Healthy habits to enjoy a long life

A long, healthy life is within your reach. Making a few, simple lifestyle changes can increase your longevity by several years, and you’ll start to feel better soon after implementing them.

**Exercise**
Exercising moderately for 150 minutes a week is linked to an almost 30% reduction in the risk of premature death. That means you should try to exercise for about 30 minutes a day, 5 days a week. Start by going for a walk around the block.

**Stress management**
Stress is unavoidable but learning to manage it has a positive effect on life expectancy. Controlled breathing is a good way to manage your body’s immediate reaction to anxiety. Meditation and exercise are also excellent, natural ways to help your body deal with stress.

**Socialize**
Hanging out with friends and maintaining social ties can give your life expectancy a huge boost. Researchers have found that maintaining a strong social network can improve your life expectancy by as much as 50%.

If you’re new to your area or have grown accustomed to going it alone, think about joining a club, or making time for regular nights out with friends.

**Healthy sleep**
Establishing a regular sleep pattern can help you stay healthy well into your golden years. When you sleep, your body heals itself. Sleep gives your heart a chance to rest; your heart rate slows, and your blood pressure drops while you rest. Try to go to bed and get up at about the same times every day. Sleeping in a cool, dark, uncluttered room helps you fall asleep faster and sleep better.

**Takeaway**
Regardless of your current age, you have the power to make the choices that could extend your life by decades. Exercise, nutrition, social interaction, stress management, and adequate sleep all contribute to healthy cell growth and regeneration.

Choose one area to focus on first. When you’re ready, add another one. With each healthy habit you implement, you’ll find it gets easier. When they combine, and you’re living your healthiest life, you’ll feel great and perhaps increase your life expectancy by several years.

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The Benefits of Drinking Water

We have always been told our entire lives to drink plenty of water, but have we ever looked into the reasons why? This is a list detailing the reasons why it is so important to drink water throughout the day and what the benefits are for your health.

Focus - The brain and body are mostly composed of water, similar to the way that Earth is mostly covered in it. Therefore, it is not surprising that drinking your recommended amount of water daily will amount to a more focused mind.

Gets the Toxins Out - Drinking water is like purifying yourself with every sip. If you keep up with your water intake, you will assist your body in flushing the waste and toxins out through urination and sweat. Doing this can actually reduce your chances of getting a urinary tract infection as well as painful kidney stones.

Helps with appetite control - Because of the aforementioned flushing aspects of drinking plentiful water, this spills over to other great benefits.

One of those benefits is maintaining your waistline. Sipping on your water throughout meals will ensure that you do not overeat and that you pace yourself to eat within a healthy timeframe.

Healthy skin - If you have constant trouble with keeping a clear face or you want to keep your skin nice and firm, look no further than drinking water.

Painful aches and cramps - When you begin to keep up your water intake, you will notice that some aches or pains that you had prior may cease to bother you. This is because a lack of proper hydration can lead to cramping and aches. You may possibly be able to relieve your body with water.

Remedies headaches - As it turns out, many of your ailments could have possibly been from not drinking the amount of water that you were meant to be drinking. Pick up that bottle and start to heal some of your ailments!

If you want to start down the path to being healthy and allowing your body to function in the way that it is supposed to, begin with treating your body properly and add more water to your diet.
Is Your Sleep Position Helping or Hurting You?

Whether you are on your side, on your back, or somewhere in between, sleeping positions vary as much as the sleeper. Here are a few of the most common:

**Back Sleeper** - Though sleeping on your back is arguably one of the best positions to sleep in, only around 8% spend the night that way. Sleeping on your back keeps your spine neutral and helps keep the natural slope of your neck. Though it is great for keeping you aligned, this position can cause snoring due to pressure being placed on the airways and is not recommended for individuals with sleep apnea. A great adjustable mattress can easily make this the best position out there!

**Stomach Snoozer** - Sleeping on your stomach is a great way to ease snoring, but it is also the worst position if your aim is to keep your back aligned. This position can put pressure on your joints in a way that leaves you waking up tingly in your extremities.

**Side Dreamer** - This is another great position to keep your spine neutral and cut down on snoring. If you sleep on your left side, you are also helping with acid reflux and in the best position for pregnant women. The only con to this posture is occasionally waking up to find your arm asleep.

**Sleeping Like a Baby** - If you sleep in the fetal position, you are in good company. Over 40% of the population likes to curl up while they dream. This position can be really comfy, but make sure you are not bringing your knees all the way to your chest. Sleeping as straight as you comfortably can eliminate stiffness in joints and breathing restriction.

While there are pros and cons to each position on this list, getting a good night’s sleep is the most important. If you are waking up throughout the night, switching your sleeping style could help you fall asleep and stay that way longer.

Excessive and loud snoring can be a sign of sleep apnea and should be evaluated by a medical professional.

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Understanding migraine brain fog

Brain fog, or brain fatigue, is a symptom that appears with overload, stress, medical conditions, medications, chemo, menopause, and age.

You might not be aware that you are experiencing brain fog at the time, but you will notice that you have an inability to finish a sentence or a thought.

Although brain fog is not a medically recognized, the symptoms will still create havoc in your life.

**What is migraine brain fog?**

Migraines have been associated with cognitive dysfunction, but not necessarily due to the pain. Popular thought was that pain was disruptive and functioned as the underlying cause of memory loss or acts of confusion. However, most reports by persons who experience migraines have reported that the brain fog starts before the onset of pain and lingers long after the episode is over.

Your mind feels like all your thoughts are thrown into a revolving door which is taking its time to slow down. Some of the more typical symptoms of brain fog are:

- Forgetfulness - you may forget faces or fail to recognize a familiar voice on the phone.
- Mood changes, irritability.
- Confusion.
- Loss of concentration.
- Inability to recall information.

Living in a brain fog makes you feel like your brain “is glued” to the walls of your skull or like someone slipped you a sedative.

**Here are a few tips for dealing with brain fog:**

Learn everything possible about brain fog so you can recognize when it starts. Educate those close to you about the symptoms of brain fog and be prepared for the period following your migraine. You can do a few things that will help you focus:

- Allow yourself time for tasks.
- Maintain lists of upcoming appointments or projects with timelines.
- If you are having difficulty following through, ask for help.
- Listen carefully.
- Take some time to think about what you are going to say.
- Be aware of your migraine triggers and make a list.

The symptoms and the duration of a migraine brain fog vary from person to person. There are four phases: the (1) prodromal, (2) aura, (3) pain, and the (4) postdrome. The last phase, the postdrome, is the longest and this is when the brain fog is the most noticeable. The feelings of impairment and sluggishness are a challenge, but with help, medications, knowledge, and support they are manageable.

- Excessive and loud snoring can be a sign of sleep apnea and should be evaluated by a medical professional.
Re-evaluate your goals

Setting goals to accomplish our dreams is the norm for achieving what we want in life. But what about if the goal you had when you started your career has been reached, or seems unrealistic as you get older? You shouldn’t have to struggle with your goals when it comes time to make a shift. Here’s some advice on how to change goals from psychcentral.com:

Remain open to change — and opportunity.
While it’s human nature to resist change, the truth is that life is all about change. Nothing stays static.

Instead of fighting change, embrace it. This will allow you to be attentive to what needs work now and set the stage for you to recognize and identify opportunity when it appears. This means training yourself to be flexible in changing goals as well as adaptable in revising goals as you make your way through your list.

By keeping an open mind, you’re more likely to be willing to consider a directional shift or taking advantage of an opportunity that not only appears feasible, it also intrigues and stimulates you.

Consider adding to the level of difficulty.
When goals are too easily achieved, it may be that you’ve set the wrong level of difficulty for the goal — or selected a goal that’s just a quick accomplishment, something to cross off your list as completed so you can feel a sense of achievement. The problem with this is that your sense of pride in getting to the finish line with too-easy goals is rather shallow. There’s more meaning and self-confidence when you are effective in achieving tougher goals. So, if your goals are too easy, maybe it’s time to think about adding complexity and challenge to your current and new goals.

If goals are too hard, set easier ones.
On the other hand, if you have a history of setting goals that are highly challenging and unlikely to succeed, you’ve set the target too high. For the time being, make it a point to set some easier and more likely to be successful goals. A good mix is best, so you still have some challenging goals in your repertoire, particularly ones pertaining to big-picture goals.

Reminders to stay on the wellness path

Being well is more than just a part of you. It’s an overall feeling that your life is going well. That things are good. That you are in balance.

Each part of wellness is linked to the next. When one thing feels off, it can throw other things off too. Feelings of stress, for example, can cause physical problems like tense muscles, headaches or stomach problems.

We need balance in this busy world. It’s always good to do a quick overall wellness check to make sure you are on the right track.

The Canadian Centre for Occupational Health and Safety (CCOHS) offers these tips to build your overall well-being by focusing on these areas:

Physical:
- Eat for energy.
- Restore your body with sleep.

Social:
- Surround yourself with good friends.
- Join a club to meet others with your interests.

Financial:
- Plan for the future with investments.
- Reduce debt and keep a monthly budget.

Emotional:
- Practice deep breathing to manage stress.
- Try to focus on the positives of life.

Occupational:
- Find ways to increase your skills and knowledge.
- Create connections with your co-workers.

Spiritual:
- Practice being thankful every day.
- Try to be mindful and “in the moment”.

wellnesszone
Strategies to control worry

What? Me worry? The answer to this question would be yes. You would be hard-pressed to find someone who has never worried about anything. But when things start to ruminate in that grey matter upstairs and you start worrying about every little thing, that’s when it’s time to take a reality check.

Cognitive psychology research shows that the more we focus on distressing thoughts or worries, the worse we feel. And the worse we feel, the more we worry, and on and on. In these moments, worrying becomes a self-fuelling cycle that monopolizes our minds and gets in the way of enjoying life and meeting our responsibilities.

Here are a few strategies to break that cycle:

**Try practical mindfulness**

Mindfulness is a popular practice these days. It suggests you sit quietly and pay attention to your breathing to train your mind to stay present and focused. This can be effective over time, but sitting still and concentrating on your breath when you have been sucked into a tailspin of worry might be difficult. Instead, try “practical mindfulness” by engaging in activities that require coordinated physical and mental focus to draw you out of your head and into the here and now. Some activities include brain games such as a crossword or choose an activity that requires simultaneous attention (like following a recipe) and action (like chopping an onion).

It’s likely you’ll not only interrupt the worry cycle in the moment but also reduce its overall intensity.

**Focus on something you can control**

More often than not our worries centre on things that we can’t control but really wish we could. But when we are swept up in worry, those efforts to control can make us feel worse. Instead, exerting our influence over things we can control will help. Engaging in a project that you are in charge of – even something as simple as cleaning out a closet – can temporarily pause and ultimately de-escalate the helplessness and worry that feeling out of control can trigger.

**Table it**

If you need immediate relief from worry, consider making a date with yourself to worry later. Trying to completely suppress worry usually increases it. So resist the urge to say, “I’m not going to think about my daughter’s school admissions test,” and instead consider, “I can think about this as much as I want tonight between 8:00 and 9:00.” Then keep the date. Giving yourself a designated window to process your concerns helps to pause your worry and frees you up to focus on other responsibilities or activities, reducing the intensity of your worrying overall.

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How music can help your mental health

Ever have one of those days when all you want to do is crank up the tunes, lay back, and listen to your favourite tracks over and over? Soon, the dark cloud that has been following you around all day starts to disappear and your mood improves.

Turns out music is indeed connected to our moods. According to the University of Pittsburgh Medical Centre (UPMC), more and more studies are scientifically confirming what many of us have already guessed – music puts us in a better mood. What some people may not realize is that our mood is directly linked to our overall health.

Being in a better mood improves our physical health, leads us to make better lifestyle decisions, and helps us strengthen relationships. When we feel better mentally, we feel better physically and emotionally, too.

Some studies have found that listening to music you enjoy may increase the release of pleasure-causing substances in the brain like norepinephrine and melatonin. It may also decrease stress-causing hormone production in the body. As a result, music therapy can help:

- Reduce stress/ease anxiety.
- Improve sleep.
- Lessen depressed mood.
- Create positive mood.
- Boost self-confidence.
- Increase energy.

So no matter what you listen to; hard or soft, classical or pop, it’s all music that’s sure to feed your soul when you need it.

Keep in mind; however, that music is no substitute for a therapist or therapy if you are suffering from a disorder such as clinical depression. In this case, a mental health professional can help you develop an individualized treatment program.
Take a minute for yourself

Sometimes it might be hard to just stop for a second to “smell the roses”, especially if you are someone who is constantly on the go and thinking any minute when you are not moving is a minute wasted. Your impatience and haste is stopping you from seeing the little things that can make your day just a little bit brighter.

Slowing down to appreciate life and all its little moments builds gratitude, and that can be a very healthy thing.

Being mindful of all the things you have to be thankful for can boost your well-being, research suggests. In a series of experiments detailed in the Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, daily exercise practices and listing off all the things you are thankful for are linked with a brighter outlook on life and a greater sense of positivity.

Even on those days when the pressure seems insurmountable, consider taking just one minute to close your eyes and think of the things that make you happy and get you through the day. It could be something as simple as the thought of looking forward to getting home, kicking off your shoes and falling into your favourite chair. It’s important to focus on that moment, not to think about all the things that need to be done once you are home.

Enjoy a single minute of silence. If you work in an open space, get up and find a quiet spot. Just close your eyes, take a few deep breaths and think of the things you are grateful for, even if the thing turns out to be this one minute. You deserve 60 seconds of peace.

Celeriac – a root vegetable with surprising benefits

Celeriac, also known as turnip-rooted celery, knob celery or celery root, is a relatively unknown vegetable, though its popularity is increasing.

That’s because celeriac is a nutritional powerhouse, packed with fibre and vitamins B6, C and K. It’s also a good source of antioxidants and important minerals, such as phosphorus, potassium and manganese.

Celeriac is a root vegetable closely related to celery, parsley and parsnips. It’s extremely versatile and can easily be incorporated into your diet as an alternative to potatoes and other root vegetables. It looks similar to a misshapen turnip and is off white with a rough, knobby surface covered in tiny rootlets. Its smooth, white flesh is similar to a potato.

For optimal flavour, choose a medium-sized celeriac about 8 to 10 cm in diameter with a smooth, even surface. Be sure that its centre isn’t hollow, a sign that the celeriac is of poor quality. What’s more, the fresher the vegetable, the stronger its celery flavour.

For optimal shelf life, store celeriac in a plastic bag inside the vegetable compartment of your fridge. To prepare it for cooking, wash and scrub the vegetable to remove any dirt before cutting off the top and base. Then, carefully remove the rough skin with a sharp knife or a vegetable peeler and chop or slice the flesh.

Be aware of the silent stroke

Some people have strokes without realizing it. They’re called silent strokes, and they either have no easy-to-recognize symptoms, or you don’t remember them. But they do cause permanent damage in your brain.

Silent strokes are common as people age. About seven per cent of people in their 50s have silent strokes. That figure rises to about 15 percent for those in their 70s. And among people aged 80-plus, about one-quarter have unknowingly been affected.

If you’ve had more than one silent stroke, you may have thinking and memory problems. They can also lead to more severe strokes.

According to information posted at ottawahospital.on.ca, silent strokes are a major cause of dementia. Silent strokes can happen without the usual signs and symptoms of stroke, such as sudden numbness, confusion or dizziness. Nevertheless, it causes damage to the brain, and places the person at increased risk for a major stroke in the future.

Lifestyle choices and other factors contribute to the risk of silent stroke, including diabetes, hypertension, depression, smoking and obesity. Because the brain is more sensitive than the heart to high blood pressure, obesity and sedentary behaviour, it’s important to adopt healthier eating habits and a more active lifestyle as we grow older.

If you notice lingering signs of brain damage such as sudden difficulty with memory, an unexpected change in personality or a decline in physical ability, make an appointment with your healthcare professional right away for a diagnosis. He or she can then offer treatment options to help prevent further silent strokes.