

May/June 2018

The art of growing young[®]

Improve Your
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Family Health



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Sharing for the
Common Good

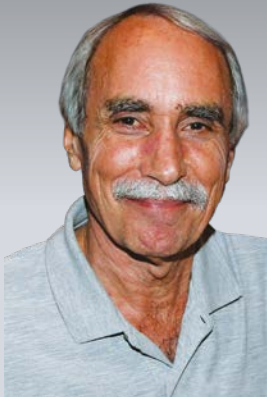
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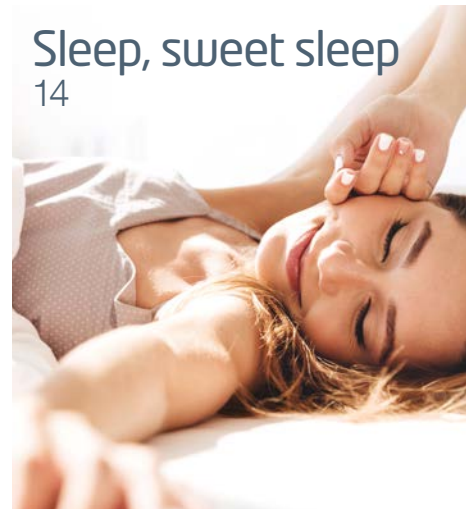
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What's Your Purpose?

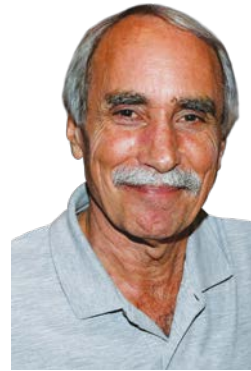
Research shows that people who feel as though they have a purpose in life tend to live longer, healthier lives. One such study I read about showed that when older people reported having life goals, they were less likely to develop weak grip strength, and maintained faster walking speeds.

Isn't it incredible to think that when we feel we have a purpose or a goal, our bodies stay healthier and function better? That's an amazing tool in the art of growing young. And it's a tool that anyone can harness no matter what your age or place in life.

Your purpose can and will change throughout your life. When we are young and fresh out of college, we often feel our purpose is to change the world for the better. We find a cause and stick with it for a while—some of us for the rest of our lives. But more than likely, your purpose will change as you age. Later, your purpose may shift to the task of taking care of your family. Older generations can find purpose in mentoring younger ones. Even caring for a pet that you know depends on you can be enough to help keep your body young.

Here's a secret: It really doesn't matter what your purpose is. As long as you have goals and feel you are doing something to better not just yourself but someone else, your body will reward you.

So what's your purpose? Is it to help other people on their own journeys to wellness? Or is it to provide for your family so they are safe and comfortable? If you think about it, there is a good chance you already have a purpose in life; maybe you just haven't said it out loud yet. If that's the case, I urge you to do so and experience the amazing effects on your body that living with a purpose has!



Dwight L. McKee M.D.

Dwight L. McKee
Scientific Director

Nutritional News

Boost your mood with spicy food

Regular consumption of turmeric, a staple in spicy Indian food, can help improve mood and memory according to a study from the University of California. One specific compound in turmeric, curcumin, appears to be responsible for the brain-boosting effect, possibly due to curcumin's anti-inflammatory and anti-amyloid brain properties.



Scientists discover another benefit of lifelong learning

Scientists recently published an article in the *British Medical Journal* showing a link between more education and a reduced risk of developing Alzheimer's disease. Continued education in any form (including taking up new hobbies or making new friends) exercises the brain and helps protect it against dementia later in life.

Think you can handle one night of bad sleep?

Think again. According to new research published in the *Journal of Sleep Research*, even a single night of sleep loss can impair working memory, a key cognitive function for performing effectively in academic, professional and social settings. This new research is more evidence against college students trying to cram the night before a big test.



Magnesium, an important sunshine booster

Vitamin D, an important nutrient, is better synthesized in the body when magnesium is present. In turn, the intestines absorb magnesium more efficiently when the body has higher levels of vitamin D. These effects can be attributed to the synergistic relationship between the two nutrients—both boost your health alone, but when they are together, the nutrients are far more potent.

Sunshine may help you sleep better

Several studies have recently shown the key to a good night's sleep may be spending more time outdoors during the day. Increased levels of vitamin D were shown in multiple studies to reduce sleep latency, increase sleep duration and improve reported sleep quality.



Fitness to Complement Daily Life

You may be able to run five miles or bench-press 80 pounds. But are you capable of lifting your toddler out of her car seat? Or can you carry your heavy suitcase up the stairs without throwing out your back?

Functional fitness is the concept behind successfully performing activities like this, and the aim behind achieving this is to develop exercises that help you do what you already do on a daily basis.

Functional fitness emphasizes the muscles and joints working together.

Instead of targeting a specific muscle as you might when operating a specific machine at the gym, you would instead attempt to mimic a movement that strengthens and stabilizes for the action you'd like to achieve.

If someone can press 300 pounds on a leg press machine at the gym while lying down, can they also do a single leg squat balancing their body weight on the one leg? The latter is more likely a skill you need for everyday movement.

Experts in the field of functional fitness suggest putting the weights away for the time being and instead working on being able to balance and control your own body weight. Then slowly add weights back into your routine.



For example, a stay-at-home parent to a toddler would work to improve his or her strength by engaging in training for lifting and squatting down. If the person is an auto mechanic, he or she would work on strengthening their back as well as arm and shoulder strengthening. A nurse in a geriatric setting might create functional fitness goals that lead toward core strengthening and lifting in order to stabilize his or her core or strengthening their upper body for moving less-mobile patients.

There are some activities that we all basically do every day. Those are getting up or down from sitting or kneeling on the ground, carrying heavy things, pulling or pushing a heavy object, going up and down stairs, getting up and down into the seated position, and reaching up to grab something.



Functional fitness prepares your body for the main daily activities such as bending, lifting, reaching, walking, stair climbing, and pushing and pulling.

Try exercises like lower, slower squats. Take note if you usually lunge up from the ground using just your right (or maybe for you it is your left) leg. Instead, try to counterbalance the strength by using the opposite leg than what is normal for you. For carrying heavier objects, do just that at home.



Perhaps make sure you are tightening your abdominal muscles and pick up a large bag of dirt in your backyard and see how long you can hold it. Or, when reaching down to pick up a basket of laundry, instead of just doing it once, do this exercise 10 times in a row, concentrating on your joints moving in a controlled manner and your body staying in alignment.

Going up and down stairs is a good example of something that does translate from the gym to the home. However, often at the gym, people will lean on the side rails and bend their torso over in a slump. This is not usually how you'll climb a few flights of stairs at work or even at home. So, attempt to do these exercises without the leaning over.



When getting up and down into a seated position, we probably don't think about doing it. We may push up with our arms a bit to give a little boost to our legs.

A good functional fitness exercise for this would be, once again, squats.

Another perhaps more realistic alternative would be to do a squat with your back against the wall. Or perform a chair-sitting action (without a chair or support underneath) against a wall and hold it for as long as you can.

For improving the muscles and joints related to pushing, do push-ups against a wall. But similar to the multidirectional lunges, do the same with the push-ups: first move forward and then to the side.



Getting on your tippy toes to reach something seems like an easy enough task, but if you're in better functional fitness shape, you can do so without the risk of harm. That's because functional fitness will strengthen the core and improve the flexibility of the joints involved.

A tremendous emphasis in functional fitness is core strength. You want to improve strength while promoting a flexible and painless range of motion in the spine. While you may want a flat and toned abdomen, the purpose in functional fitness is to be able to rely on your core muscles to get out of bed; stand up from your chair at work; or even sit in a chair, reading in a way that doesn't put added stress and strain on your body.

Sharing for the Common Good

Scandinavians are continually ranked as the happiest people in the world. Aside from their socio-political social net, the culture is one of community and consideration.





There is an emphasis on the inclusion of all in their governmental program, and a belief that fairness and equity are essential pillars to an advanced society. In other words, it's the grown-up version of sharing. Societies in which it is deemed righteous to take care of one another simply thrive.

A farmer was once lauded for the quality of his crop. When asked what made his crop so successful, he said it was because he shared it with his farmer neighbors.



The farmer's theory was that as the seeds from his crop spread with the wind, so did the seeds from his neighbors' crops.

His logic was that if his neighbors' crops were inferior in quality, that would also affect his crop. If he were to have a successful bounty of good-quality produce, then so must his neighbors.

The moral is that no one is an island, and no one can stand alone. We are all intricately connected. Often our societies tell us that we must look out for ourselves and our own interests—we must be the best, the most competitive, the richest, the smartest, have the nicest things, maintain an image of the best kind of family and/or be the most attractive. But when we seek to only satisfy ourselves, we lose the connection that quality relationships give us.

Sharing is a natural instinct intrinsically integrated within human beings (and other animals, for that matter).

It is quite simply the only way that human civilization has survived. Networks of interdependence, trust and vulnerability helped human beings survive during difficult times—such as famine, war, and civil strife or natural disasters—and thrive during periods of peace and prosperity.

Live into your abundance. There's a saying that it's wise, when you have enough, to invite more people to your table. This means that recognizing that we have more than what's sufficient is the first step. And the second step is to share your abundance.

It can be said that the best security system is knowing your neighbors. The reason is that when we know who we live amongst and we share part of our lives, we are building a network of taking care of one another and looking out for one another. In a comparable manner, we know that when one house on the block starts to look shoddy or less taken care of, the value of all of the houses on the block goes down.



When we know our neighbors and share in public life together, our neighborhoods are safer. The same analogy holds true for people and relationships.

In a family, when one member is suffering from anxiety or depression, it is hard for them to not affect others. In a society, when not everyone is living up to their fullest potential, it inevitably affects others.





But sharing means being vulnerable—being vulnerable with our feelings, our emotions and our thoughts.

Being vulnerable does not mean that you are participating in a complete free-for-all in which it is an all-the-time give-athon of you and your inner landscape and personal space. It should be mutual and accountable. There should be a balance of give and take. Vulnerability in a sharing relationship also means setting boundaries and asking for what you want and need.

In addition to a better societal impact, sharing resources is better for the environment (and often that leads to better financial savings for everyone as well).



If you live in a neighborhood where you have smaller yards, you and a few neighbors could share a lawnmower. Try carpooling or ridesharing to your place of work. For appliances and items you use infrequently (such as an ice cream maker, fondue set, outdoor grill or yard tools), consider purchasing them and co-owning them with someone else. These actions decrease consumption and increase cooperation.

Sharing is also important for physical health. When you partner with others to reach your healthy lifestyle goals, you can hold each other accountable and motivate one another. Or if you go through a period of time when you are ill, sharing this vulnerability helps others feel fulfilled by helping support and uplift you.

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Cup Half Full: The Power of Positive Thinking While Accepting the Cup Is Also Half Empty

In life we are often confronted with information that is daunting and draining.

Our brains are inundated with daily reminders of what is bad in the world, what we supposedly need or want, and what is wrong with other people or ourselves. It is so hard to turn off the messages of “you are not enough” or “you don’t have enough” or “that person isn’t good enough.” What if we could be more mindful of our thoughts and how they affect our feelings and actions?

Is there a way to both accept our negative feelings and transform them into more positive thoughts and outcomes?

The point of mindfulness is to embrace the full range of emotions. Denying your negative thoughts or your feelings of sadness and anger is not the point of positive thinking. Minimizing saddening or angering experiences doesn’t solve them. Working through those thoughts and letting them go or transforming them to see things from a different angle are healthy ways to embrace our negative feelings and experiences, and then move toward positivity, connection, wholeness and health.

While positive psychology is a powerful tool in personal and societal peace, it should not lead to shameful feelings when we are sad or hurt by some experiences in life. Positive psychology does not refute the actual difficulties or situations that cause hurt and grief, but instead it emphasizes the importance of studying and working toward the other perspective (positivity) as well. We need to notice, accept and understand what troubles us so that we can embrace it and then let it go—opening ourselves to a more positive path.

But there are habitual thought patterns that can snowball into bigger, more negative emotions. For the sake of being aware of these thought patterns, we’ll review a few here. Not to beat yourself up about them, but to name them in order to be able to observe and perhaps eventually let them go (something we’ll cover later).

Filtering. Filtering occurs when you focus on the bad parts of a situation and filter out all of the good parts. For example, take when you have a largely positive day at work and you get a lot accomplished, but when you leave for the day you realize there were two items that you were not able to get to. You go home and lament not getting to those other items and focus on how you’ll do even more tomorrow.

Instead of focusing on what you did accomplish, you focus on what you did not.

Personalizing. When you experience a negative situation, you fault yourself. An example could be that a coworker or neighbor is standoffish or short with you and you immediately think you did something wrong. The fact of the matter is that they could be that way in that moment for a myriad of reasons and all of those reasons could have nothing to do with you.

Catastrophizing. You jump to the worst possible conclusion. You get a call from your mother at a strange time and you immediately think there is bad news to be heard. Or you arrive on vacation and it is raining the first day so you assume the whole trip will be ruined.

Polarizing. You see things only as right or wrong, with no gray zone in between. Things have to be absolutely and precisely correct, or they are not good at all.



Why are these negative thought patterns unhealthy? Simply said, we get stuck in them, and often we are unaware of how stuck we are. There’s an expression that resentment is like taking poison and waiting for the other person to die. Negative thoughts could be substituted for resentment! Negativity affects our health on so many levels—from increased stress hormones raging through our bodies to heart disease and obesity.^{1,2} But how do we change our negative thinking habits?

Bring awareness to your inner self periodically throughout the day.

Perhaps set an alarm on your phone two to three times a day to take a moment to see what you’re thinking and feeling. The first step is awareness.

¹ Wenzlaff, R.M., et al. “Depression and mental control: the resurgence of unwanted negative thoughts.” *Journal of personality and social psychology*, U.S. National Library of Medicine, Dec. 1988, www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/3216288.
² Hirsch, Colette R., et al. “Delineating the Role of Negative Verbal Thinking in Promoting Worry, Perceived Threat, and Anxiety.” *Clinical Psychological Science*, SAGE Publications, July 2015, www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC4827167/.



Embrace and then let go of your negative thoughts instead of trying to overcome them. When you notice you are feeling angry about an interaction you had with your sister-in-law, take a moment to fully feel that anger. Recognize that whatever was said hurt you or made you feel distrustful. Instead of getting lost in that hurt or distrust, then just breathe into it and accept that feeling.

Once you can accept that is your feeling, try to release it—perhaps verbally telling yourself it is time to let go of the power that interaction has had on you.

While self-affirmations and focusing on what's good about us (or others) is essential for mind-over-matter issues, asking questions can help lead you toward a more positive sensation in which you experience peace of mind. With your negative thoughts, ask the following questions: What is this thought? What can I do or want to do with it? Should I change it? If I'm ready to change this thought, how can I change it?

However, sometimes we truly don't feel we can change a negative thought. Or, if we are honest with ourselves, sometimes we don't want to. Sometimes we need to hold on to that resentment about the interaction with our sister-in-law longer. When we get stuck in that space, a question to ask is this: What is this negative thought doing to serve me or bring me more positivity and peace? Perhaps we feel safe holding on to that anger toward her. "She always says such insensitive things just to get my goat!" If that is our thought, can you then move toward acceptance? Try a mini-mantra that focuses on your accepting your hurt or anger toward her and acknowledges that you accept that she also may have a tendency to be that way. You will probably have to remind yourself and work toward this acceptance on an ongoing basis. And that is also okay.

Practice positive affirmations that feel authentic and real. When you don't feel good about yourself, positive self-talk can sometimes feel disingenuous. But that doesn't mean you should dwell in the negative thoughts. Start by following the basic guideline of not saying anything to yourself that you wouldn't say to a close friend you care for deeply.

Say to yourself that you are worthy of love, kindness and respect.

Whether you believe it or not, those are actual facts. Tell yourself that you will find gratitude this day (and perhaps the reminders you set on your phone can also trigger a moment to name something you are grateful for). Remind yourself that there is goodness inside of you and inside of others.

If you tend to have a negative outlook, don't expect to become an optimist overnight. Give yourself grace and space to work through those emotions to achieve the positive side of those feelings, as well as the whole range in between. Remember that it is normal not to think positive thoughts all the time. And it is unrealistic to believe that you can be happy every moment. That is not failure, but instead it is part of our human and emotional life. And it is also part of our soul's need (and health needs!) to work toward more positive and peaceful thinking about ourselves, each other and the world around us.



Your Health Is Your Oyster (or Shrimp or Mussel or Clam...): The Health Benefits of Shellfish

Shellfish is being touted as the superfood of the sea, and with due reason.¹ Shellfish is full of important minerals and is a source of healthy fats. Oysters, clams, mussels, scallops, lobster, crab and shrimp are some examples of the varieties available to you.

Shellfish are full of essential nutrients. The various kinds of shellfish afford the body many vital nutrients that include zinc and iodine. Zinc is perhaps most notable as a potential nutrient deficiency that can lead to everything from increased anxiety to decreased immune system function.² Iodine is another component of shellfish that is important for our health, particularly for the function of the thyroid gland—so much so that it has become a major public health issue with various countries fortifying everyday foods such as table salt with iodine. The issues with iodine deficiency have mainly to do with intellectual development in populations (which is related to maternal and fetal thyroid function). Since so many countries started fortifying table salt, multiple studies have correlated that with an increase in population IQ levels. Shellfish is a direct source of naturally occurring iodine.

Shellfish are also excellent sources of other minerals, including iron and copper, both of which help with hemoglobin in our blood (the main blood component that aids in making sure our body parts get all the necessary oxygen).



Omega-3s are perhaps the foundation of the nutritional health benefits of shellfish. While salmon gets the spotlight in mainstream nutrition for omega-3s, shellfish like oysters, shrimp and mussels have nearly the recommended daily amount in a six-to-eight-ounce serving (170 to 225 grams). The green-lipped mussels found in the coastal areas of New Zealand contain unique fatty acids that particularly support both joint and lung health.

Heart health is one of the primary reasons nutritional health experts recommend seafood.

Decades ago, omega-3s began to gain international attention when it was observed that the indigenous Inuit population of Greenland had lower levels of heart disease compared with the Danes (the colonizers of Greenland). Researchers attributed this reality to the consumption of seafood and its lower levels of saturated fats and high levels of omega-3 fatty acids.

Omega-3s also help with mood improvement and brain health. What's more, shellfish may play a role in fighting depression. Studies have demonstrated a relationship between groups of individuals who have higher rates of depression and lower omega-3 levels.³ In terms of brain health, scientists have noted that people who regularly consume seafood have lower rates of cognitive disorders such as dementia.



Shellfish's omega-3s have been correlated with greater concentration abilities in children and better reading skills.

Let us not underestimate the role that shellfish plays in beauty. Zinc, copper and omega-3s all contribute to healthier skin, nails and hair. The omega-3s in shellfish can actually help mitigate some damage caused by the ultraviolet light from the sun.⁴ They can also aid with the symptoms of psoriasis or eczema.^{5,6} Shellfish are also great sources of protein and copper, which are essential components of collagen, a substance which keeps the skin firm and flexible.

¹ Dong, Faye. The nutritional value of shellfish. 2009, wsg.washington.edu/wordpress/wp-content/uploads/publications/Nutritional-Value-of-Shellfish.pdf.

² Russo, A.J. "Decreased Zinc and Increased Copper in Individuals with Anxiety." *Nutrition and Metabolic Insights*, Libertas Academica, Feb. 2011, www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC3738454/.

³ Osher, Y, and R H Belmaker. "Omega-3 fatty acids in

depression: a review of three studies." *CNS neuroscience & therapeutics*, U.S. National Library of Medicine, 2009, www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/19499625.

⁴ Pilkington, S M, et al. "Omega-3 polyunsaturated fatty acids: photoprotective macronutrients." *Experimental dermatology*, U.S. National Library of Medicine, July 2011, www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/21569104.

⁵ Koch C, Dölle S, Metzger M, Rasche C, Junglas H,

Rühl R, et al. Docosahexaenoic acid (DHA) supplementation in atopic eczema: a randomized, double-blind, controlled trial. *Br J Dermatol*. 2008;158:786–792.

⁶ Balbás, G Márquez, et al. "Study on the use of omega-3 fatty acids as a therapeutic supplement in treatment of psoriasis." *Clinical, Cosmetic and Investigational Dermatology*, Dove Medical Press, June 2011, www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC3133503/.

Sleep, sweet sleep

It is something we need, something we love and, often, something we aren't getting enough of. Getting enough sleep is one of the most important keys to great health.





Getting enough sleep is one of the most important keys to great health. But for a myriad of reasons, we just don't always make it a priority in our daily lives. Or our daily lives are so busy that we have trouble turning the "busyness" off when we lay down to recharge.

Insomnia is habitual, ongoing sleeplessness, and is often characterized by the person's feeling of not being able to sleep. The exact purposes and mechanisms of sleep are only partially clear to scientists. The science surrounding the "hows and whys" of sleep and its effect on the mind and body are still a mystery.

However, research has undoubtedly demonstrated that getting enough sleep is imperative for effective functioning (cognitive), physiological well-being (physical health) and improved mood (emotional health). Without sleep, we don't function cognitively at our best levels.

Sleep is an essential activity for optimal physical health.

Furthermore, we all have had moments when we were tired, when we didn't speak kindly to our families, we cried more easily or we got angrier than we needed to. Lack of sleep affects our emotional lives as well.

Insomnia—why does it happen to us and how do we naturally solve it? Let's look at some common reasons people experience insomnia, and some practical and natural ways to combat chronic sleeplessness.

Circadian rhythms are nature's way of guiding us to sleep. It's the body's way of keeping us on a natural "sleep and awake" cycle in a 24-hour period. If you have ever noticed you tend to get sleepy around the same time every night, or that you wake up around the same time each morning, then that is due to your body's circadian rhythm. For those of us experiencing insomnia, the circadian rhythm is usually not working at its best, or we are so busy or anxious that we don't notice it.

One way to work toward creating a circadian rhythm is to strictly go to bed at the same time every night (even weekends!) and wake up at the same time every morning.

Create a bedtime ritual. Nature loves cycles, rhythms and rituals. And so do our bodies and souls. Make bedtime a sacred time and actually take some intentional time to slow down, breathe, turn off your brain, turn off your electronics and move more slowly. It doesn't have to be an elaborate essential oil-scented bath or a 20-minute mindfulness meditation (although both of those would be fantastic ways to unwind before bed). Instead, do small actions for what you already need to do.

Ideas for creating a bedtime ritual include putting on your pajamas at the start of the nightly routine. In fact, perhaps having actual cozy pajamas instead of old T-shirts or sweatpants could help signal to your body that you are beginning to wind down for sleep. Intentionally and slowly brush your teeth or wash your face with warm water.



Lotion your body with magnesium cream or rub lavender oil into the bottom of your feet.

Read from a nightly meditation book. Do a one-minute stretch when you get into bed and under the covers.

To do these things, it will take a bit more time. Start by choosing a time you'd like to be in bed with the lights off. Then begin your nightly, bedtime rituals about a half hour beforehand. If you feel you need less or more time, adjust your time accordingly, if possible.

Think positively about sleep and your ability to achieve it. The bedtime rituals, along with positive feelings (as opposed to dreading your inability to sleep well enough), help create a thought-action synergy that will help you fall asleep faster and help you sleep better. This is called cognitive behavioral therapy and its positive effect on helping people with insomnia is backed by several studies, according to a systematic review out of Harvard University.¹

¹ Trauer, J M, et al. "Cognitive Behavioral Therapy for Chronic Insomnia: A Systematic Review and Meta-Analysis." *Annals of internal medicine*, U.S. National Library of Medicine, 4 Aug. 2015, www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/26054060.





Darkness promotes sleep. While it may be impractical to go down with the sun (especially those of us up in northern climates when sundown can range widely with the seasons), a good idea is to try to get to bed by 9:30 p.m. Some sleep experts believe that the quality of sleep decreases after midnight and then even more so after 3 a.m.

A simple act of changing your lightbulbs in your bedroom could help with the process.

Soft light that is emitted from light sources like Himalayan salt lamps or special alarm clock lamps will attempt to create lighting that helps you see what you're doing while you're getting ready for bed but won't stimulate your brain to stop producing melatonin (an important sleep hormone). Make sure you have curtains that sufficiently block out street lights.

It is especially important to avoid blue light at night, which means no electronics after 7 p.m.! If you do decide that 9 p.m. or 9:30 p.m. is your bedtime, then make sure that at least two full hours before bed you do not have any electronic stimulation—particularly from screens. In addition to cutting out the pre-bedtime television and laptops or tablets, also face down (or get rid of) your standard alarm clock.

² Ngan, A, and R Conduit. "A double-Blind, placebo-Controlled investigation of the effects of *Passiflora incarnata* (Passionflower) herbal tea on subjective sleep quality." *Phytotherapy research* : PTR., U.S. National Library of Medicine, Aug. 2011, www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/21294203.

Watching the digital clock numbers can produce more anxiety before bed, but especially in the middle of the night when you have difficulty sleeping and begin stressing out about the hours ticking down before your "official" wakeup time.

Exercise helps sleep. Have you ever noticed that when a young child plays at the park for an hour or goes to a swim class, he or she is much easier to put down for an afternoon nap? Well, we adults are no different.



Exercise helps regulate our body mechanics, stimulates us sufficiently during our awake hours and helps us manage stress.

³ Howatson, G, et al. "Effect of tart cherry juice (*Prunus cerasus*) on melatonin levels and enhanced sleep quality." *European journal of nutrition*., U.S. National Library of Medicine, Dec. 2012, www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/22038497.

⁴ Abbasi, B, et al. "The effect of magnesium supplementation on

primary insomnia in elderly: A double-Blind placebo-Controlled clinical trial." *Journal of research in medical sciences* : the official journal of Isfahan University of Medical Sciences., U.S. National Library of Medicine, Dec. 2012, www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/23853635.

Because stress and anxiety are the top reasons that people who suffer from insomnia claim keep them up at night, exercise is an obvious antidote to helping promote better mental health. A mild word of caution is in order, though: Exercise can increase our endorphins, so be sure to not exercise within three or four hours before bedtime.

Try herbal remedies. Melatonin, chamomile tea (or chamomile essential oil in an infuser), passionflower tea, tart cherry juice, valerian root capsules, or oral or topical magnesium are natural ways to promote sleep. A double-blind, placebo-controlled study out of an Australian university showed that passionflower tea improved sleep in adults.² Tart cherry juice has been shown to increase the natural levels of melatonin in the body, which in turn helps promote sleep.³ Many of us are deficient in magnesium. Taking an oral magnesium supplement to help promote sleep is great, but applying a relaxing topical lotion before bed is a fantastic way to give yourself a soft massage and increase your sleep-promoting magnesium levels in your body. In fact, some practitioners believe it is best absorbed topically. Regardless, magnesium is an excellent mineral for rest.⁴

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Life-giving Lemons

When we think of lemons, we often think of adding flavor to water. Or perhaps adding lemon curd to a scone. Sometimes we may squeeze lemon juice into a dish we're making.

The truth is that lemons have a very versatile and wide-range of healthy properties that improve our bodies and our minds. Many preventative health experts recommend drinking a full glass of warm water with lemon juice squeezed into it upon waking up. This could help boost your immunity (vitamin C/antioxidant), alkalize the body and promote digestion.

Acid-base balance

The body works hard to maintain the right balance in all areas of health, but especially in terms of maintaining pH (which is the level of acid versus base, aka "alkaline"). The trouble with many diets is that the foods are acid-producing in our bodies. An increase in junk or processed foods; too much animal protein, sugar or refined grain products; or too many prepared and packaged foods means more stress on the body as it tries to maintain its overall pH balance. If you're eating a more whole-food-based diet, meats, fats, fish, cheese (particularly hard ones), refined sugars, coffee and alcohol are acid-forming. Fruits and vegetables are more alkalizing. The interesting fact is that some acidic foods, such as lemons, actually interact in the body to decrease the acid levels.¹

Gut health

The citric acid in lemons help stimulate the bowels, a process called peristalsis. Many people suffer from chronic constipation, and while this can be attributed to a number of reasons, lemons help stimulate the bowels to move food through. At the same time, the ascorbic acid in lemon juice can actually improve absorption of food, which can give the body more time to process the nutrients.

Liver detoxification

Lemons also have a cleansing and detoxification effect on the body—particularly the liver. A study on mice with alcohol-induced cirrhosis (inflammation and scarring of the liver's cells) showed significant improvements in liver health when treated with lemon juice.² The scientists in this study believe that this could be due to lemon's antioxidative properties.

Vitamin C

Perhaps due to the antioxidative qualities of vitamin C, the *Journal of Alzheimer's Disease* reviewed studies and concluded the protective effect of vitamin C on age-associated cognitive deterioration.³

The juice from two lemons gives you nearly 90 percent of the recommended daily intake of vitamin C (the amount necessary to prevent scurvy, the vitamin C deficiency disease—not necessarily the amount needed to promote optimal health, detoxification, immune support and enzyme function).

Lower cholesterol.

While consuming an entire lemon, including the lemon peel, may not be something you do, a study showed that it significantly lowered cholesterol in hamsters that were given a higher-fat diet.⁴ Some people use lemon peels in baking or puree them into their smoothies.

Lower blood pressure

A study out of Japan on human subjects showed that lemon intake, coupled with walking, helps significantly lower blood pressure.⁵ The study's researchers theorized that there is a synergistic relationship between the participants' activity (walking) and lemon consumption that helps further the advantageous outcome.

The study suggested that components of lemons such as citric acid, polyphenols and ascorbic acid are the keys to their health benefits.

Weight control.

Properties in lemons also help suppress the buildup of fat in our bodies.⁶ One study fed mice a fattening diet, also giving them lemon polyphenols (polyphenols are a group of phytochemicals that are biologically active compounds found in plants). These specific compounds found in lemons helped the mice gain less weight than expected despite their high-fat diets.

A few words of caution with lemon intake. Lemons and their juice can be harsh on teeth enamel. After consuming lemons or lemon juice, it is a good idea to swish the inside of your mouth with water for a few minutes to gently remove the acid, which will prevent it from degrading your teeth. Also, in all of these suggestions, real lemons (not lemon juice concentrate) were used. Lemon juice concentrate is highly pasteurized and often stripped of its nutritional value.

¹ Schwalfenberg, Gerry K. "The Alkaline Diet: Is There Evidence That an Alkaline pH Diet Benefits Health?" *Journal of Environmental and Public Health*, Hindawi Publishing Corporation, Oct. 2012, www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC3195546/.

² Zhou, Tong, et al. "Protective Effects of Lemon Juice on Alcohol-Induced Liver Injury in Mice." *BioMed Research International*, Hindawi, Apr. 2017, www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC5439254/.

³ Harrison, F.E. "A critical review of vitamin C for the prevention

of age-related cognitive decline and Alzheimer's disease." *Journal of Alzheimer's disease* : JAD., U.S. National Library of Medicine, 2012, www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/22366772.

⁴ Terpstra, A H, et al. "The hypocholesterolemic effect of lemon peels, lemon pectin, and the waste stream material of lemon peels in hybrid F1B hamsters." *European journal of nutrition*, U.S. National Library of Medicine, Feb. 2002, www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/11990004.

⁵ Kato, Yoji, et al. "Effect on Blood Pressure of Daily Lemon Ingestion and Walking." *Journal of Nutrition and Metabolism*,

Hindawi Publishing Corporation, Apr. 2014, www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC4003767/.

⁶ Fukuchi, Yoshiko, et al. "Lemon Polyphenols Suppress Diet-Induced Obesity by Up-Regulation of mRNA Levels of the Enzymes Involved in β -Oxidation in Mouse White Adipose Tissue." *Journal of Clinical Biochemistry and Nutrition*, The Society for Free Radical Research Japan, Nov. 2008, www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC2581754/.

Improve Your Child's Eating Habits

With the increase of weight problems in young children, how can you ensure your child maintains a healthy relationship with food and understands the long-term effects of a bad diet?

We hear often how childhood obesity is on the rise in developed countries, and now even creeping into developing countries as first-world processed foods become more available globally.¹ On a widespread level, children are consuming more calories from nutritionally empty, high-calorie foods and getting considerably less physical activity. There may well be trans-generational epigenetic effects in play, after several generations of processed and fast-food diets. Animal studies have documented that epigenetic changes induced by nutrition to the human genome can be passed down from generation to generation. This is becoming a health crisis, as obesity is a major contributing factor to chronic diseases such as diabetes, hypertension, cardiovascular disease, arthritis, cancer and pain management.

The good news is that there are options and behaviors that mindful parents can incorporate to guide children toward healthy eating habits.

Children love choices and decisions. It is an inherent need for them to feel like they have some control of their own destiny. When meal planning, ask your child things like "Should we have carrots or spinach as our side dish tonight?" Or ask how to prepare the vegetable; e.g., "Should we grill or steam the broccoli for lunch?" You can take it one step further by having children help prepare healthy meals. More on that later.

Educate children about healthy eating without preaching or lecturing. Having conversations about the benefits of healthy eating is good. But going to a farm and having them see healthy soil and beautiful vegetables might be more impactful. When you are cooking, let them know that you are making decisions like baking the chicken instead of frying it because it is the healthier option. When you're at the grocery store with them, show them how you choose the brown rice instead of the more-processed white rice because of its nutritional value, and that you choose organic sources, as commercially grown rice is increasingly contaminated with arsenic. Focus on articulating a quick and brief sentence so you sound kind of "matter of fact" rather than preachy.



Expose children to new experiences with healthy foods.²

As mentioned previously, take a farm tour. Or bring them to a farmers' market when there is a cooking demonstration (sometimes there are specific demonstrations geared toward little ones). Try different ethnic foods and further the experience by sampling different variations of a food in different dishes.



Make a weekend project of trying spicy Chinese eggplant, Middle Eastern baba ghanoush or Indian eggplant stew, and then make baked Italian eggplant parmesan together at home (assuming no sensitivity to "nightshade family" foods).

Experts agree that parents' behavior is the biggest influence on what children eat.³ If they see you having a healthy relationship with food and eating healthy food, children are more likely to model that behavior. In fact, science shows that what a mother eats during pregnancy can influence the taste preferences of babies after they are born. This occurs because flavors of food can be detected in the amniotic fluid that the baby swallows in utero. Furthermore, breastmilk can also transmit flavors of the mother's diet to the nursing.⁴ If your little one only eats the pasta of your pasta primavera, then talk specifically to your spouse about how delicious the vegetables are in the pasta.

¹ Gupta, N, et al. "Childhood obesity in developing countries: epidemiology, determinants, and prevention." *Endocrine reviews.*, U.S. National Library of Medicine, Feb. 2012, www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/22240243.

² Caruth, B R, et al. "Prevalence of picky eaters among infants and toddlers and their caregivers' decisions about offering a new food." *Journal of the American Dietetic Association.*, U.S. National Library of Medicine, Jan. 2004, www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/14702019/.



Other ideas include serving salad first without the rest of the meal. Many healthy parents decide to not have sweets or processed foods in the kitchen at all.

Save dessert for a special treat, perhaps just one day a week during which you all walk to the “ice cream shoppe” together (there’s a reason an ice cream “Sunday” is called that).

This shows children that healthy foods take priority and less-healthy foods are only occasionally eaten in your home. Young children especially love learning from peers. So, if you have a family friend who has a healthy eater, ask whether you can join them for a meal once in a while so that your child can see someone their age eating healthy foods.



An important reminder is to try and take some emotion out of it. Attempting to coax children with bribery may satisfy the immediate goal – they eat the healthy food – but it doesn’t solve the means for creating the long-term habit of healthy eating. Similarly, rewarding good food with bad food also sends the wrong message that unhealthy food is a prize to obtain and work for. If you’re feeling stressed about your child continually refusing healthy food, discuss these concerns with your spouse or vent with your friends. Don’t let children see you fret over their decisions. Calmly continue offering, modeling and helping involve them in healthy food habits.

³ Savage, Jennifer S., et al. “Parental Influence on Eating Behavior: Conception to Adolescence.” *The Journal of Law, Medicine & Ethics: a journal of the American Society of Law, Medicine & Ethics*, U.S. National Library of Medicine, 2007, www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC2531152/.

⁴ Mennella, J A, et al. “Prenatal and postnatal flavor learning by human infants.” *Pediatrics*, U.S. National Library of Medicine, June 2001, www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/11389286/.

Coffee and Tea: Everyday Brain Boosters

Can caffeine from coffee and tea boost brain function and help reduce the risk of diseases such as Alzheimer's and dementia in later life?

Reaching for your morning mug of coffee may feel like a necessity in order to kick-start your day. Many people joke that they cannot interact or function until they've downed that first cup.

As it turns out, coffee and tea are more beneficial than just a quick "pick me up" to your groggy, barely awake self.

Several studies conclude that there is more brain-boosting potential due to its interactions in the body and cerebrum. While we're all familiar with the fact that coffee can help us feel more alert and awake, it seems to have both short- and long-term benefits—from memory boosting to even lowering the risk of Alzheimer's and other forms of dementia.

It's not entirely agreed upon how coffee and tea work in the brain to improve brain function. One theory is that coffee impedes inflammation in the brain.¹ Other theories believe the advantages come from the antioxidant properties in both drinks. Many studies suggest that the benefits come from caffeine's ability to block adenosine from binding to neurological receptors in the brain.² Adenosine is a neurotransmitter that can slow down brain activity. Dopamine, serotonin and noradrenaline are other neurotransmitters that caffeine has an effect on to alter mood, reactivity speed and alertness.

Parkinson's disease is a degenerative disorder that affects movement in the body. It is a progressive disease that can begin with slight tremors and eventually lead to more immobilizing gross motor decline. Studies have revealed a potential link to coffee consumption and a lower risk for developing Parkinson's disease.³ However, don't necessarily start consuming unlimited liters of coffee daily! Three cups of coffee showed significant positive effects, whereas five cups or more didn't make a difference in results.⁴

The aforementioned studies attribute the positive effects of coffee to the reduced risk of developing Parkinson's disease to the caffeine in coffee.

So, theoretically, tea drinkers could also benefit. This is not the case for all the cognitive disorders, where coffee, and not simply caffeine, is the actual key.

As we age we often see the decline of our cognitive memory. Sometimes it is something as simple as forgetting where you placed that to-do list, but sometimes the memory loss can be a bit more alarming—especially for those of us who have prided ourselves on having great memories. There is some evidence that caffeine helps short-term memory in terms of reactivity time, numeric memory and word/sentence recall.⁵ Lead scientists out of the University of California and Johns Hopkins University demonstrated that participants taking a memory test did significantly better when they consumed 200 mg of caffeine than those who did not.⁶

The most severe forms of memory loss are Alzheimer's and other dementias. Some studies suggest that coffee may reduce the risk for developing Alzheimer's.⁷ Scientists believe that this has something to do with how caffeine affects the tau protein. The buildup of the tau protein in the brain is more prominent in the brain scans of patients with Alzheimer's.⁸ In fact, one longitudinal study, analyzing a large group of adults over the course of their lives, found that those who drank three to five cups of coffee daily during midlife benefited later in life with a significant reduction in diagnosed Alzheimer's/dementia.⁹ As a side note, the protective effects of tea are less evident.¹⁰

A domino effect can be seen in the example of type 2 diabetes.¹¹ Coffee specifically has been linked to the decrease in the development of diabetes. Some experts believe that as much as 70 percent of people with diabetes will develop Alzheimer's.¹² The researchers found in this and previous studies that older adults with diabetes tended to have more brain size reduction. Again, the buildup of tau proteins in the brains of adults who had diabetes was more evident. More research is needed to determine whether this cognitive decline has more to do with the constant increase of sugars or other factors that also contribute to diabetes (e.g. obesity).

In conclusion, caffeine can be a surprisingly powerful health aid in brain health. It should be stressed that all of the studies mentioned highlighted the moderate consumption of caffeine, which consistently hovered at three cups a day. Furthermore, it is important to consider what you're adding to your coffee or tea. Be sure to also consume any added sweeteners or sugar in moderation.

¹ Chiu, Gabriel S., et al. "Hypoxia/Reoxygenation Impairs Memory Formation via Adenosine-Dependent Activation of Caspase 1." *Journal of Neuroscience, Society for Neuroscience*, 3 Oct. 2012, www.jneurosci.org/content/32/40/13945.full.

² Ruxton, C. H. S. "The impact of caffeine on mood, cognitive function, performance and hydration: a review of benefits and risks." *Nutrition Bulletin*, Blackwell Publishing Ltd, 13 Feb. 2008, onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1111/j.1467-3010.2007.00665.x/full.

³ Sääksjärvi, K, et al. "Prospective study of coffee consumption and risk of Parkinson's disease." *European journal of clinical nutrition*, U.S. National Library of Medicine, July 2008, www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/17522612.

⁴ Qi, H, and S Li. "Dose-Response meta-Analysis on coffee, tea and caffeine consumption with risk of Parkinson's disease." *Geriatrics & gerontology international*, U.S. National Library of Medicine, Apr. 2014, www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/23879665.

⁵ Haskell, C F, et al. "Cognitive and mood improvements

of caffeine in habitual consumers and habitual non-Consumers of caffeine." *Psychopharmacology*, U.S. National Library of Medicine, June 2005, www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/15678363.

⁶ Borota, D, et al. "Post-Study caffeine administration enhances memory consolidation in humans." *Nature neuroscience*, U.S. National Library of Medicine, Feb. 2014, www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/24413697.

⁷ Carman, A J, et al. "Current evidence for the use of coffee and caffeine to prevent age-Related cognitive decline and Alzheimer's disease." *The journal of nutrition, health & aging*, U.S. National Library of Medicine, Apr. 2014, www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/24676319.

⁸ Laurent, C, et al. "Beneficial effects of caffeine in a transgenic model of Alzheimer's disease-like tau pathology." *Neurobiology of aging*, U.S. National Library of Medicine, Sept. 2014, www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/24780254.

⁹ Eskelinen, M H, et al. "Midlife coffee and tea drinking and the

risk of late-Life dementia: a population-Based CAIDE study." *Journal of Alzheimer's disease : JAD*, U.S. National Library of Medicine, 2009, www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/19158424.

¹⁰ Eskelinen, M H, and M Kivipelto. "Caffeine as a protective factor in dementia and Alzheimer's disease." *Journal of Alzheimer's disease : JAD*, U.S. National Library of Medicine, 2010, www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/20182054.

¹¹ Jiang, X, et al. "Coffee and caffeine intake and incidence of type 2 diabetes mellitus: a meta-Analysis of prospective studies." *European journal of nutrition*, U.S. National Library of Medicine, Feb. 2014, www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/24150256.

¹² Moran, C, et al. "Type 2 diabetes mellitus and biomarkers of neurodegeneration." *Neurology*, U.S. National Library of Medicine, 29 Sept. 2015, www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/26333802.



Healthy Life. Healthy Hair.

Food and nutrition for hair health

Healthy hair begins from the inside out. Often when we are having hair loss or our hair is brittle and weak, it is a sign of an internal problem—frequently due to nutritional deficiencies. Healthy protein in your diet is one of the primary keys to nutritional hair health.

Keratin is a protein that actually makes up the hair shaft. Keratin proteins are elongated, firm fibers that give hair its strength. Since protein is the foundation of keratin, not having enough protein in your diet can make hair brittle.

Excellent sources of protein are nuts and seeds like flax and walnuts, or healthy, fatty fish like salmon and sardines. That is because these sources contain the healthiest fatty acids of omega-3s.

Omega-3s are great for preventing hair shaft breakage and giving hair its shine and smoothness.

Vitamin E is one of the most important vitamins for healthy hair. Opt for foods like sunflower seeds, almonds, avocados, and green veggies such as broccoli and spinach, which are all great sources for vitamin E. Zinc deficiencies can lead to hair loss. To ensure you're getting plenty of this mineral, check your supplements but also eat foods like pumpkin seeds and kidney beans, or shellfish, particularly oysters, collected from clean coastal ocean waters.

Concerning ingredients in shampoo and conditioners

When you look at an ingredient list and cannot pronounce much of it, be wary. Not only are many chemicals not appropriate for healthy human use, but often they wreak havoc on the environment. Remember just because a chemical or ingredient is legally permitted to be in a product doesn't mean that it should be available. It is up to the consumer to protect himself or herself.

Some believe that ingredients to avoid are any derivatives of lauryl alcohol, myreth sulfate and parabens. As you can see from this short (but not complete) list, sulfates of certain compounds can be a primary culprit. DEA (Diethanolamine), MEA (Monoethanolamine) and TEA (Triethanolamine) are hormone disrupters that, while still legal in the United States, are prohibited in European cosmetics.

Healthy shampoo and conditioner ingredients.

Select organic ingredients from all-natural sources. Look for essential oils such as tea tree and rosemary oils. Aloe vera is both good for your hair and good for the environment, as it is highly sustainably grown and harvested. Coconut and castor oils are other healthy ingredients.

MSM (Methylsulfonylmethane) is a form of sulfur that the body can more easily process than other forms of sulfur. Sulfur is the odorous element that gives rotten eggs (eggs are high in sulfur) that bad smell. Think of when you've smelled a strand of hair burn and it gives off an unpleasant odor; that is sulfur. Eggs and burned hair aside, MSM is an important addition to healthy hair. A study analyzing three groups of mice—all received a topical concoction that included MSM in increasing amounts—showed that hair growth rate was in direct relation to the percentage of MSM in the topical solution.¹ This suggests that MSM may be useful both as an addition to the diet and also applied topically to the scalp on a regular basis, when hair loss is a problem.

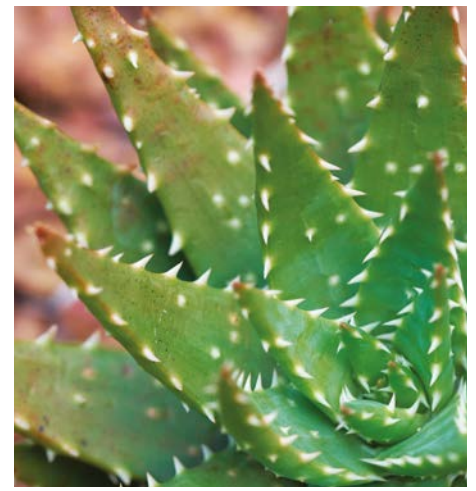
Stimulate hair growth naturally.

Aside from using all-natural products, there are everyday keys to helping your hair grow healthy and strong.

Use less heat. Discuss with your stylist whether there are haircuts for your hair type that require less maintenance. If you must use styling tools, use them sparingly and always use a natural heat protector.



¹Shanmugam, Srinivasan & Baskaran, Rengarajan & Nagayya-Sriraman, Santhoshkumar & Yong, Chul-Soon & Choi, Han-Gon & Woo, Jong-Soo & Yoo, Bong-Kyu. (2009). The Effect of Methylsulfonylmethane on Hair Growth Promotion of Magnesium Ascorbyl Phosphate for the Treatment of Alopecia. *Biomolecules & Therapeutics - BIOMOL THER.* 17. 241-248. 10.4062/biomolther.2009.17.3.241.



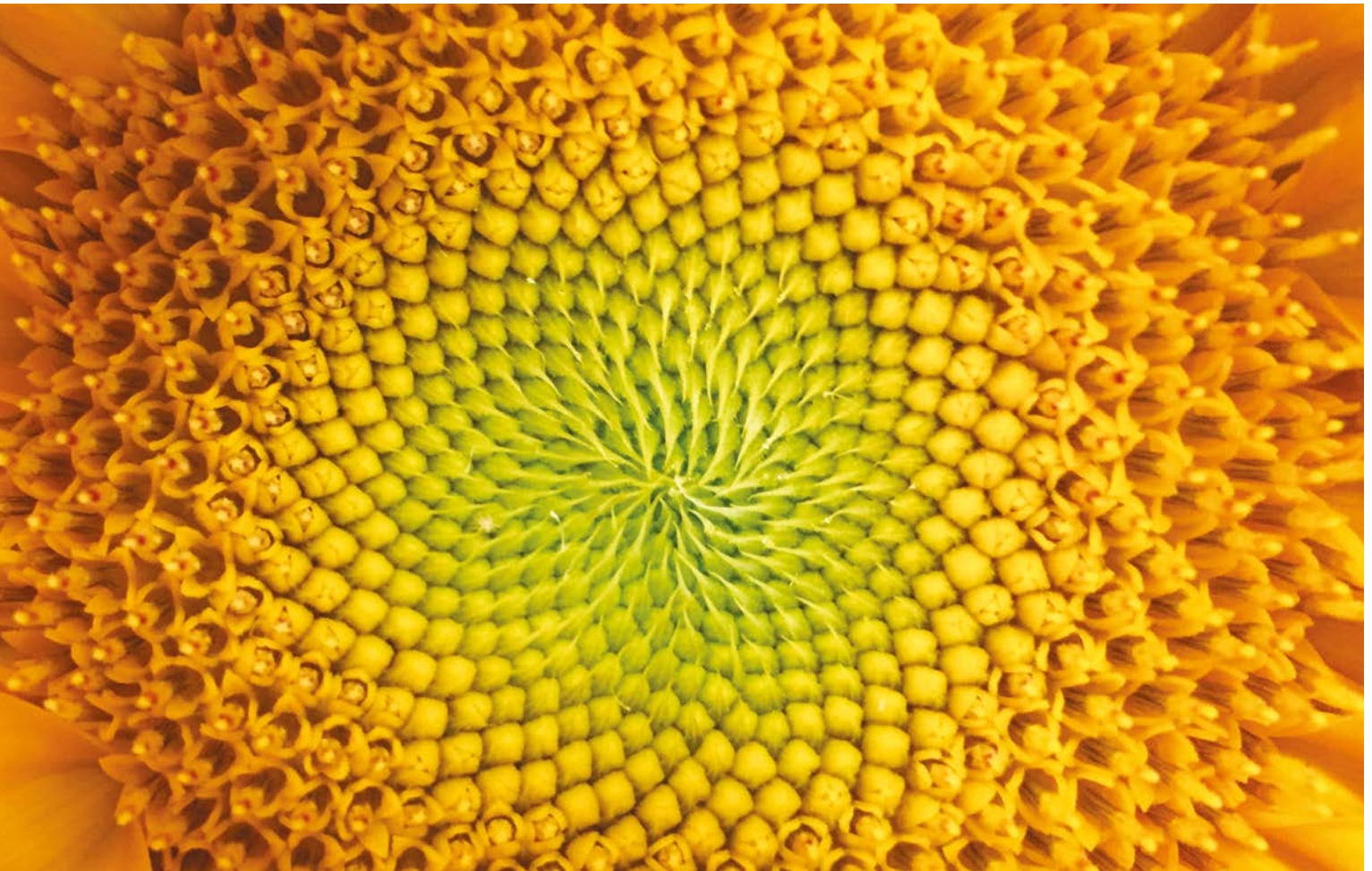
Wash your hair less often. A problem with using conventional shampoos is that they often strip hair of all of its natural oils.

Many people who switch to natural shampoos report needing to only wash their hair two or three times a week after continued use.

Increase blood flow to your scalp by doing head-down inversions (also known as touching your toes) or giving yourself a nightly scalp massage. This is easy to do while taking your morning shower and also helps you “wake up and feel energized.”

This will help stimulate the circulation to your hair follicles.

Perhaps once a week treat yourself to a longer (self) scalp massage using tea tree oil diluted in coconut oil and/or MSM lotion. Another option is to exfoliate your scalp with this treatment using natural sugars (try coconut sugar) or Epsom salt (also a source for topical magnesium).



Natural Ways Men Can Improve Fertility

Issues of fertility are often discussed in a heavily female-focused way, but male infertility is a major contributing factor when couples are having difficulty getting pregnant.

In fact, infertility is estimated to affect up to 7 percent of all men. Furthermore, infertility in couples is attributed to the male side of the equation at a rate of 40 to 50 percent.¹ Most cases for male subfertility lie in the reproduction, quality, movement and hardiness of the sperm. However, there are some natural ways to improve male fertility.

Exercise is not only good for your heart and brain health, but also for overall sperm quality.

A study analyzing the effects of regular, moderate cardiovascular activity (like jogging) on sperm quality showed superior results for some men compared with what was realized by their more sedentary study-based male counterparts.²

The group who performed the moderate intensity workouts showed 22 percent more sperm cells compared with the sedentary control group. Additionally, they saw their sperm volume increase by 8 percent, motility (movement or speed) increase by 12 percent, and shape and structure (morphology) improve by 17 percent.

Men attempting to improve their fertility should avoid certain medications. Always speak with your health care provider before beginning or stopping any medications. But certain medication classes and types are associated with lower sperm count or decreased sperm motility (speed and movement). Some of these medications include antibiotics, anti-inflammatories, antipsychotics, corticosteroids, certain steroids and methadone.

Of course, the killer of all things healthy—stress—is also linked to lower fertility rates in men. Stress is a deterrent to reproductive health in men. Similarly to women, stress forces the body to focus on the necessities of survival as opposed to the “extras” like procreation.

Once again, vitamin D is not only essential to immune system function, but it is also vital to better male fertility and sperm quality. It appears it also contributes to sperm health. In fact, men with low levels of vitamin D in their bloodstream had lower rates of pregnancy with their partners.³

Not surprisingly, antioxidants are a key tool in boosting male fertility. An evidence-based review of antioxidant supplementation and semen quality concluded that antioxidants improve at least one to two semen quality indicators (such as amount, motility, replication, structural health, etc.).⁴



Certain essential fatty acids appear to also have an effect that benefits sperm quality.⁵ Supplementing with omega-3 fatty acids has been shown to benefit the size, shape, speed and amount of sperm.

Zinc is a mineral that is linked to spermatogenesis and contributes to sperm motility.⁶ While it is not fully understood what zinc's exact role in the formation of sperm in the testes may be, it has been hypothesized that zinc's antioxidative properties contribute to improved sperm count, motility or longevity (depending on the study).

Nutritional sources of zinc include turkey, pumpkin seeds, and shellfish such as oysters, lobster and mussels.

¹ Hirsh, Anthony. "Male Subfertility." *BMJ*: British Medical Journal, Sept. 2003, <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC196399/>.

² Hajizadeh, B, et al. "The effects of three different exercise modalities on markers of male reproduction in healthy subjects: a randomized controlled trial." *Reproduction* (Cambridge, England), U.S. National Library of Medicine, Feb. 2017, www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/27920258.

³ Tartagni, Massimo, et al. "Males with low serum levels of vitamin D have lower pregnancy rates when ovulation induction and timed intercourse are used as a treatment for infertile couples: results from a pilot study." *Reproductive Biology and Endocrinology*: RB&E, BioMed Central, Nov. 2015, www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC4654914/.

⁴ Ahmadi, Sedigheh, et al. "Antioxidant supplements and semen parameters: An evidence based review." *International Journal of Reproductive Biomedicine, Research and Clinical Center for Infertility*, Dec. 2016, www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC5203687/.

⁵ Safarinejad, Mohammad Reza, and Shiva Safarinejad. "The roles of omega-3 and omega-6 fatty acids in idiopathic male infertility." *Asian Journal of Andrology*, Nature Publishing Group, July 2012, www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC3720081/.

⁶ Yamaguchi, Sonoko, et al. "Zinc is an essential trace element for spermatogenesis." *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences of the United States of America*, National Academy of Sciences, 30 June 2009, www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC2705534/.



Asparagus is packed with antioxidants and in Ayurvedic medicine is viewed to help with sexual dysfunction.

At least one study backed those beliefs up with scientific evidence, showing that it helped with achieving and maintaining an erection.⁷ Part of asparagus's power is that it, along with citrus fruits, mangos and broccoli, contains vitamin C, which has been shown to increase sperm health.⁸ Remembering vitamin C's antioxidative qualities could be a reason for boosting male fertility.



Analyzing the ancient medicinal traditions from India to China, we also see insight in Chinese medicine. The use of ginseng as an aphrodisiac is popular in traditional Chinese medicine. Science also highlights the success of ginseng in not only male sexual function, but also in the quality and amount of sperm production.⁹

⁷ Bansode, F W, et al. "Dose-dependent effects of *Asparagus adscendens* root (AARR) extract on the anabolic, reproductive, and sexual behavioral activity in rats." *Pharmaceutical biology*, U.S. National Library of Medicine, Feb. 2015, www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/24963947.

⁸ Akmal, M, et al. "Improvement in human semen quality after oral supplementation of vitamin C." *Journal of medicinal food*, U.S. National Library of Medicine, 2006, www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/17004914.

⁹ Leung, Kar Wah, and Alice ST Wong. "Ginseng and male reproductive function." *Spermatogenesis*, Landes Bioscience, 1 July 2013, www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC3861174/.

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Food supplements should not be used as a substitute for a varied diet.

Ask the Expert

How important is a good night of sleep?

In a word, extremely. Sleep is vital for staying happy and healthy. Just one night of poor sleep is enough to impair your working memory, making it harder to perform at work and school. Several consecutive nights of bad sleep are sure to leave you feeling cranky and irritable, not to mention being tired and sluggish. Chronic sleep loss has been associated with a wide range of more serious health issues, including weight gain, diabetes and depression.

If it feels like it's getting harder and harder to get to bed early enough for a full night of sleep, you're not alone.

Many people struggle to get enough sleep in today's modern world. Making an effort to practice good sleep habits can have a major impact on your health and mood. To help ensure a good night of sleep, limit



stimulating activities in the evening; remove technology from the bedroom; turn off cell phones at night; and sleep in a cool, dark room.

How does stress affect my health?

Believe it or not, small amounts of stress can actually be good for your health. Stress is a situation that motivates us to take action. Small amounts of stress are what prompt us to do homework in school and complete work projects on time. It's when stress levels are too high for too long that our health is negatively affected. From relatively benign issues such as headaches and heartburn to more serious problems such as increased blood pressure and cellular damage, stress can negatively impact our bodies in a variety of ways. Fortunately, there are plenty of ways to handle negative stress that you can do practically anywhere. Listening to calming music during your commute, meditating in the evening, visiting the gym on your lunch break, confiding in a friend over dinner—stress-fighting techniques are endless.

Is fat healthy or unhealthy?

The great fat debate is over. The new consensus is that fat is not the enemy. Despite decades of being told to avoid fat at all costs, many people are finding they are actually healthier when they eat more healthy fats, especially unsaturated and plant-based fats from organic sources. These are easy to spot, as they are liquid at room temperature. Think of olive oil, a major component of the Mediterranean diet, a health-promoting fat that should not be avoided. Fats like olive oil supply energy, lower bad cholesterol, raise good cholesterol and protect many vital parts of the anatomy. Healthier still are omega-3 fatty acids. Found primarily in fresh, cold water fish as well as certain algae (which are the source of these fatty acids in fish that eat them), omega-3 fatty acids are widely known these days for their brain- and heart-boosting properties. Even fats we think of as unhealthy are not necessarily as bad as we once thought. As long as your fat intake corresponds to your energy use, fat can (and should) be a part of your healthy diet.



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