

Understanding alternative medicine

In today's world, the term "alternative medicine" has become increasingly prevalent. But what exactly does it mean? Alternative medicine refers to treatments and practices that fall outside the realm of conventional Western medicine. These approaches often encompass a wide range of modalities, including herbal remedies, acupuncture, chiropractic care, homeopathy, naturopathy, and traditional Chinese medicine, among others.

Alternative medicine is sought out by individuals for various reasons. Some may turn to it as a complement to conventional medical treatments, seeking relief from chronic pain, managing stress, or enhancing overall well-being. Others may embrace alternative medicine as their primary form of healthcare, drawn to its holistic approach that considers the interconnectedness of mind, body, and spirit.

When considering alternative medicine, it's essential to weigh its potential benefits against the risks. While some alternative therapies have shown promise in certain cases, others lack scientific evidence to support their efficacy. Therefore, it's crucial to approach alternative medicine with an open mind while also maintaining a critical mindset.



Here are some instances where trying alternative medicine might be useful:

- 1. Chronic conditions:** Alternative medicine may offer relief for chronic conditions such as arthritis, migraines, or fibromyalgia, where conventional treatments have been ineffective or caused adverse side effects.
- 2. Stress reduction:** Practices like meditation, yoga, and acupuncture can help manage stress, promoting relaxation and overall well-being.

3. Preventive care: Some alternative therapies, such as herbal supplements and dietary changes, may support preventive health measures by boosting the immune system or promoting healthy lifestyle habits.

While alternative medicine can be beneficial for many individuals, it's essential to be aware of red flags that may indicate questionable practices or potential harm:

- 1. Lack of scientific evidence:** Be cautious of therapies that lack credible scientific research supporting their effectiveness or safety.
- 2. Unsubstantiated claims:** Beware of treatments that make grandiose claims or promise miraculous cures without evidence to back them up.
- 3. Safety concerns:** Some alternative therapies may pose risks, particularly if administered incorrectly or in conjunction with other medications. Always consult with a healthcare professional before trying a new treatment.
- 4. Excessive costs:** Be wary of alternative medicine providers who pressure you into expensive treatments or products without providing transparent information about their benefits or risks.

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How chemicals and pollutants get into our bodies

(NC) We do many things to take care of ourselves and those around us, like staying active, eating healthy and keeping our homes safe. Yet we are regularly exposed to chemicals and pollutants in air, food, water and in the products we use in our homes. Most of these chemicals are harmless, but others can pose a health risk if we don't learn how to protect ourselves. Here's what you need to know about how we are exposed to the chemicals around us.

Ingesting

Ingesting just means eating or drinking. Many chemicals can be found in both our food and water sources. As we eat and drink, we might swallow chemicals that can harm us. Children are also at risk of putting things in their mouths that aren't food or drink, including flakes of lead paint, colourful detergent pods and household cleaning supplies.

Inhaling

Inhalation is breathing in. The chemicals and pollutants we breathe in end up in our lungs and can end up in our blood. This can include anything from second-hand smoke or paint fumes, to odourless, tasteless

chemicals like radon or carbon monoxide.

Absorption

Finally, chemicals and other pollutants can enter the body through absorption. That's when something comes in contact with your skin or eyes. These organs can be more sensitive to pollutants and may react more quickly than the rest of our bodies.

Risk factors

The impact a chemical or pollutant has on your health depends on many factors, including the type of substance you were exposed to, how long you were exposed and your age and general health. Some exposures may have an immediate impact, such as nausea and vomiting or a chemical burn on the skin. Others may have longer-term impacts such as cancer or organ damage.

Some groups of people are more likely to face serious harm including the very young or very old, and those who are pregnant or have certain pre-existing medical conditions.

Learn more about the pollutants in our daily lives and how to avoid them at canada.ca/healthy-home.

Dry mouth: When drinking more water isn't enough

(NC) A sticky, dry mouth is more than an uncomfortable feeling. Occasional dry mouth from nervousness or dehydration goes away with a glass of water. But if your mouth is often dry, your tongue is sticking to the roof of your mouth, and it is difficult to chew, swallow and talk, you may have persistent dry mouth, known as xerostomia.

Dry mouth affects your overall health and well-being. Difficulty chewing and swallowing makes it a challenge to eat well. Difficulty talking can be socially embarrassing. Dry mouth can also cause bad breath, sores in your mouth and on your lips, cavities and other oral health problems.

Many things can cause dry mouth. Some medications, especially cold medicines and medications for high blood-pressure, depression and anxiety, will leave your mouth feeling dry. Treatments for cancer and some diseases and chronic conditions are associated with dry mouth. So are some lifestyle choices, such as smoking.

If you notice that your mouth often feels dry and swallowing is difficult, ask your oral health-care professional for advice. Scheduling routine visits with your dental hygienist will help monitor your health condition and provide regular scaling (cleaning and polishing).

For daily comfort, try the following tips:

- Clean your teeth and your mouth twice daily.
- Use an alcohol-free mouth rinse.
- Sip water regularly and drink water with every meal.
- Chew sugar-free gum or suck on sugar-free candies.
- Use lip lubricants or balm to prevent dry lips and sores.
- Avoid foods and drinks that are known to dry your mouth, such as caffeine, alcohol, cinnamon-flavoured items, and spicy and acidic foods.
- Reduce or quit smoking.

Find more information about dry mouth at dentalhygienecanada.ca.



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Public speaking anxiety: Studies show that CBD may help

Public speaking is an important skill. It can help you get ahead at work, or, if you struggle with it, make the climb harder. For many people, getting in front of a bunch of people can come with an illogical fear that makes it hard for them to function properly. They may know the subject they wish to speak on, but the very act of being in front of many people prompts a paralyzing self-consciousness and sense of doom.

This fear could come from no diagnosable condition, or, in some cases, be traced to social anxiety disorder, a common mental-health affliction that affects about 3 % of the population.

While no serious product has ever been offered to help specifically with stage fright, various psychiatric drugs do exist for social anxiety disorder which may come with side effects for many people. However, the plant-based remedy cannabidiol, or CBD, has been proposed as an alternative supported by scientific evidence.

While CBD is extracted from hemp and cannabis plants, it doesn't contain the molecules that cause intoxication. It isn't detected as a prohibited drug in blood tests.

A Brazilian study that looked at the potential benefits of CBD in addressing anxiety-related stage fright was published in the scientific journal *Nature*. The study placed two dozen subjects in public speaking situations, with the benefit of

either an oral dose of CBD oil or a placebo. The levels of anxiety that they experienced were measured throughout the process.

The results of the study demonstrated that the participants who received the CBD oil supplement were able to think better on their feet, perform with greater comfort, and subjectively experience lower levels of stage fright. The scores obtained by the study subjects were found to be similar to scores usually seen in participants who complained of no anxiety in the area of public speaking.

According to [sciencedirect.com](https://www.sciencedirect.com), the mechanism by which CBD addresses anxiety and fear of public speaking is not thoroughly understood. However, initial theorizing finds that CBD activates receptors in the brain's amygdala and then blocks them. These receptors have been linked to emotional processing, including anxiety.

While more than one study supports the use of CBD to tame the fear of public speaking, researchers haven't yet arrived upon a definitive dosage recommendation for how much CBD actually works. Studies have used everything from 300 mg doses to doses as high as 600 mg.

If you think CBD could be an alternative to help you with public speaking situations, talk with your healthcare provider about it to determine if it is a viable option.

Ways to overcome mild stagefright

Public speaking can be nerve-wracking, but with these tips, you can overcome your fears and make a positive impression on your audience. Remember to have confidence in yourself and the knowledge you have about the topic. You've got this!

Practice, practice, practice

One of the best ways to reduce your anxiety before a public speaking event is to practice your speech as much as possible. This will help you to memorize your main points, improve your delivery, and anticipate any questions or challenges. You can practice in front of a mirror, a friend, a family member, or a video camera. The more you practice, the more confident you will feel.

Know your audience

Knowing your audience will help you to tailor your speech to their interests, needs, and expectations. You can research your audience by asking the organizer, conducting a survey, or browsing their social media profiles. Knowing who you are speaking to will also help you to establish rapport and connect on a personal level.

Visualize your success

A third tip to overcome stage fright is to visualize your success. This means imagining yourself delivering a great speech, receiving positive feedback, and feeling proud of yourself. Visualization is a powerful technique that can boost your self-esteem, calm your nerves, and motivate you to perform well. You can visualize your success before, during, and after your speech.

Breathe and relax

A final tip to help you cope with stage fright is to breathe and relax. Breathing deeply and slowly can help you to lower your heart rate, reduce your blood pressure, and ease your tension. Relaxing your muscles can also help you to avoid stiffness, shaking, and sweating. You can breathe and relax by doing some stretches, listening to soothing music, or using positive affirmations.



Go green in your workspace

Greenspace is any area of natural or semi-natural vegetation that can provide environmental and health benefits. Greenspace can include plants, flowers, trees, grass, or even a small garden. According to a study by the University of Exeter, having greenspace in your workspace can improve your well-being, productivity, and creativity. The study found that employees who had plants in their offices were 15% more productive than those who did not. They also reported higher levels of happiness, satisfaction, and engagement.

Greenspace can enrich your environment and culture. Plants can add colour, texture, and freshness to your workspace. They can also create a sense of connection, community, and belonging among your colleagues. You can share your plants, exchange tips, or even organize a plant swap.

Creating greenspace in your workspace does not have to be complicated or expensive. Here are a few tips:

- Choose plants that are easy to care for and suitable for your space. Some examples are succulents, cacti, snake plants, peace lilies, or spider plants. These plants can survive in low-light and low-humidity conditions, and do not need frequent watering.
- Place your plants in strategic locations, such as near your desk, window, or door. This can help you enjoy the view of your greenspace and get some natural light. You can also use plant stands, shelves, or hanging baskets to maximize your space and create visual interest.
- Add some personal touches to your greenspace, such as photos, art, or ornaments. You can also use pots, containers, or vases that match your style and personality. This can make your greenspace more inviting and inspiring.
- Take care of your plants and enjoy their benefits. Water them regularly, prune them when needed, and wipe their leaves to remove dust. You can also talk to your plants, play some music for them, or even name them. This can help you bond with your greenspace and feel more relaxed and happy.

Different ways to boost productivity

Tired of setting alarms just to stay focused? Sick of needing a caffeine kick to feel alert? When even the methods of boosting productivity are making you feel lazy, it's time for a switch-up.

Luckily, there are more ways to level up your motivation than you might think. Take a look at some alternative techniques to kick yourself into first gear:

Eat your way to productivity

Could what you're eating be draining your motivation? There's a lot of evidence out there that shows productivity is closely linked to diet, with some foods lifting you up and others bringing you down.

High levels of saturated fats, for example, cause your brain to release serotonin and tryptophan - two hormones that are responsible for making you feel sleepy, which isn't ideal for that get-up-and-go attitude. Salt, too, can knock you sideways by causing dehydration, which is a well-known productivity killer.

On the other hand, foods containing phenylalanine (like almonds) stimulate dopamine production, which is linked to elevated moods and better motivation. There's also choline, a type of B vitamin found in salmon and legumes, which has been proven to improve focus and alertness.

Disrupt your daily routine

Productivity and routine frequently go hand-in-hand, but what if that doesn't work for you?

If you keep to a routine but are still procrastinating, try to disrupt your schedule. This could mean moving your morning run to the evening, changing the hours you work (if you can), or throwing caution to the wind and chucking your entire routine out of the window.

This might simply be a matter of shifting your schedule around until it works for you. Or, you might discover that you work better when you follow your instinct rather than a timetable. Give spontaneity a go and see what works for you.

Let yourself be unproductive

By focusing so much on keeping procrastination at bay, you might actually be making your productivity worse. The solution? Lean into doing less.

People who frequently procrastinate see all sorts of motivation-boosting effects from their chill time, including enhanced creativity, lower stress levels, and the ability to work more efficiently. The result is that when they put their mind to a task, they get more done in less time.



Benefits of mindfulness meditation

Mindfulness meditation has become increasingly popular in recent years as more research reveals its wide-ranging health benefits. Studies show that practicing mindfulness can positively impact both mental and physical wellbeing.

One of the most well-documented effects of mindfulness meditation is stress and anxiety reduction. When you feel overwhelmed or threatened, your body initiates a “fight or flight” response, releasing stress hormones like cortisol. While this can be helpful in genuinely dangerous situations, chronic activation of stress responses can damage health over time.

Research shows that mindfulness quiets this threat response by activating the body’s relaxation response. Just a few minutes of practice per day can start to retrain the nervous system to respond to challenges with more equanimity rather than panic. Over time, this reduces baseline feelings of anxiety and allows quicker recovery from acute stressors.

Mindfulness meditation positively impacts several markers of cardiovascular health. Studies show reductions in blood pressure, heart rate, and cholesterol levels among regular meditators.

These effects may result from mindfulness’s ability to dampen our body’s physiological reactivity to stress and reduce your nervous system’s

fight or flight response. With practice, meditation can reverse ingrained patterns of cardiovascular activation during times of distress. Over months and years, this leads to healthier baseline cardiovascular function. And with cardiovascular disease being so common, it could be lifesaving.

Research also suggests that mindfulness can significantly improve sleep quality and duration for those with insomnia. Through relaxing the body and quieting the racing mind, meditation facilitates falling asleep faster and staying asleep longer. People also report fewer nighttime awakenings following the introduction of a meditation practice. Better sleep then confers its own set of health advantages.

Are you ready to start rewiring your stress responses and tapping into a deeper sense of calm? A practice as small as taking 10 minutes a day to tune into the present moment can start compounding results. Just observing each breath and letting thoughts pass without judgement begins activating the relaxation response.

Of course, creating any new habit presents challenges at first. But why not give it a try for a few weeks? What do you have to lose besides stress and anxiety? You might just gain the foundational pillar of health we all long for - a sense of inner peace.

How to start practicing mindfulness

Mindful meditation is not a religion or a belief system, but rather a skill that anyone can learn and benefit from. If you are new to mindful meditation, you might wonder how to get started. **Here are some simple steps that can help you begin your journey:**

- Find a comfortable and quiet place where you won’t be disturbed. You can sit on a chair, a cushion, or the floor, as long as you keep your back straight and relaxed.
- Set a timer for how long you want to meditate. You can start with 5 or 10 minutes and gradually increase the duration as you get more comfortable.
- Close your eyes or lower your gaze and take a few deep breaths. Notice how your body feels and relax any tension you might have.
- Bring your attention to your breath. Observe the sensations of inhaling and exhaling, without trying to control or change them. If your mind wanders, gently bring it back to your breath.
- Be kind and patient with yourself. Don’t judge yourself for having thoughts or feelings, but simply acknowledge them and let them go. Remember that there is no right or wrong way to meditate, and that every session is different.

If you want to learn more about mindful meditation and how to practice it, there are many online resources that can help you. Here are some of them:

- Mindful.org is a website that offers articles, videos, podcasts, and courses on mindful meditation and its benefits. You can also sign up for their newsletter and get daily tips and inspiration.
- Headspace is a popular app that guides you through various types of meditation, such as stress relief, sleep, focus, and happiness. You can try it for free for 10 days and then choose a subscription plan that suits your needs.
- Insight Timer is another app that offers thousands of free guided meditations, music, and talks from teachers around the world. You can also join live events and connect with other meditators.
- YouTube is a great source of free guided meditations, tutorials, and interviews on mindful meditation. You can search for topics that interest you or follow channels like The Mindful Movement, Mindful, and Mindfulness Exercises.

How to boost your protein intake

Protein is not just a building block for muscles; it plays a crucial role in various bodily functions, including repairing tissues, supporting immune function, and regulating hormones. Therefore, ensuring an adequate intake of protein is essential for maintaining overall health and well-being.

To increase protein consumption, there are several delicious and nutritious options to consider.

1. Lean meats and poultry:

Incorporating lean meats such as chicken, turkey, and lean cuts of beef or pork into meals is an excellent way to add high-quality protein. Opting for skinless poultry and trimming visible fat can help reduce unnecessary calories and saturated fats.

2. Fish and seafood: Fish and seafood are rich sources of protein and heart-healthy omega-3 fatty acids. Salmon,

trout, tuna, and shrimp are excellent choices that can be grilled, baked, or broiled for a nutritious meal.

3. Plant-based proteins: For those following a vegetarian or vegan diet, plant-based protein sources offer plenty of options. Legumes such as beans, lentils, and chickpeas are packed with protein, fibre, and essential nutrients. Tofu, tempeh, edamame, and soy products are also versatile plant-based protein sources.

4. Eggs: Eggs are a convenient and affordable source of high-quality protein. Whether scrambled, boiled, or poached, eggs can be enjoyed for breakfast, lunch, or dinner. Don't forget to include the nutritious egg yolk, which contains essential vitamins and minerals.

Stuck in a rut? How to get back out again

Is your life predictable? Maybe you follow a humdrum routine, and nothing's wildly wrong, but it's not right, either. You want to shake things up, yet, not so much that you must reach too far from your comfort zone. Here's how you can get out of a rut and put a spark back in your life.

Don't plan everything

While a little planning goes a long way, helping you achieve your aims, too much planning can keep you in a rut of predictability. Over-planning doesn't leave room for spontaneity, so you always know what will happen next. Stop planning every little detail of your life, and you'll make space for unexpected events.

Change your routines

Some of your routines might help you achieve goals and get through your day successfully, so keep them. However, you follow others on autopilot, and they need not stay the same. For example, if you usually travel to work along the same old route, why not go a different way? You may find another road is more pleasant, convenient, or enjoyable, and you'll see new sights.

Meet new people

Make an effort to meet new people. Otherwise, you could end up with the same crowd, which is fine if you enjoy their company. Nonetheless, it's helpful to meet people because they'll show you new ways to do things, introduce you to various new interests, and provide fresh insights.

You'll hook up with new faces if you join classes, visit places you wouldn't usually go to, and take up hobbies out of town. Make sure you swap names and numbers with people you meet and get along with and arrange to see them again.

Learn a new skill

Another terrific way to get out of a rut is to learn a new skill. It's never too late to expand your knowledge and study a language or subject that interests you.

For example, perhaps you've always liked photography but never taken your yearning to develop it earnestly. Now is your chance to explore new and old pastures. While you do, you're bound to feel more alive because you use your brain differently, meet new people, and change your lifestyle.

energyzone

1. Blueberries

Blueberries are often hailed as one of the ultimate superfruits due to their impressive antioxidant content and numerous health benefits. Research suggests that consuming blueberries may contribute to various aspects of



health, including improved cognitive function, cardiovascular health, and blood sugar regulation. Whether enjoyed fresh, frozen, or incorporated into smoothies, oatmeal, or yogurt, blueberries are a delicious and nutritious addition to any diet.

Superberries - Blue and Acai



2. Acai Berries

Acai berries, native to the Amazon rainforest, have gained widespread recognition for their potent antioxidant properties and potential health benefits. These small, dark purple berries are a good source of fibre, healthy fats, and essential vitamins and minerals, including vitamin A, calcium, and potassium. Acai berries are commonly consumed in smoothie bowls, juices, and supplements, providing a convenient way to reap their nutritional benefits.