



Taking the path to well-being

Wellness and well-being are terms that have developed significantly worldwide over the last decade. A lot of attention has been placed on both to enhance how we can live our best lives regardless of the circumstances we find ourselves in.

But what are they, exactly? How are these terms defined and are they really all that different from each other?

According to the Oxford Dictionary, 'wellness' is 'the state of being healthy, especially when you actively try to achieve this.' 'Well-being, on the other hand, is considered 'general health and happiness, a state of emotional/physical/psychological well-being'.

Within these definitions you could say wellness is the day-to-day pursuit of attaining a sense of well-being. To put it simply, the difference can be seen as action versus result.

These five actions from Mental Health Ireland show how many countries acknowledge the importance of our mental health and how daily wellness plays a role.

This advice applies to everyone who wants to get on the path to well-being:

Connect

Make time each day to connect. Connect with the people around you; your family, friends, coworkers and



neighbours. By staying connected and nurturing these relationships we may feel happier and more secure, giving us a better sense of purpose.

Be active

Look for ways to be active everyday. Go for a walk or a run. Step outside. Cycle, play a game, garden or dance. Discover a physical activity you enjoy which suits your lifestyle and level of mobility and fitness. Research has shown being physically active can improve your mental health and well being.

Take notice

Be aware of the world around you and what you are feeling. Be Curious. Catch sight of the beautiful. Notice the changing seasons. Savour the moment whether you are walking to work, eating lunch or talking to friends. Pay attention to the present

moment – to your thoughts, feelings and to the world around you.

Keep learning

Try something new. Rediscover an old interest. Sign up for that course. Cook a new recipe. Take on a new responsibility. Setting yourself a new challenge and learning a new skill will increase your confidence which can improve your mental health and well being.

Give

Giving to others is good for you. Do something nice for someone else. Thank someone. Volunteer your time or join a community group. See yourself and your happiness linked to the wider community can be incredibly rewarding and create connectedness with the people around you.

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The difference between a fast and slow metabolism

'Metabolism' is one of those words that is constantly heard when matters of weight, health, and eating are discussed. But what exactly does the term 'metabolism' refer to? Why does your metabolism matter? Is it better to have a slow or fast metabolism, and what is the difference? Knowing the answers to these questions is worthwhile for anyone who is interested in their nutrition and health.

Generally, a person's metabolism describes how many calories their body uses. Of course, the amount of calories the body burns is heavily dependent upon physical activity. Someone who runs a marathon will use up far more calories than someone who sits on their couch all day.

However, the number of calories an individual burns through is not entirely dependent on physical activity. The body's basal metabolic rate is the other major factor. The basal metabolic rate refers to the amount of calories burned to passively maintain parts of the body, such as the heart, lungs, and muscles. This is where what is called a fast or slow metabolism comes in.

Essentially, a fast metabolism means someone has a high basal metabolic rate, while a slow metabolism means they have a slow basal metabolic rate. The implications are relatively obvious. Someone with a high metabolism can consume more food than someone with a slow metabolism, even if both have the same level of physical activity.

However, while a fast metabolism is certainly a good thing for anyone looking to keep the weight off, it's actually an impediment for those who want to gain mass. Athletes or anyone desiring a bulkier physique may find they wish they had a slower metabolism. And having a faster metabolism doesn't mean someone can eat whatever they want without consequences. Unhealthy foods are still bad for you, even if they don't result in weight gain.

The speed of your metabolism is certainly not under your direct control. Metabolism does tend to slow down as aging occurs. Women also tend to have slower metabolisms since they have more fat and less muscle than men. The big thing you can do if you want a faster metabolism is to add muscle, as larger muscles naturally require more calories to be maintained.

Understanding how metabolism works is valuable. Whether someone has a fast or slow metabolism, knowledge is always useful - especially when it comes to a phenomenon that plays such a crucial role in health and well being.

How processed is your food?

(NC) In the past 70 years, calories we eat from ultra-processed foods have doubled from 24 to 54%. That's not surprising, given they are branded, packaged and marketed so heavily and cleverly.

Ultra-processed foods are high in saturated fat, sugar and salt, and they're contributing to an unhealthy diet - now the leading risk factor for death in Canada.

"The more ultra-processed foods we eat, the less room we have in our diet for whole and less-processed foods," explains Carol Dombrow, RD and nutrition consultant with Heart & Stroke.

But are all processed foods created equal?

To better understand processed foods, a classification system called NOVA was developed by an international panel of food scientists and researchers, splitting foods into different categories:

Unprocessed or minimally processed foods: Think vegetables, grains, legumes, fruits, nuts, meats, seafood, herbs, spices,

garlic, eggs and milk. Make these real, whole foods the basis of your diet.

Processed foods: When ingredients such as oil, sugar or salt are added to foods and they are packaged, the result is processed foods. Examples are simple bread, cheese, tofu and canned tuna or beans. They are convenient and help you build nutritious meals.

Ultra-processed foods: Almost half of our calories come from ultra-processed foods. They go through multiple processes, contain many added ingredients and are highly manipulated. Examples are pop, chips, chocolate, sweetened breakfast cereals, packaged soups, chicken nuggets, hotdogs and fries.

Staying away from ultra-processed foods and eating a balanced diet focused on whole foods will help prevent chronic diseases, including heart disease, stroke and obesity. Find out more at heartandstroke.ca.



Publisher & CEO: Stefan Dreesen

Editor: Kate Van Hoof-Peeren

H&S Communication Specialists:

Alan Haycroft, Liz Slobodin,
Kevin Harvey

TOLL FREE: 1-888-655-4800

Mailing Address: 2010 Winston Park Drive, Suite 200,
Oakville, ON L6H 5R7

www.smartworkplace.ca | info@smartworkplace.ca

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Lifestyle changes to detox your liver

The liver carries out a vast range of functions within the body, so taking care of it is key to maintaining health. Toxin removal and fat burning are two of the liver's most important roles, but it also converts glucose to glycogen to fuel the body, stores valuable vitamins and minerals and removes damaged cells from the blood.

There are preventative steps you can take to detox your liver to reduce the risks of damage including the following lifestyle changes:

Reduce intake of saturated fats.

A 2017 study carried out by the charity Diabetes UK confirmed the link between eating saturated fats and impaired liver function. If the liver becomes overwhelmed by processing oils, butter and animal fats it can lead to obesity and other health issues.

Introduce liver-friendly foods into your diet.

Just as some foods should be avoided to look after your liver, others can help it to heal and recover. Leafy greens are very high in plant chlorophylls which can soak up toxins in the bloodstream. Walnuts are rich in omega-3 fatty acids and glutathione that help to cleanse the liver. Grapefruit, apples and berries are good for the gut and also

give the liver a boost. Making small changes to your diet and replacing unhealthy snacks with liver-friendly foods is a simple step towards detoxing your body.

Get more sleep.

Lack of adequate sleep can lead to a range of physical and mental health problems. Sleep deprivation has now been linked with liver metabolism, so getting seven or eight hours of quality sleep each night is another way to protect this vital organ.

Enhance circulation within the body.

A sedentary lifestyle is one of the risk factors for liver disease. Getting active has a broad range of benefits for the mind and body, but many people don't realize it can also help the detoxification process. Activity doesn't have to be intense, and even just a couple of hours of walking, hiking or swimming every week can help.

Early warning signs that you may have a weak liver include frequent tiredness and low energy levels, loss of appetite and skin problems such as rashes and acne. More significant symptoms include eye issues such as redness and burning sensations, frequent headaches and sinus problems. If you have any concerns about liver problems seek medical advice.

Ways to increase self-awareness

Here are a few tips to help you increase your self-awareness:

Slow down

Whether in a car speeding past other vehicles on the road or communicating with someone in a rush, you aren't paying attention, and self-awareness involves focusing on what you are doing.

Imagine you're chugging along the highway in a slow car on a journey. Because you take your time, you can see details like the meadows and buildings you pass. You spot road signs easily, so you'll know when it's time to change direction. Apply similar principles to the rest of your life, and you'll notice details too.

For example, during conversations, pause to reflect on what's said and what you want to achieve; you'll find it simple to direct the discussion and take it to your chosen destination.

Slow down, whether in a meeting, chatting with friends, or doing chores, and your awareness will expand. You'll notice environmental and personal intricacies, like what's affecting others and how people respond to you.

Be mindful

When you slow down, you'll discover you can be mindful. Mindfulness is about claiming the moment with razor-sharp awareness. Use your senses to give you information. For example, what can you see and hear?

Pay attention to outer data (information from your surroundings) and inner data (thoughts and feelings). As a result, your self-awareness will increase. You'll recognize how eating specific foods and being with certain people affects you. You'll notice others' facial expressions that provide clues about their emotional state. In the past, you might have missed these snippets of information that can raise your mental and emotional prowess.

Clarify your views

As you learn and grow, your values and opinions alter. But you might only notice these changes if you occasionally ponder your beliefs and likes and dislikes. Consider what's important to you in life. For example, what are your views on significant issues like politics, climate change, and immigration?

Other revealing questions include personal qualities you consider deal breakers in relationships, like honesty and dependability. You'll understand yourself better once you define these aspects of your personality.



Brown noise: pros and cons

Brownian sound, called Brown or red noise, is a deeper, low-frequency sound with more of a bass tone and less of a hiss than white noise.

Because brown noise plays low-frequency sounds and omits high-frequency sounds, it makes it smoother and more manageable, generating sounds like the rush of a cascading waterfall or a tranquil rainfall.

Here are the pros and cons of brown noise:

Pros:

Helps you sleep: Brown noise has proven to help people fall asleep and to sleep longer. The constant presence of unobtrusive low-frequency sound masks more disruptive noise like traffic.

Helps with concentration: By providing a consistent acoustic backdrop, Brown noise might assist in sharpening focus and improving productivity.

Possible tinnitus relief: Some individuals afflicted with tinnitus, a constant ringing or buzzing sensation in the ears, find solace in the presence of Brown noise. It serves as a means to mask the persistent tinnitus sound.

Sound masking: Brown noise is used as a sound-masker, providing privacy and reducing the impact of ambient noise.

Cons:

Not universally effective: Some people may find Brown noise ineffective or bothersome. Variations in noise

perception and tolerance levels dictate what may prove beneficial for one person may not yield the same results for another.

Potential sleep disruption: Despite its potential sleep benefits, Brown noise can inadvertently disrupt sleep if the volume is too high or if you are unaccustomed to sleeping in the presence of sound.

Dependency concerns: There is a risk of developing a dependency on Brown noise or any form of sound masking for sleep or concentration. This might interfere with your ability to rest or focus without it.

Ineffectiveness against specific sounds: While Brown noise effectively masks certain noises, it may be less effective in countering abrupt, high-frequency sounds.

Possible impact on hearing: Some evidence suggests that prolonged exposure to even moderately quiet noise may, over time, lead to issues such as tinnitus and forms of hearing loss, mainly when played at high volumes.

Ultimately, the decision to use Brownian sound is up to you. For some, it is a beneficial tool for sleep, relaxation, or concentration, whereas others may not find it helpful.

There are many free playlists of Brown noise available on YouTube, Spotify, and other streaming audio sources if you would like to give it a try.

Tips for working out in the morning

Exercising in the morning can be challenging. If you find this to be true for you, here are a few tips:

1. Get enough sleep. Exercising in the morning may involve getting up earlier, which can result in a shortchange of sleep. Try to avoid having this happen. Working out on insufficient sleep is not a sustainable habit either. Start going to bed earlier the night before if necessary.

2. Prepare. Psychological inertia can be difficult to overcome. Preparing for your workout as much as possible the night before will make it much easier to get started exercising when morning comes. For example, you could lay out your gym clothes and shoes, or plan your running route before heading to bed.

3. Keep moving. Fight your urge to stay in bed by keeping your body in motion. Don't sit down and definitely don't remain lying in bed. Movement naturally increases alertness, so your desire for rest will dissipate quicker than you think.

4. Consume liquids. After a night's sleep, the body is dehydrated. Experiencing dehydration during exercise is not good, as it both reduces performance and makes exercise miserable. You should take in some liquids immediately after waking up.

5. Follow a routine. Following the same routine each morning will eventually turn it into a solid habit. Eventually, your routine will make morning exercise seem natural.

6. Focus on the benefits. Remembering why you are forcing yourself out of your warm, comfortable bed to exercise can be hard. Recalling why this habit is worth embracing will help. Working out naturally raises mood, thus providing a fantastic natural boost to your day. Exercising early in the day also ensures you won't end up skipping your workout entirely and lose out on the incredible health benefits exercise provides.



How a good night's sleep boosts creative thinking

Studies show sleep is an essential ingredient for promoting innovative and creative thinking and problem-solving abilities. People who get enough sleep are more likely to be imaginative and creative than those who burn the midnight oil and deprive themselves of restful slumber. One reason sleep helps consolidate and organize the memories and information you gather throughout the day.

As you sleep, your brain processes and stores memories, improving your ability to retrieve and use this information creatively. This process is essential for fostering creativity and innovation, as it builds new associations and connections between ideas and concepts.

Plus, sleep clears your mind. It's like a reboot that allows you to dispense with junk memories that clog up your brain. This allows you to approach problems with a fresh perspective. Drifting off into dreamland also reduces mental fatigue, which helps you focus more on tasks and generate new ideas. So, sleep helps recharge your mental batteries while helping you to be more creative and productive.

Sleep quality is an issue for many people. Think about how you feel after a night of tossing and turning. When you don't get enough sleep, cognitive function slows, making it harder to think clearly and generate new ideas.

Lack of sleep can also lead to decreased mood and energy, further limiting the ability to be creative and productive. And don't forget that creative insights

sometimes come to people during dreams.

How well you sleep at night has much to do with your lifestyle habits. It's important to have healthy ones:

- **Stick to a consistent sleep schedule:** Try to go to bed and wake up at the same time every day, even on weekends.
- **Create a relaxing bedtime routine:** Develop a relaxing bedtime routine to help signal your body that it's time to wind down. This can include taking a warm bath, reading a book, or practicing relaxation techniques.
- **Ensure your sleeping environment is conducive to sleep:** Your bedroom should be cool, dark, and quiet. Consider using blackout curtains or a white noise machine if needed.
- **Avoid screens before bed:** The blue light emitted by screens can disrupt your body's natural sleep-wake cycle. Try to avoid using electronic devices, such as smartphones and tablets, for at least an hour before bed.
- **Limit caffeine and alcohol intake:** Both caffeine and alcohol can interfere with sleep. Try to avoid caffeine in the afternoon and evening and limit your alcohol intake.
- **Do a brain dump before bedtime:** Grab a journal before bedtime and write down your worries, concerns, and anything on your mind. Get it down on paper and shut the book, so you can avoid mulling over these things while trying to sleep.

Thinking about a plant-based diet?

A healthy diet means eating the right balance of different foods to make sure you are getting the vitamins and minerals you need. Perhaps you are thinking about a plant-based diet to not only help your eating habits, but also help with your sustainability goals.

According to nutritionists, a plant-based diet is any diet that focuses around foods derived from plant sources. This can include fruit, vegetables, grains, pulses, legumes, nuts and meat substitutes such as soy products.

The basic principles of a whole-foods, plant-based diet are as follows:

- Emphasizes whole, minimally processed foods.
- Limits or avoids animal products; however, small amounts of eggs, poultry, seafood, meat or dairy can be included.
- Focuses on plants, including vegetables, fruits, whole grains, legumes, seeds and nuts, which should make up the majority of what you eat.
- Excludes refined foods, like added sugars, white flour and processed oils.

People following plant-based diets and consuming a wide variety of fruits, vegetables and pulses (edible seed from a legume plant) are likely to have good intakes of fibre and the vitamins and minerals that are present in fruit and vegetables, including folate, vitamin C and potassium, all of which are important for good health.

However, it is worth noting that 'plant-based' does not automatically mean 'healthy', particularly when it comes to processed and packaged foods. Technically, products such as refined sugar, white flour and certain vegetable fats can all be labelled 'plant-based' as they are vegetarian, but this does not mean that they should make up the bulk of a healthy diet.

When following a plant-based diet there are some key nutrients that you should focus on. These include protein, vitamin B12, the vitamins and minerals needed for bone health including calcium and vitamin D as well as the essential omega-3 fatty acids.

If you are significantly changing your diet, it may be useful to start slowly - perhaps introducing two or three plant-based meals, or days, a week. This allows your body to adapt to new foods and to the changes in the proportion of certain nutrients, such as fibre. And talk to your doctor to make sure you are making the right diet choices for your overall health.

Try the best thing you can do for your health

(NC) We all want to lead fuller, healthier lives. There are many things that will help, like getting regular exercise, eating more fruits and veggies, getting better sleep and making time for meditation. But did you know that if you currently smoke, the best thing you can do for your health is give up smoking?

Quitting can be one of the hardest things you'll ever do, but it's well worth the effort, even if you only smoke every now and again. Did you know that all tobacco cigarettes carry significant risks to your health? There is no such thing as a safe cigarette – the burning of a cigarette releases over 7,000 chemicals, over 70 of which cause cancer. People who smoke are exposed to toxic chemicals, including tar, hydrogen cyanide, formaldehyde, carbon monoxide and benzene. These harmful chemicals can cause a number of diseases, like lung cancer, heart disease and emphysema.

The only way to reduce your risk from

smoking-related diseases is to avoid tobacco smoke. In fact, quitting smoking provides health benefits for everyone, regardless of gender, age, ethnicity or lifestyle. The health benefits of quitting smoking even start within 20 minutes of your last cigarette.

Health Canada says there are many options to help quit, like counselling, self-help books, nicotine replacement therapies, medications, and other less harmful sources of nicotine. The cravings and withdrawal symptoms will pass – they are only temporary – soon you will feel better than ever.

The key to success is creating a quit plan and sticking to it. The quit process involves educating yourself, understanding your triggers and having a plan to overcome them. If you slip up, learn from your mistakes and get back on track. Learn more and find helpful resources at canada.ca/tobacco.

Boosting your immune system as you age

(NC) As we age, our immune system weakens, which is why older people are more susceptible to getting sick and often take longer to recover from illness than they did before. So, the older we get, the more important it is to give your immune system the support it needs. Here are three ways you can do that.

Eat well

The food you eat is the fuel your body needs to function. Consuming a variety of foods, including plenty of fruits and vegetables, to get all the nutrients you need while minimizing the amount of processed foods you eat will help you stay healthy.

Smoking and drinking alcohol both negatively affect your immune system, so you should avoid or minimize consumption of both if you're looking to boost your immunity.

Remember adult vaccines

Throughout one's life, vaccination including adult vaccinations provides effective protection against disease. While many of us are familiar with childhood vaccinations, they don't provide lifelong immunity against every disease. As well, some vaccines are prescribed only for adults. Talk with your health care provider about vaccines you might need now.

Exercise regularly

Regular exercise improves your cardiovascular health, lowers blood pressure and helps protect against a variety of viruses and diseases.

A balanced diet and regular exercise will also help you maintain a healthy body weight, which in turn helps boost your immune system.

While exercise is important, allowing your body to rest is equally valuable. Sleep is the tool your body uses to recharge its batteries, including your immune system.

energy zone

Strawberries!

Did you know strawberries are one of the healthiest fresh fruits? Here are five reasons why eating this popular berry is a smart choice.

Immunity support: Just one cup of strawberries has 95 per cent of vitamin C for the day, which supports the immune system.

Nutritional power: Strawberries are also packed with other beneficial nutrients including potassium and fibre.

Digestive support: A serving of eight strawberries provides three grams of both soluble and insoluble fibre.

Natural sweetness: Sweet-tasting and low in calories,

strawberries offer a treat for your tastebuds without excessive sugar.

Versatility: Strawberries can work for any snack or mealtime from a mid-morning energy boost to a healthy evening snack or a delicious accessory to a sweet or savoury recipe.

