gum (only ones with natural sweeteners, such as xylitol), especially after a meal, can essentially act as a moisturizer for your mouth and a way to help prevent tooth decay. Sugarless gum stimulates the salivary glands to produce more saliva. This, in turn, helps flush away bacteria before it turns into acid. Be sure the gum is sugar-free and has xylitol.²

Cheese

While cheese has been regarded as good for bone health—due largely to its calcium content—a study has looked at its effects on dental health, and the results will please all cheese lovers.³

According to a study published in *General Dentistry*, the peer-reviewed clinical journal of the Academy of General Dentistry, cheese lowered the degree of tooth decay in study participants by increasing the pH (decreasing the amount of acid) in the mouth.

Water

And let us not forget the power of clear liquids—particularly water. The importance of drinking plenty of unsweetened liquids is paramount in oral health because it serves as a flushing mechanism. But it is best to stay clear of adding lemon or lime juice to your water, as the acids can erode enamel, thus becoming counterproductive to your goal of better oral health.



Brushing and flossing

People of all ages should brush their teeth every morning and evening, as well as after sugary or acidic meals and snacks. Flossing should be done daily too. Parents can help cement this practice in their children’s lives by starting the habit early—before teeth even show up in babies! It takes about two to three minutes to brush properly. That’s about the length of a song.





Spend more time outdoors

The link between sunlight and healthy teeth may not be obvious, but vitamin D is a critical nutrient for healthy teeth. And the best way to boost your vitamin D levels is to receive sun exposure during late spring, summer and early fall if you live in the “temperate zones,” which have cold winters. When the days are shorter, you can help increase vitamin D levels by supplementing with vitamin D-3, ideally combined with vitamin K-2, which helps move calcium into teeth and bones rather than settling in soft tissues.

Avoid sugar

What to avoid is just as important as adopting healthy habits. According to Ireland’s Dental Health Foundation, regularly consuming foods and drinks that are high in sugar content is the most important cause of tooth decay. Soft drinks are especially bad; the high sugar content increases the risk of tooth decay, and the high acid levels can erode enamel.

⁴ Peedikayil, Faizal C., Prathima Sreenivasan, and Arun Narayanan. “Effect of Coconut Oil in Plaque Related Gingivitis—A Preliminary Report.” *Nigerian Medical Journal: Journal of the Nigeria Medical Association* 56.2 (2015): 143-147. PMC. Web. 2 Sept. 2017.

⁵ Shanbhag, Vagish Kumar L. “Oil Pulling for Maintaining Oral Hygiene—A Review.” *Journal of Traditional and Complementary Medicine* 7.1 (2017): 106-109. PMC. Web. 19 Sept. 2017.



For bright smiles and fewer trips to the dentist, everyone should limit their intake of sodas, sugary drinks and sweet treats.

Pay attention to nutritional labels at the grocery store, as sugar levels can be surprisingly high in prepackaged foods.

Even very healthy foods can contain sugars and corrosive compounds that damage teeth. For example, the natural sugars found in fresh fruits and juices can be almost as damaging as table sugar. Lemons, oranges and other acidic fruits can raise acid levels, disrupting pH levels in the mouth, which can ultimately cause the bacteria responsible for producing plaque to increase. That’s why it is so important to brush after every meal (even healthy ones) and not snack right before bed.

Extra credit: oil pulling

Go the extra mile by giving oil pulling a try! Practiced for centuries in India and believed to be introduced in the U.S. by Ukrainian physician F. Karach, MD, oil pulling is not a common, everyday activity in the Western world. However, systematic reviews of multiple studies demonstrate significant improvements in decreasing plaque formation and plaque-induced gingivitis.^{4,5} You can easily practice it with pantry items you have on hand, like coconut, macadamia, or other fresh, high-quality, good-tasting oils.

Just put about a tablespoon of your preferred oil in your mouth and swish vigorously for a few minutes! It is important to spit out all of the oil (into a paper towel or wastebasket is best, to avoid clogged pipes) when you are finished, as researchers believe it will be full of toxins. Afterward, rinse thoroughly with water and brush your teeth as you normally would.

A healthy, beautiful smile is a wonderful thing to have. By eating right and taking time to brush and floss, you can help ensure your smile is bright and infectious—and that your heart and brain stay healthy for a lifetime.

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Vitamin C

Vitamin C, also known as ascorbic acid, is readily available in many vegetables and fruits and is vital to optimal health. While some animals are able to produce it internally, humans must get vitamin C from their diet or supplements.¹ It is one of the few water-soluble vitamins, meaning it dissolves in water and is carried to your body's tissues. Unlike fat-soluble nutrients, vitamin C cannot be stored in the body.

Vitamin C aids in the formation and maintenance of connective tissues such as ligaments, cartilage and tendons, as well as bones, blood vessels and skin. It is a necessary factor in the creation of collagen, which is a critical component of healthy, youthful skin. Vitamin C is also a necessary nutrient for wound healing. Therefore, it is considered an indispensable nutrient for skin health. Vitamin C is very synergic with oligomeric proanthocyanidins, or OPCs (extremely potent antioxidants), especially in its role in the maintenance of connective tissue, which includes all of our tendons, ligaments, skin and, believe it or not, even our nails and hair. OPCs increase the efficiency of vitamin C by several times.

In addition to skin health, vitamin C helps fight heart disease and works to help decrease unhealthy cholesterol and triglycerides. It also helps the body absorb supplemental and dietary iron.

One of the most important aspects of vitamin C is its powerful role as an antioxidant. Antioxidants are available in certain foods and drinks, and their job is to neutralize oxidizing agents, or free radicals. In fact, in the past, there were discussions and advocacy in the scientific community about increasing daily intake recommendations in order to maximize vitamin C's free radical-quenching potential in our bodies.²

There is continued research into and debate about the role of vitamin C in protecting our bodies against the common cold. One recent review of numerous studies found that when ordinary people took increased dosages of vitamin C, they had slightly shorter times being sick (they were sick for roughly one less day than those who did not take increased vitamin C).

The review also noted that vitamin C helped prevent the incidence of the common cold by 50 percent in athletes and soldiers partaking in extreme physical exertion and/or exposed to extremely cold weather.

This may be partially due to vitamin C's antioxidant behaviors, as extreme workouts can cause a free radical surge in the body.³

Vitamin deficiency is rare in the developed world because vitamin C is so abundant in citrus fruits and vegetables, and it's often available in multivitamin supplements. However, some evidence does suggest that many people may have minor levels of deficiency. Symptoms of vitamin C deficiency consist of fatigue, body aches and weakness, bleeding from your gums, and rashes on your legs. Dry and brittle hair, gum inflammation, and poor skin health (rough, dry skin or wounds that are slow to heal) are other signs of deficiency. Scurvy is a rare disease that is caused by the ongoing lack of vitamin C in your diet.⁴ However, it does occur, especially in older people who eat poor-quality diets, and is rarely suspected or tested for by modern physicians since it is believed to be a "vitamin deficiency disease of the past."

When we think of vitamin C, the first foods that come to mind are probably oranges and other citrus fruits. They are excellent sources of the nutrient. Interestingly, red bell peppers have some of the highest levels of vitamin C per serving. Indeed, peppers were the food source from which the great Hungarian scientist Albert Szent-Gyorgi originally isolated vitamin C. He won the Nobel Prize for this discovery.

Other great fruit sources of vitamin C are berries (raspberries, blueberries, blackberries, cranberries), melons (watermelon, cantaloupe, honeydew, heirloom varieties), kiwi, pineapple and mango.

Vegetables also provide an abundant supply of it, especially dark green vegetables—including broccoli, cabbage and leafy greens (spinach, kale, chard, turnip greens, collards). In addition to greens, winter squashes such as butternut, acorn and heirloom varieties are rich in vitamin C. Finally, the "vegefruit", the tomato, is another good source!

Vitamin C is sensitive to light and heat and can break down during the cooking process. Therefore, it is best to consume fruits and vegetables high in vitamin C fresh and raw, or lightly cooked, if you want to maintain the integrity of the vitamin.⁵

The National Institutes of Health (NIH) recommends that the adult female consume at least 75 mg a day, or 85 mg if she's pregnant and 120 mg if she's breastfeeding. The NIH recommends adult males consume 90 mg a day. The NIH recommends smokers take even more vitamin C—35 mg more a day than nonsmokers. Children should consume between 50 mg and 75 mg, depending on their age.⁶ It's important to discuss the medications you are taking with your health care provider, as vitamin C can have adverse reactions with some prescription drugs. In general, it is best to separate the intake of medications and nutritional supplements by at least two hours, to minimize the possibility of in-stomach interactions.

¹ Li Y, Schellhorn HE. New developments and novel therapeutic perspectives for vitamin C. *J Nutr* 2007;137:2171-84.

² Carr AC, Frei B. Toward a new recommended dietary allowance for vitamin C based on antioxidant and health effects in humans. *Am J Clin Nutr* 1999;69:1086-107.

³ Hemila H, Chalker E. Vitamin C for preventing and treating the common cold. *Cochrane Database Syst Rev*. 2013;(1):CD000980. PMID: 23440782. www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/23440782.

⁴ "Vitamin C (Ascorbic acid)." University of Maryland Medical

Center, 16 July 2013, www.umm.edu/health/medical/altmed/supplement/vitamin-c-ascorbic-acid.

⁵ "Vitamin C." *MedlinePlus Medical Encyclopedia*, 7 Jan. 2017, medlineplus.gov/ency/article/002404.htm.

⁶ "Office of Dietary Supplements—Vitamin C." NIH Office of Dietary Supplements, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 11 Feb. 2016, ods.od.nih.gov/factsheets/VitaminC-HealthProfessional/.

Avoiding Sickness During the Winter

In the thick of winter and the endlessly chilly days, getting sick is almost assumed as inevitable. Sore throats, body aches, the common cold, arthritis flare-ups, dry skin and even cold sores all seem to be more commonplace during wintry weather. Here are some simple ideas that older adults can incorporate into their everyday lives to avoid the most common winter illnesses.

The most important action you can take to combat illnesses is to wash your hands. In winter, there is an increase in hospitalizations for respiratory illnesses.¹ Interestingly, it has been shown that the main cause of infections in hospitals is people's noses through sneezing and wiping runny noses without washing hands afterwards. While it is common for people to assume that a cough or sneeze would be the primary transmission mode, many illnesses are spread by physical contact. A friendly handshake or touching a doorknob can transmit a virus quite easily. But one cannot avoid human contact throughout winter!



But all that hand-washing can take a toll on older people's skin, particularly in the winter.

As such, wash your hands often and correctly.² Wet your hands with water and rub your hands together with soap for at least 20 seconds before rinsing (research shows that 95 percent of people do not wash their hands correctly).³ If you use a cloth hand towel to dry off at home, just make sure to replace it with a fresh, clean one more often.

Another way to practice hand hygiene is to not touch your mouth as much.

Scientists have correlated the amount people touch their face to an increase in respiratory illness.⁴ People often touch their mouth, nose or eyes unconsciously, which is why proper hand-washing is so important.

In fact, skin irritation is listed as one of the targeted reasons why people don't practice good hand hygiene.⁵ One option is to regularly and liberally use hand lotion with natural moisturizers such as shea butter, almond oil, essential orange oil, sesame oil, rose hip seed oil, avocado oil and chamomile flower extract (rich in the flavonoids lutein, apigenin, quercetin, and the oils bisabolol and matricin), as well as the classic skin healer aloe vera. Supplements and lotions containing hyaluronic acid are helpful for dry skin because this special tissue acid retains water.

Vitamin D is an important player in the immune system. When vitamin D is lacking, the immune system may not be able to function at optimal levels. During winter, people have a higher rate of vitamin D deficiencies—usually due to being cooped up inside, because the cold and shorter days mean less sunlight, and the winter sun in temperate climate zones is too low in short-wave ultraviolet to produce much vitamin D when sunlight does contact our skin.



Our bodies naturally produce vitamin D, with the help of ultraviolet energy from the sun. In winter, when daylight is in shorter supply, there are less ultraviolet rays in the atmosphere, which leads to less internal production of vitamin D. So, what's the solution? Supplement with a high-quality natural vitamin D-3 product (preferably combined with vitamin K-2 and omega-3 fatty acids), and also spend more time outside. If you see a warmer day in the forecast or a day with more sunlight, make a point to be outside in nature. (An added bonus: Vitamin D, as well as many parts of the spectrum of natural sunlight, is a mood booster even in winter.)

¹ Mourtzoukou, E. G., and M. E. Falagas. "Exposure to cold and respiratory tract infections." *The International Journal of Tuberculosis and Lung Disease: the official journal of the International Union against Tuberculosis and Lung Disease.*, U.S. National Library of Medicine, Sept. 2007, www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/17705968.

² "Handwashing: Clean Hands Save Lives." Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 27 Jan. 2016, www.cdc.gov/handwashing/.

³ Borchgrevink, C. P., et al. "Hand washing practices in a college town environment." *Journal of Environmental Health, U.S. National Library of Medicine*, Apr. 2013, www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/23621052.

⁴ Nicas, Mark, and Daniel Best. "A Study Quantifying the Hand-To-Face Contact Rate and Its Potential Application to Predicting Respiratory Tract Infection." *Journal of Occupational and Environmental Hygiene*, vol. 5, no. 6, 2008, pp. 347-352., doi:10.1080/15459620802003896.

⁵ Chassin, M. R., et al. "Improving hand hygiene at eight hospitals in the United States by targeting specific causes of noncompliance." *Joint Commission Journal on Quality and Patient Safety, U.S. National Library of Medicine*, Jan. 2015, www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/25976719.



While you're taking that brisk walk outside to get good sun exposure, you're doing double duty for warding off winter ailments. Exercise is a good friend of the immune system. In fact, a systematic review of 17 trials concluded that for older adults in particular, exercise bolsters the immune system.⁶



In the midst of winter when you're feeling under the weather, often you just want to curl up in bed.

But there is more reason to make sure you are getting enough sleep—prevention of the common cold. A team of researchers found that people who logged at least seven hours of sleep a night developed cold symptoms at a significantly lower rate than did those who logged only five or six hours. Researchers sprayed a live cold virus into the participants' noses and then tracked their sleeping habits. The participants who slept less were four times more likely to catch a cold than were those who slept more. Whereas 17 percent of the longer sleepers became sick, 39 percent of the people who slept less than six hours got colds.

And those who averaged less than five hours of sleep a night caught the cold at a rate of 45 percent! The researchers don't know exactly why more sleep is a protective factor, but one of the researchers speculated that it could be related to the observation that less sleep can contribute to chronic inflammation, which is a dysfunctional response of the immune system.⁷

Winter brings its own multitude of issues that can challenge the body and mind. By following many of the practices that are recommended for generally healthy living, you can remain healthier throughout the season.

⁶ Haaland, Derek A., et al. "Is Regular Exercise a Friend or Foe of the Aging Immune System? A Systematic Review." *Clinical Journal of Sport Medicine* 18.6 (2008): 539-48. Print.
⁷ Prather, Aric A., et al. "Behaviorally Assessed Sleep and Susceptibility to the Common Cold." *Sleep* 38.9 (2015): 1353-1359. PMC. Web. 5 Sept. 2017.

Around-the-Clock Health: Optimizing the Impact of Your Supplements

The old saying goes that you can bring a horse to water, but you can't make him drink. And it's an analogous situation with supplements and our bodies.

However, in this analogy, it depends on *when* you bring that metaphorical horse to the water. In the case of vitamins and minerals, timing may not be everything, but it can significantly help in terms of bioavailability. Research shows that various supplements have optimal times when the body will process and absorb them best.

Vitamins are either fat-soluble or water-soluble—meaning they either dissolve in and are more easily processed when they are mixed with either lipids (fats) or water. To more easily imagine this, picture what happens when you mix vinegar with olive oil for dressing. The vinegar and oil maintain their own identities, and you can distinguish between the two. If you mix that vinegar in a water solution, the two blend together in a way that makes them indistinguishable from one another. In this case, vinegar is water-soluble.

This is important to consider because it will determine whether a given vitamin should be consumed with food or on an empty stomach. Many vitamins are fat-soluble.

Vitamins A, D, E and K are best absorbed when eaten with a small amount of fat, such as whole milk yogurt, fatty fish or even vegetables sautéed in olive oil.

Vitamin C and the B-complex vitamins are primary exceptions that don't need healthy fats from your diet for the body to process them. In fact, B vitamins are vital elements in metabolism and therefore are best taken on an empty stomach, though they are also well-absorbed with food, and some people with sensitive stomachs will be more comfortable taking even the water-soluble vitamins with food.

Does that mean you should separate out all the many vitamins in your daily multivitamin? Of course not. One option is to take your multivitamin with a meal, but be sure the fat content of that meal is within healthy moderation. If you want to supplement with water-soluble vitamins, you could take them upon waking up.

Calcium and magnesium are crucial minerals, which have a calming effect. Perhaps the folk concept of a warm glass of milk before bed is a good idea after all. That said, the body can absorb only so much calcium at a given time, so many experts believe it is best to divide the doses up and not take more than 500 mg at a time.¹ Although calcium and magnesium are optimally absorbed when taken separately from one another, nature often combines these two minerals in food, and, although they're not absorbed quite as well when taken together (due to a bit of competition between them for absorption), it is often convenient to do so and still quite effective.

Zinc is best taken before eating and best *not* paired with calcium or iron, since they can fight for receptor sites; however, most forms of zinc in amounts higher than a few milligrams often cause gastrointestinal upset when taken on an empty stomach, so taking zinc with food is often best, though avoiding iron and calcium at the same time is advisable. Iron should also be taken on an empty stomach and not in conjunction with calcium. The trouble is that iron supplements can cause gastrointestinal distress. A good option is to take iron with citrus, fruit or juice high in vitamin C, because vitamin C helps aid in its absorption.²

Probiotics are best taken roughly 30 minutes prior to eating a meal containing some fat.³ The rationale behind that is to prevent the probiotics from being overpowered by all the other dynamics occurring when food is being digested in the body. In other words, taking probiotics prior to eating gives the probiotics a running start to work at balancing and aiding in promoting a healthy gut flora.

Generally speaking, obstacles to nutrient absorption are many of the familiar foes—caffeine, alcohol and stress. Caffeine can diminish the absorption of iron by up to 80 percent.⁴ That doesn't mean you must eliminate your morning tea or coffee.

Instead, attempt to wait at least an hour between consuming caffeine and your supplement.

Not surprisingly, alcohol shouldn't be what you swallow your multivitamin with. Furthermore, consumed beyond moderation, alcohol can damage the lining of your digestive tract and decrease digestive enzymes.⁵ Stress keeps the body in fight-or-flight mode. This is not conducive to digestion because the body focuses on coping with the stress instead of proper digestion.⁶ Informed experimenting is the best way to find the way *your* body prefers to get its food and supplements.

¹ Straub, Deborah A. "Calcium Supplementation in Clinical Practice: A Review of Forms, Doses, and Indications." *Nutrition in Clinical Practice*, vol. 22, no. 3, 1 June 2007, pp. 286-296., doi:10.1177/0115426507022003286.

² "Taking iron supplements." *MedlinePlus Medical Encyclopedia*, 3 May 2015, medlineplus.gov/ency/article/007478.htm.

³ Tompkins, T. A., et al. "The impact of meals on a probiotic during transit through a model of the human upper gastrointestinal tract." *Beneficial Microbes*, U.S. National Library of Medicine, 1 Dec. 2011, www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/22146689.

⁴ Garrison, Robert H., and Elizabeth Somer. *The nutrition desk reference*. Keats Pub., 1997.

⁵ Somer, Elizabeth. *The essential guide to vitamins and minerals*. Harper Perennial, 1995.

⁶ Mindell, Earl, and Hester Mundis. *Earl Mindell's new vitamin bible*. Grand Central Life & Style, 2011.



Staying Active Indoors as a Family

Anyone who has endured a blizzard can tell you that cabin fever is real! What initially feels cozy—being home from school, cuddling up on the couch under blankets and sipping hot chocolate—can become quite repressive after a while, especially to little kids full of energy. Here are some fun ways to keep your children active and creative during the long, chilly winter while they spend much of their time inside.

Run, run, run! You may think that running involves tracks, treadmills, parks or at least snow-free sidewalks. But running comes in all forms and is an excellent way to quickly increase your heart rate and break a sweat. Live in a small apartment? There are some games you can play with them, like Red Light/Green Light, while your kids run in place. Or run up and down the stairs. Live in a larger house? Have hallway races. Mix it up and try various kinds of running, like march running (think knees up in front of you), bunny hopping and skipping.

Throw a dance party. Tell your kids they can play DJ and choose their favorite songs.

Dancing is not only good for the body physically, but it also helps children appreciate music.

Add some giggles to the dance party by playing a song or two where you do a freeze dance. One of your children can be the lucky one who gets to press pause at random times during a song, and everyone dancing has to freeze in their current stance. Similarly, you can play a version of musical chairs in which everyone dances, and when the music stops they have to take a seat on the ground. Another fun variation on dancing is reenacting a dance from a movie or music video. It doesn't have to be choreographed strictly—just some silly interpretations on the professional versions.

Host your own indoor Olympics! It doesn't have to be too competitive, just creative. Set up an obstacle course using boxes and chairs.

Get a yoga mat or blanket and create a small tunnel to crawl through. Jump into and out of Hula-Hoops. Have a ring toss, or tape off a goal area and toss bags of dried beans as literal beanbags. Have a gymnastics event that includes jumping, splits, somersaults and handstands. Or place some tape down on the floor for some fall-free balance beam sequences. You can also play table tennis. If you don't have a set of paddles, just use your hands—like ping-pong meets handball at the dining room table. Make a basketball set out of a small ball and large wastebasket. Exercise your children's brains too by having them create props. Use a whisk as the Olympic torch, or make quick medals with aluminum foil and yarn.

And then there are always the good old-fashioned games that don't require Olympic prowess—the games that we all played growing up on rainy days. Give Rover some exercise too by having the kids (gently) chase the dog. Or if the dog isn't into it, the kids can play tag among themselves in the basement. You can make it touchless by using flashlights. Another variation is freeze tag, where a soft touch must elicit a total standstill!

For smaller kids, give them piggyback rides where they can use their abdominal muscles to balance on top.

Or have them give piggyback rides to their stuffed animals. Try a game of hide-and-seek in teams. Play Simon Says, Twister or leapfrog. Use painter's tape to make a hopscotch court down your hallway. If cousins or neighbors can come over, try Duck, Duck, Goose.





Crab walking entails leaning backward and essentially crawling backside down. The options are limited only by your imagination.

After all of that activity, bring some Zen into your kids' winter lives with yoga. The internet has plenty of kids' yoga videos that encourage kids to visualize animals or sing along with the yoga class. To make it even more engaging, each family member can take a turn being the yoga instructor for five minutes—almost like Simon Says-meets-yoga.

And if all else fails, bundle everyone up, pack up a thermos of warm apple cider and go for a long walk. But you may be too tired after all this indoor activity! And guess what? All of these activities are equally good for adults... try them yourself. Doing them with the kids really adds to your quality time with them.



Juicing **versus** Chewing

To chew or not to chew, that is the question.

Juices and smoothies have become incredibly popular in recent years, particularly among health-conscious women. Entire chain stores of smoothie bars devoted exclusively to liquid nutrition have sprouted up across some countries. Fad diets promising body cleansing have been touted by everyone from health gurus to celebrities. And there has been an increase in sales around the globe of specialty kitchen gadgets that turn your fruits and vegetables into liquid.¹

Even everyday grocery stores have a special juice section, if not an in-house juice bar. As women attempt to play the balancing act of all their responsibilities, chugging down a quick juice or smoothie can be tempting for meal replacement or feeling like you're adding nutritious vegetables and fruits to your diet.

While treating yourself to a post-workout, protein-packed smoothie is a quick way to give your body nutrients and vitamins, humans are biologically hardwired to chew for not only health but also pleasure.

The act of chewing helps the body begin to metabolize and process the nutrients in food. Your teeth work to turn those bite-size pieces of food into very small parts for easier digestion. When you chew, you're really doing your digestive tract a favor. The more work your teeth do to start the digestive process, the easier it is for your stomach and intestines to do their jobs. The body can pull more nutrients out of food when you've chewed better. Larger pieces of food pass through your intestines more slowly than do better-chewed pieces. This gives more time for bacteria to grow on these large food particles, which can cause more gas and discomfort.

Aside from the physical breakdown of food that the teeth provide, saliva plays a key role. Saliva contains an enzyme called salivary amylase that begins to process fats and complex carbohydrates while in the mouth. Saliva also contains protective elements that aid in reducing acids and antibacterial agents that aid in germ fighting. The longer you chew your food, the more saliva that is produced.

What this all amounts to is that you want to reap what you sow. If you are actively making healthy choices about food, you don't want to miss out on beneficial nutrients due to not chewing enough.

Chewing takes time. And that is time during which your body and brain are communicating about your level of satiation, or fullness. During the chewing process, physical and chemical signals are sent to the brain that are important for food intake regulation. The brain is essentially monitoring how much you chew in order to determine how much you've eaten. Researchers believe that more drawn-out chewing during meals can help with weight management because people tend to eat smaller meals when they chew longer.²

¹ Harvard Health. "Juicing—Fad or Fab?" Harvard Medical School, Harvard Health Publishing, July 2015, www.health.harvard.edu/healthy-eating/juicing-fad-or-fab.

² "Increasing the Number of Chews before Swallowing Reduces Meal Size in Normal-Weight, Overweight, and Obese Adults." *Journal of the Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics*, Elsevier, 9 Nov. 2013, www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S2212267213013750. Accessed 2 Sept. 2017.



Imagine eating a six-ounce chicken breast. You must cut up the pieces, using a fork and knife. You will chew each piece for a few seconds before swallowing it. Maybe you'll take a few sips of water every few bites. That six-ounce chicken breast may take about 15 minutes or more to eat! Now imagine drinking a six-ounce smoothie. You could probably drink the smoothie in about three or four gulps, each lasting less than a minute. When you are eating the chicken breast, there is an extended amount of time that allows the appropriate chemicals in the body to send messages to the brain that you are receiving calories and nutrients. Simply because the act of drinking takes considerably less time, those receptors might not have alerted the brain of the feeling of fullness. Therefore, chewing—and chewing thoroughly and eating slowly—helps with weight management.



In one laboratory study, scientists assigned chew counts to two separate groups—both groups had to eat pizza, but one was instructed to chew 15 times per bite and the other 40 times per bite. In the group that ate the pizza with 40 chews per bite, participants experienced a decrease in hunger and desire to continue eating.³ In fact, chewing is so important to food consumption quantities that some research has demonstrated the simple act of chewing gum reduces the amount of food intake someone has after a meal.⁴ Another study found that children who chew less and/or faster when they are younger have higher rates of obesity as adults.⁵

But it isn't all facts and no fun. Chewing your food helps you appreciate the varying flavors and textures. It helps you taste something delicious longer. This is not to say that smoothies are not good dietary options—as long as they are savored and not gulped.



³ "Effects of chewing on appetite, food intake and gut hormones: A systematic review and meta-analysis." *Physiology & Behavior*, Elsevier, 15 July 2015, www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0031938415300317#s0035. Accessed 2 Sept. 2017.

⁴ "Short-term effects of chewing gum on satiety and afternoon snack intake in healthy weight and obese women." *Physiology & Behavior*, Elsevier, 3 Mar. 2016, www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0031938416300889. Accessed 2 Sept. 2017.

⁵ "Rate of eating in early life is positively associated with current and later body mass index among young Japanese children: the Osaka Maternal and Child Health Study." *Nutrition Research*, Elsevier, 27 Nov. 2016, www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0271531716304006#s0055. Accessed 2 Sept. 2017.

They don't actually require chewing, as the blender has done that work—but taking small sips and holding each sip in the mouth for 15 or 20 seconds will dramatically increase the satiation, as well as optimally begin the digestive process by thoroughly mixing each sip with saliva, which enzymatically begins all complex carbohydrate digestion. The same is true for soups—if they are sipped and savored, held in the mouth to mix with saliva before swallowing, you increase your satiation and decrease overall calorie consumption.

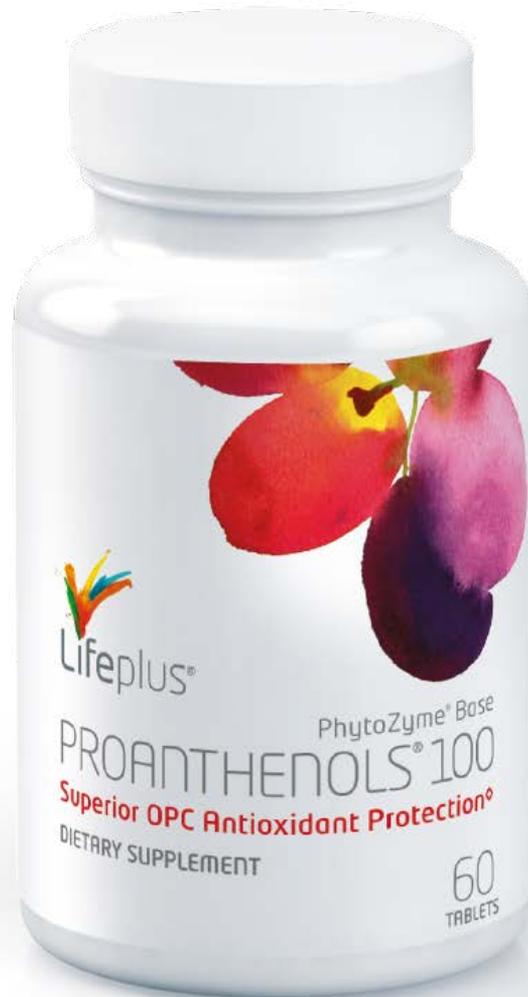
Women lead busy lives, tasked with multitasking all the demands of family and work. Simply taking the time to savor your food is an act of self-care that can almost feel indulgent. And that by itself is good not just for our bodies but also for our souls.

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Ask the Expert

Should I be eating fish, or are they too toxic?

Countless studies and mountains of research show that to receive the many benefits of health and brain-healthy omega-3 fatty acids, you should consume fish two to three times a week. With pollution and toxins in the news cycle, it's no wonder some people are leery of consuming that much fish. But if you eat the right fish in the right amounts, your body will thank you.

When planning your meal, look for fresh, cold-water fish, such as sardines, anchovies, salmon, halibut and mackerel.

Remember the anagram SMASH—which stands for sardines, mackerel, anchovies, salmon and halibut—when choosing fish for your diet. Avoid king mackerel, marlin, orange roughy and other larger, long-living fish, as they can accumulate higher levels of mercury. Also stay away from farm-raised options, as the diets these fish are fed do



not allow them to accumulate the same nutrient levels as their wild counterparts. If you are still concerned about contaminants in wild fish, you could also try a high-quality fish oil supplement that has been molecularly distilled (under a powerful vacuum, which allows the oils to vaporize at a much lower temperature, in the absence of oxygen). Just make sure you choose one that specifically says it contains DHA, as it is one of the best omega-3 fatty acids for your body.

Is there really such a thing as good cholesterol?

“Cholesterol” is a loaded word that makes many people cringe. However, there are actually two kinds of cholesterol, and yes, one of them is healthy. High-density lipoprotein, or HDL cholesterol, decreases the risk of cardiovascular disease. Because it helps the body, HDL is often referred to as “good” cholesterol. On the other hand, low-density lipoprotein, or LDL cholesterol, increases the risk of cardiovascular disease. LDL is referred to as “bad” cholesterol. Researchers believe that oxidized LDL initiates the process of atherosclerosis. Fortunately, there are many antioxidants that shield LDL from oxidation, including vitamins A, C and E, as well as beta-carotene complex, Co-Q-10 and selenium. Some herbal concentrates may help as well—specifically, hawthorn, garlic, ginger, turmeric and rosemary. HDL levels can be increased (again, higher levels of HDL cholesterol are a good thing) by maintaining regular physical activity and avoiding refined carbohydrates, such as white flour and sugar.

Do I need to buy a gym membership to be healthy?

While gyms can be great places to find equipment, classes, companions and motivation to get active and fit, you absolutely do not need to work out with gym equipment to be physically fit. In fact, some of the most recent research on the subject concludes that simply getting a little more active throughout the day by taking stairs, making frequent trips to the watercooler, vacuuming the house, parking farther from the store and doing other small, everyday physical tasks can protect a person's health better than regularly going to the gym. The study went on to show that the people who have the highest activity levels tend to be the ones who make being active part of their everyday life by making small changes, such as getting off the bus one stop early and walking the rest of the way, or riding their bike to work. Every movement you make during the day adds up. If you make a conscious effort and a few small changes to your life, you can easily end the day with a cumulative total of an hour of exercise. An activity tracker, which counts steps (and often has other functions), is an excellent feedback device. Working up to a goal of 10,000 steps a day (the equivalent of five miles for someone with an average stride) is an excellent way to ensure adequate daily physical activity.



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