# Stay Health Fitness & Wellness Weekly

Understanding the scientific benefits of various breathing techniques

# STOP SUGAR CRAVINGS





# INSIDE THIS ISSUE

Issue: FEB 14 2025

- (3) Eat in Moderation: What Does It Really Mean?
- (4) Trending e-News-
- (5) How To Stop Sugar Cravings-
- (12) Bad Sleep VS Good Sleep-
- (16) Muscle Twitches & Spasms-
- (21) Sneaky Causes of Back Pain-
- (24) Understanding the scientific benefits of various breathing techniques-
- (27) Natural Ways to Ensure You Get Enough Vitamins and Minerals

# VISIT US ONLINE FOR MORE HEALTH, FITNESS & WELLNESS

StayHealthyWeekly.News

Health, Fitness, & Wellness Disclaimer-The information in Stay Healthy Weekly Magazine is not intended to replace the advice of healthcare professionals. Always consult with your physician or qualified healthcare provider before making any changes to your diet, exercise routine, or lifestyle, or if you have any questions regarding a medical condition.

CONTACT US
Stay Healthy Weekly Magazine
Visit us @ www.StayHealthyWeekly.News
Email: info@stayhealthyweekly.News
Copyright 2025 All right Reserved



### PUBLISHERS Thoughts

# EAT IN MODERATION: WHAT DOES IT REALLY MEAN?

By Jaye Kenzie

We're often told to 'eat in moderation,' but what's that really mean? Here's one dietitian's take, along with 3 simple steps:

### What is 'Eating in Moderation'?

Even among dietitians, there isn't a universally clear definition of 'eating in moderation,' but the concept itself is quite simple. Moderation means the "avoidance of excess or extremes." When it comes to eating, this translates to not overindulging. Most people associate it with not consuming too many traditionally unhealthy foods like cakes and cookies. However, it also involves not going overboard with healthy foods like fruits and vegetables. The phrase often refers to portion size, meaning not eating more than your body needs.

Determining what "moderation" means can be tricky. Is it once a week? Every two weeks? Three times a month? A couple of times per year? The truth is, this varies from person to person. Everyone has different dietary patterns and preferences, so do what works best for you.

# 3 BENEFITS OF EATING IN MODERATION

### 1. \*\*Managing Your Weight\*\*

A common misconception about weight maintenance and weight loss is that you need to restrict your food intake. This is not the case. People often struggle with weight issues due to a lack of balance in their diet, or in other words, not eating in moderation. During weight loss, it's recommended to increase the intake of nutritious foods like fruits and vegetables



and decrease highly processed snacks and desserts. This doesn't mean you can't enjoy junk food at all. You can still reach and maintain your goals as long as you don't consume these items excessively.

### 2. \*\*Relearning Your Body\*\*

Overeating can occur for many reasons, from stress to seeking comfort from food. Regardless of the reason, overeating can disrupt your ability to recognize your body's hunger and fullness cues. By eating in moderation, you can work with your body to relearn and listen **to these signals.** 

### 3. \*\*Reducing Chronic Disease Risk\*\*

We know that overeating fried foods and those high in added fats and sugars isn't good for reducing the risk of conditions like diabetes and high blood pressure. However, consuming these foods occasionally, alongside a diet full of healthy options, will keep your risk low.

# Trending News Health & Wellness





### The Psychology of Fashion:

How Your Style Reflects Your Personality & Mood Ever wondered what your wardrobe says about you? From the bold prints of a statement outfit to the soothing shades of your loungewear, every piece of clothing you pick reflects a part of who you are. Welcome to the fascinating world of fashion [...]

### Is Humanity Really Doomed, or Are Things Better than People Think?

Is it just me, or have other people also been hearing a similar message with



greater frequency lately? "The world is only

# Can Kidney Stones Treatment Be Done Without Surgery?

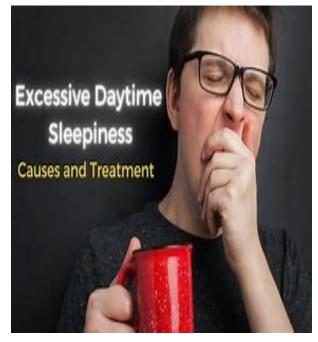
Kidney stones are a common yet painful condition that affects many individuals worldwide. The usual treatment for kidney stones often involves surgery, but did you [...]





## The Best Types of Dental Veneers: Which One's Right for You?

Dental veneers have become a popular solution for achieving a flawless smile. Whether you have stained, chipped, or misaligned teeth, veneers offer a long-lasting and natural-looking fix. Dental Veneers Cost Dubai, with several types available, choosing the right one can feel overwhelming. This guide will help you understand the different types of dental veneers and [...]



Dr. Somers explains the impact of excessive daytime sleepiness on heart health[...]

VISIT US ONLINE FOR MORE HEALTH, FITNESS & WELLNESS



### HOW TO YOUR CURB SUGAR CRAVINGS

Sugar is pretty amazing. It's the purest form of energy available to us and — unlike fats and proteins — can actually cross the blood-brain barrier. Sugar quite literally *feeds* your brain. And it tastes great, too!

### We need sugar to live. But we don't need added sugar.

But for some of us, it *feels* like we need sugar. Desperately. In fact, researchers have found that sugar lowers both opioid and dopamine receptor availability in our brains. Put simply, sugar activates the reward and pleasure centers of our brains the same way addictive substances do.

It's no wonder we consume so much of the stuff. According to the American Heart Association, the average American adult eats somewhere between 22 and 30 teaspoons worth of added sugar in a day. Women and children should only be eating about 6 teaspoons (25 grams) of sugar a day; men's intake should only be slightly higher, at 9 teaspoons (36 grams). Nine teaspoons of sugar may sound like a lot (and it is), but it's also what you'll drink in an average 12-ounce can of soda.

Reducing your sugar intake can be a positive step toward improving your overall health. It can help with digestive issues like irritable bowel and acid reflux, but that's not all. Eating less sugar can also improve anxiety and stress, reduce fatigue, ease joint pain, and cut down on headaches

and migraines. According to the American Heart Association, 8 out of 10 adults are trying to reduce the amount of sugar they eat, but it's not easy. For people who've become chemically dependent on sugar, it's even harder.

We spoke to registered dietitian Beth Czerwony, RD, LD, about what sugar addiction is — and what to do if you feel like your sugar cravings are out of control.

### What is sugar addiction?

Plenty of people have a sweet tooth, so how do you know if you're addicted to sugar? Is there an invisible threshold that you cross between cookie number one and cookie number two?

You can't be diagnosed with a sugar addiction, at least not yet. But self-reflection and an honest conversation with a healthcare provider is the best way to start to get a handle on the issue.

According to Czerwony, the key features of sugar addiction are volume, frequency and feelings.

### Ask yourself these questions:

- Do you feel like you don't have control over how much sugar you eat?
- Do you think about sugar all day?
- Are you eating sugar throughout the day, or do you feel that you're eating more sugar than you should?

It's even *more* likely if you're attempting to get or stay sober in other areas of your life. "People that have struggled with an addiction to alcohol, for example, will often turn to sweets to replace it," Czerwony notes. "So, sugar addiction really is a chemical imbalance."

Unaddressed, Czerwony says the long-term consequences can include elevated risks of:

Type 2 diabetes.

Overweight or obesity.

Fatty liver disease.

Chronic Inflammation.

Heart disease.

Stroke.

Pancreatitis.

Unlike many other substance use disorders, your body *needs* sugar. It just doesn't need *added* sugars. That makes managing your sugar dependence a bit tricky — abstaining from the stuff is impossible.

### Steps to take to break a sugar addiction

When it comes to breaking a sugar addiction, there's no quick fix. You're making a significant lifestyle change, and it will take time and effort. We've compiled a list of the mental, physical and dietary changes that will help you fend off sugar cravings and help you manage your eating habits.

Focus on eating a balanced diet Sometimes, the best advice is also the most obvious.

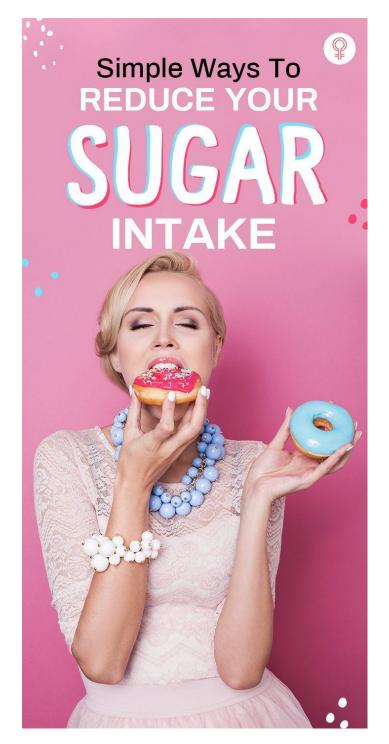
"If you're getting in the recommended five servings of fruits and vegetables a day, protein and high-fiber foods, it will help stabilize your blood sugar," Czerwony says.

As you build a balanced diet, be aware that there are added sugars lurking in most highly processed foods. This means that you may be eating a lot more sugar than you realize.

### Don't skip meals

Whether it's a side effect of a busy life or a conscious choice, skipping meals opens the door to sugar cravings.

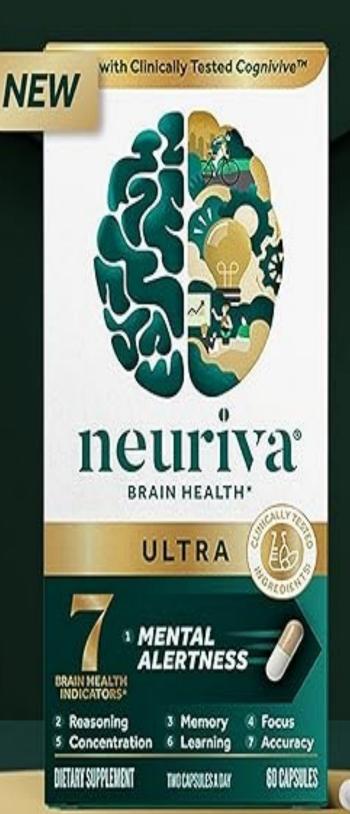
It happens to all of us from time to time. "If you don't eat all day because you're busy or you're not hungry, you'll



be way past hungry by the time you get home. You'll end up having one big meal right before bed or stopping at a drive-thru."

Eating nourishing food consistently throughout the day prevents you from getting too hungry, which enables you to make better food choices.

"It's tough," Czerwony concedes, "but nowadays, we have all kinds of meal replacement shakes and bars, convenience cheese sticks and yogurts — those types of things." There are also lots of fast food alternatives now, like meal





# NOTICEABLE MENTAL ALERTNESS FROM 1 SERVING

with Cognivive TM\*\*

**Learn More** 

prep kits and healthy heat-and-eat subscription services.

### Plan and prep

Improvising tends not to work out very well for those of us with a raging sweet tooth, whether we're at the grocery store or standing in front of the fridge.

"Not everybody's a home chef," Czerwony says, "and that's OK. But it's important to invest the time to plan a grocery list, buy meal prep-friendly foods and healthy snacks and know what you're going to have each day of the week — it's about getting into that pattern."

### Make time for movement

Stress hormones play a big role in sugar cravings. Exercise is a proven stress reducer and a great way to calm sweet cravings.

"Exercise will help decrease your ghrelin levels. It can also help you to be more tired, get to sleep and stay asleep a little bit longer, which also reduces cravings," Czerwony explains.

Exercise doesn't have to be vigorous to be helpful, either.

"Everybody's level of athleticism and pain tolerance is different," Czerwony notes. "I never tell people they have to hop on the treadmill. If you have fibromyalgia, for example, and can't run, let's do some seated exercises, or let's go for a light walk. Whatever you're able to do.

We have two hormones in our stomach: leptin and ghrelin. Leptin signals to our brain that we're full. Ghrelin, on the other hand, sends the message that we're hungry.

"Your ghrelin levels increase when you don't have good sleep," Czerwony explains. "So, you find yourself waking up and saying 'I want that donut' instead of having a balanced breakfast."

It's harder to make good choices when you're tired, and even harder to pass up the short-term energy boost sugary foods offer. Being well-rested will reduce your sugar cravings and — when they do happen — make them easier to ignore.

### **Drink Lots of water**

Sometimes, we think we're hungry ... and really, we're just thirsty.

Czerwony emphasizes that hydration is especially im-



portant when you're trying to kick a sugar habit. "If we have concentrated sugar in our bloodstreams," she explains, "you can dilute that down with the water." That will help reduce blood sugar peaks and valleys, which, in turn, helps keep cravings managed.

### Journal your food intake

Do you grab a candy every time you walk past your coworker's candy bowl? Or help yourself to the leftover bits of toaster pastry that your kid leaves in the morning? Do you *always* order a margarita at that one great hole-in-thewall restaurant?

It's really easy to eat (or overeat) sweets without realizing it — especially, Czerwony notes, if you're grazing or mindlessly snacking.

You might want to consider food journaling. "We can manage what we monitor," Czerwony states. "If we don't realize what we're doing, we can't manage it."

If you have a history of anorexia or bulimia, food journaling might be a trigger. If that's the case for you, either skip this tip or try adjusting your approach. Instead of noting the amount of food eaten and calories consumed, for example, try checking off a box every time you eat a serving of vegetables or drink 8 ounces of water.

Don't eliminate food groups that aren't harming you If you peruse the World Wide Web, you'll see plenty of people claiming that you'll feel so much better if you just stop eating. Czerwony isn't convinced.

"Certainly, if you have a lactose intolerance or an allergy, consider eliminating dairy. If you have a gluten intolerance or celiac disease, consider eliminating gluten. But don't cut

out food groups that aren't harming you," she says. "If you do, you'll have to really focus then on getting the calcium, the magnesium and the vitamin D that you're lacking as a result. That doesn't serve us well and sets us up for failure."

### Do you need to 'detox' from sugar?



Oh, the internet. It has so much information and advice to offer — and so much of it is contradictory. The value of sugar detoxing is one of those topics.

Let's start by defining our terms. A sugar detox involves cutting all added sugars from your diet for a set period of time, from as little as a week to as long as a month. The premise is that, after an initial period of "withdrawal," you'll no longer crave sweets the way you do now.

The approach works for some (lucky) people, but it's not the best call for most of us. Detoxing makes sense if you have an addiction to a dangerous substance, but we consume sugar every day in one form or another, so you're never *truly* cutting it out of your diet. You're just dramatically reducing your intake.

"I'm not a fan of going 'cold turkey," Czerwony cautions. "I think that it's abrupt. And that anything that's too rapid is not going to work long term.

"If you do a sugar detox, you could get hangry. You could get upset. And the first thing you're going to do is reach for something sweet to make yourself feel better. You're more likely to stick with a new behavior if you're making smart choices and small, reasonable behavioral changes over time."

According to Czerwony, sugar detoxing isn't helpful for most folks. "Some people are able to rip the Band-Aid™ off and move on," she says, "but for the majority of people, that's just not a healthy way to look at it. You'll relapse into you're old behaviors, feel ashamed that you couldn't quit sugar and then you're going to try again. You're setting yourself up for a bad cycle."

### Talk to a doctor

If you feel like your sweet tooth is taking over your life, Czerwony advises that enlisting the support of your primary care doctor or a healthcare provider is an important step to take.

"The first line of defense is having an open and honest conversation with your healthcare provider," she says. "That way you really can get ahold of the issue."

That conversation will probably lead to the provider ordering some lab work.

"They really need to see what you're working with," she continues. "Do you have elevated blood sugar? Do you have elevated lipids? If you do, that needs to be addressed and taken care of, which may require prescription medication."

Czerwony also notes that there are anti-obesity medications on the market that help decrease appetite and cravings for sweets. Not all providers are willing to prescribe those medications, but it's a conversation worth having.

"If your primary care doctor isn't comfortable addressing this issue, or if you feel that you more specific care, see a dietitian."

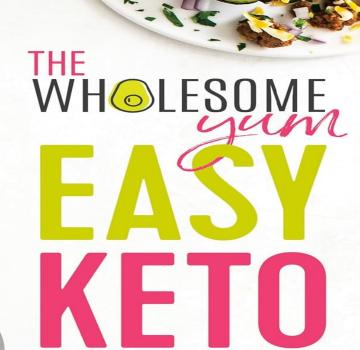
### Sweet relief

If your feel like your sweet tooth is becoming a problem, physically or mentally, you're not alone — and it's *not* all in your head. For some of us, a few lifestyle changes will be enough to break our sugar addiction. Others will need medical intervention to overcome the chemical reactions fueling the craving. Whatever your situation, being kind to yourself and open with your healthcare provider can only help. *Story by* Lara Gibbs-Stay Healthy Research

### MAYA KRAMPF



SIMPLE LOW CARB
RECIPES.
10 INGREDIENTS
OR LESS.

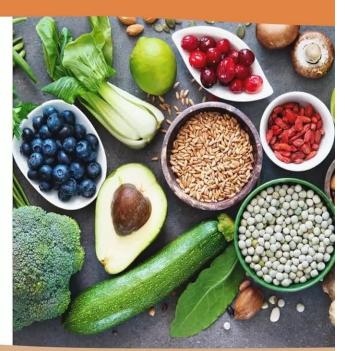


COOKBOOK

### **ORDER NOW**

### What's inside?

This USA Today bestseller by Maya Krampf features 100 easy, delicious low carb recipes with 10 ingredients or less, making the ketogenic diet enjoyable and family-friendly.



### Citrus & Vetiver

Citrus & Vetiver is a sublime combination of energizing scents that are guaranteed to pick you up each day.

We blend citrus and vetiver (a type of grass, similar to lemongrass) essential oils to give this scent its refreshing, uplifting smell that everyone loves.



Click Here To

### LEARN MORE

# Skin & body care with nothing to hide.

Safe, EWG-rated ingredients & proven-to-work formulas

These are not just products.

They're ingredients & sourcing practices we put on our bodies each & every day, inside packaging with real power to help us all take care of ourselves, each other, and our one & only planet.







Coconut Oil

Helps condition skin, and gives our deodorants a smooth glide without feeling greasy.



Tapioca Starch

A natural starch derived from the root of the cassava plant.



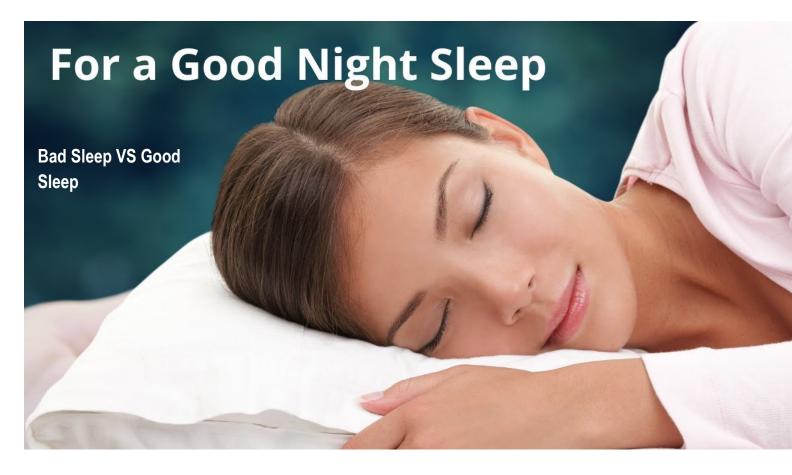
Dead Sea Minerals

Dead Sea natural salts are rich
in magnesium and help fight
odor causing bacteria.



No artificial fragrance here
– we use 100% natural oils for
a delightful scent experience.

Essential Oils



Written by Olivera Jancikin, MD

Did you know that your sleep hygiene plays a pivotal role in the quality of sleep you get, influencing your daily performance and overall health? Sleep hygiene is a term that refers to daily habits affecting your sleep. Examples of good sleep hygiene include going to bed and waking up at the same time each day and getting around eight hours of sleep.

But what are the bad sleep habits that are preventing us from doing this? Let's break them down in detail to see what you can do today to improve your sleep hygiene.

### **Bad Habits**

Bad sleep habits are detrimental because they extend beyond just your sleep. Harvard **research** shows that we could develop short-term and long-term issues when we deprive ourselves of sufficient rest. Memory impairment, relationship stress, and poor alertness are just a few of the short-term risks.

Operating on minimal sleep could also lead to long-term effects like heart disease, diabetes, obesity, depression, and stroke. Lack of rest can even affect your appearance, leading to premature wrinkles and dark circles under your eyes. Further, cortisol increases with more stress, which is connected with <a href="minimal">minimal</a> rest, and cortisol breaks down collagen, keeping our skin smooth.

If you've been sleeping badly lately, it could be due to poor sleep hygiene. Changing even one of these bad habits can make

a significant difference in how well you sleep and your overall well-being.

### Phone in Bed

Our phones emit blue light, which is shown

to <u>suppress melatonin</u>, the hormone that makes us sleep. By scrolling through Instagram right before it's time to turn out the lights, you may not only be hindering your melatonin production, but you're engaging your brain at a time when it should be relaxed and winding down.

Blue light exposure affects our health in many ways, damaging retinal cells, causing vision problems, and even interrupting the cardiac system, putting you at a greater risk of developing type 2 diabetes, sleep disorders, and cardiovascular diseases. However, this doesn't only come from our smartphones but also TVs, gaming systems, and tablets.

### Late-Night Snacking and Heavy Meals

Eating is essential for our health, but if you've ever eaten a big meal and then tried to exercise immediately afterward, you can understand how timing can affect our bodies. To get quality rest, we want to be relaxed when we go to bed, but if our digestive system is busy metabolizing our food, this hinders that ability.

The problem with late-night snacking, particularly consuming heavy meals, is that our metabolism slows down by about <u>15</u> <u>percent</u><sup>[5]</sup> as we sleep, so it may take longer to digest this food. As a result, you could wake up nauseous and bloated. Addition-

ally, unhealthy foods and heavy dishes could trigger nighttime heartburn, acid reflux, or indigestion, which makes it more difficult to rest comfortably.

Also, according to Clevland Clinic, our insulin resistance is high at night, so the calories you had right before bed are likely to be stored as fat. If you were to eat the same food in the morning instead, your body would probably burn those calories throughout the day.

However, that doesn't mean you have to go to bed hungry either. Some healthy late-night snacks, like fruits, smoked salmon, avocado, almonds, green smoothies, and greek yogurt, can be good to eat before bed.

### Falling Asleep to TV or Sound Machine

Using a crutch of any sort to go to sleep may be helpful in the short term, but needing external help regularly could cause issues later when those crutches aren't available. Becoming dependent on white noise before bed is relatively harmless. However, it's a dependency, which means that, after a while, you may not be able to fall asleep without it. This may not sound bad, but imagine being somewhere where this is unavailable to you. You'd likely have trouble falling asleep.

### Going to Bed Without Unwinding

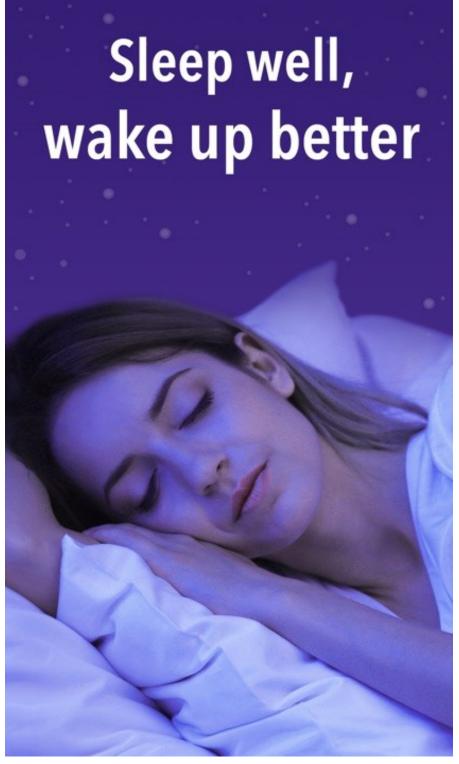
Many individuals keep a busy schedule, competing to pack in as many activities as possible, but this can be detrimental to our health. We need time to mentally and physically unwind before bed; otherwise, falling asleep after we've had a non-stop day can be challenging. If you have too many things going on during the day, you may struggle to make your brain stop thinking about these priorities when it's time to sleep. In other words, if you go to bed right after you wrap up your busy day, your brain will keep going.

Your brain will likely continue analyzing that meeting, school project, grocery list, or whatever else you had going on that day. This is why it's important to give yourself at least an hour to unwind, relax, and get into sleep mode.

Further, research has shown that our brains develop heightened problem-solving abilities and more profound creativity when we allow them time to shut off and be bored from time to time.

### Drinking Alcohol Close to Bedtime

Many people may choose to have a nightcap at the end of the day or when they have trouble falling asleep. According to Alcohol Research and Health, sleep problems are more com- For this reason, it's crucial to keep your room quiet, dark, and at



mon among alcoholics, so it's unlikely a few glasses would make you sleep better. Initially, alcohol may help you fall asleep faster, but the sleep you'd get is far from quality. Drinking before bed reduces REM sleep, which is important for brain development, emotional processing, and memory. In addition, alcohol could make mornings unpleasant, as you may have a headache or feel nauseous when you wake up.

### Poor Sleep Environment

Sleeping in a poor environment can make it difficult to have a good night's sleep, as it can contribute to stress and discomfort. a recommended 60 to 67 degrees Fahrenheit. This range might not be for everyone, so find a cool temperature that works for you.

In addition, an <u>ideal sleep environment</u> also has cool colors, lavender or other calming scents, and comfortable bedding. Poor sleep environment includes clutter, an uncomfortable mattress and bedding, reminders of work, and electronics that emit light and/or sound.

In order to avoid that, take a look at our list of <u>most comfortable</u> <u>mattresses</u>.

### Having Stressful Conversations Before Bed

Whether in-person, online, or on the phone, stressful conversations before bed can make it difficult to fall asleep, even when you're tired. Stress and sleep don't go well together because the frustration and anxious feelings you develop can get your mind racing, which is the opposite of what you need in order to fall asleep. Furthermore, even if you fall asleep, you're unlikely to have quality rest, which can make you wake up in a bad mood. For this reason, it's best to avoid potentially stressful conversations right before bed.

### Consuming Stressful Media At Bedtime

As with stressful conversations, any type of media that causes you agitation or anxiety is not conducive to quality sleep. This can include social media, news, television, movies, and books. For example, that horror movie you watched or a certain news article could leave you feeling frustrated or scared, hindering your ability to rest easily. Rather than consuming stressful media just before bedtime, opt for things that bring you joy and relaxation, such as a favorite travel book or soothing music.

### Exercising Too Close to Bedtime

Research [9] suggests you can exercise before bedtime but only if the exercise isn't too vigorous. In other words, light stretching and yoga are okay to do and may even help you fall asleep. However, more intense exercises should be completed at least an hour before you go to sleep because they could make it harder to doze off and hinder your sleep quality.

### Having Irregular Sleep and Wake Times

Irregular sleep schedules can impact your ability to get enough hours of shuteye each night, making it harder to wake up refreshed in the morning. For instance, sleeping in late one day could result in insomnia later that night. Furthermore, research has found that <u>inconsistent sleep patterns</u> increase a person's risk of obesity, diabetes, high cholesterol, and high blood pressure.

For this reason, it's important to go to bed and wake up at the same each day, even when you don't have work or school, as this helps keep your body's internal clock in check.

Learn More: How One Night of Poor Sleep Affects Our Health

### Baby Sleep Habits to Avoid

As with adults, it's important to avoid certain habits that can negatively impact a baby's sleep. When looking to create better sleep habits for you and your child, it's wise to avoid a few practices to encourage independent sleep routines.

- Children who need to be held constantly may make life more of a challenge for both of you. Try to encourage your little one to fall asleep without the comfort of your warm embrace.
- Avoid breastfeeding directly before bed, so they don't grow reliant.
- Stay away from giving your little one a bottle right before hed
- Avoid driving them in their car seat to go to bed. While a
  great trick sometimes, you likely don't want your children to
  demand you drive them around in the car to go to sleep.
- Avoid rocking your child to sleep daily, even though this is nice on occasion and when necessary.

These habits are perfectly reasonable and may be necessary at times, but only up to a point. By the age of six months, your child should ideally not be reliant on any of these routines. If these habits begin to encroach significantly on your own sleep needs, it may be time to reevaluate your habits.

### Conclusion

Bad sleep habits affect your life by making it difficult to fall asleep and get quality rest. Luckily, avoiding these poor sleep practices is fairly easy to do on your own, and though some may take more time to get used to than others, making these changes can result in better rest and an overall improvement in your well-being. Through better rest, you should see positive changes to your physical, emotional, and cognitive health.







### Leading Causes Of Muscle Twitches And Spasms

Muscle twitches and spasms affect many individuals. The positive about this, of course, is that most muscle twitches are common and normal. However, some muscle twitches and spasms are signs of a serious disorder or emergency medical condition. A wide variety of conditions can be causing an eyelid that will not stop twitching or a calf muscle that aches so badly. There are certain individuals who experience intense foot cramping that feels as if their bones will break. Whether twitches and spasms are being caused by something as innocuous as stress or something more neurological, there is hope for treatment.

Stress and anxiety are a common cause of muscle spasms and twitching. Simply put, stress often leads to muscle tension, which puts a strain on the muscles and causes them to spasm. These twitches may be daily or only on certain stressful occasions. A great way to combat stress is to practice meditation and be mindful of the tension in one's body. It is easy to tense up the muscles without realizing it, including facial muscles and shoulders. Anxiety also leads to extra electrical impulses in the brain, which sends it down to the nerves and causes shaking and twitches. The good news is that this is one of the most common causes of this condition; many suffer from it and it can be easily treated with therapy, medications, meditation, and muscle-relaxant techniques.

### Caffeine

Caffeine is a famous cause of muscle conditions. Caffeine is a stimulant, not just a byproduct of many individual's favorite

drinks and food, and can cause side effects. It is, of course, in coffee and tea but also in chocolate, energy drinks, soft drinks, and some medications. The side effects of caffeine include muscle spasms, twitching, nervousness, headaches, abnormal heartbeat, and restlessness. It also has diuretic symptoms, which means it leads to frequent urination. Caffeine can also cause eye twitches. So how much is too much caffeine? Generally, the maximum amounts are four hundred milligrams per day for a healthy adult, two hundred milligrams for pregnant women, and one hundred milligrams for adolescents. A twelve-ounce serving of coffee has 260 milligrams and twelve ounces of soda has thirty to seventy milligrams. It is recommended for an individual to wean off of caffeine slowly, however, as quitting cold turkey can cause drowsiness, headaches, and nausea.

### **Low Potassium**

Low potassium is also known as hypokalemia. Potassium is a mineral the body needs to work properly. It helps the muscles to move, gives cells nutrients, and aids nerves in sending signals. Potassium also protects blood pressure from rising too much. Muscle cramping is just one symptom of hypokalemia; others include weakness, fatigue, and heart arrhythmias. Severe cases of low potassium can lead to paralysis and death. This is caused by a wide variety of conditions such as vomiting, sweating too much, consuming too much alcohol, certain medications, folic acid deficiency, diabetic ketoacidosis, poor kidney or adrenal gland function, and conditions such as Cushing's syndrome.

### **Restless Leg Syndrome**

Restless leg syndrome is a disorder of the nervous system that causes a severe urge to move the legs. It usually prevents proper sleeping so it is also considered to be a sleeping disorder. This condition can range from mild to intolerable, and symptoms include a strange itching or tingling or crawling sensations inside the legs and perhaps also in the arms. Those with restless leg syndrome feel restlessness and a strong urge to move the limbs to get rid of these sensations. They may also pace on the floor, rub the legs, or toss and turn in bed. Symptoms can come and go but are generally worse in the evenings and at nighttime

### **Multiple Sclerosis**

Multiple sclerosis is a serious neurological disease. It is essentially a disorder of the central nervous system in which the flow of information within the brain and between the brain and body is disrupted. Due to this, the symptoms list is extremely lengthy. Symptoms differ from patient to patient . Common symptoms are numbness or weakness in one or more limbs, typically on one side of the body at a time, or in the legs

and bottom. Vision problems are common and include partial or complete loss of vision, again usually in one eye at a time. The list also includes prolonged double vision, slurred speech, fatigue, tremor or lack of coordination, unsteady gate, tingling or pain in parts of the body, dizziness, and problems with bowel and bladder function.

### **Seizures**

Seizures are not always the grand twitching and fainting events seen on television, and they can be much more subtle and consist only of a few muscle twitches or a slight turn of the head. A seizure could even appear as a visual disturbance that only the patient can sense. Seizures are due to abnormal activity in the brain. There are many different types of seizures and epilepsy, and there are oppo-

site symptoms that one may have. They usually last from a few seconds to a few minutes. One can lose consciousness, remain alert, stare into space or fall to the

ground. However, as one may only have a single symptom, it is best to consult a doctor for further testing.

### **Exercise**

Muscle spasms can also be caused by exercise, as they may have been overworked when beginning an exercise program or after a lengthy break. Dehydration can also happen easily after a workout, especially if the weather is hot or the workout is strenuous. In order to prevent muscle spasms from exercising, it's important to simply build up to a workout rather than pushing too hard immediately. Additionally, individuals should ensure they consume proper liquids, including drinking an electrolytecontaining beverage to replace salts lost during sweating. These exercise muscle cramps are a sign to take preventative measures before and after exercise to ensure a healthy and pain-free body.

### Medications

There are a number of medications that can cause muscle twitches and spasms. It is an unfortunate reality that many important medicines can cause annoying or painful side effects. The medications with a high risk of causing leg cramps are certain asthma medications and diuretics, but countless others can have muscle twitches and spasms as even a low-risk side effect. That said, no one should cease taking a medication without first



consulting a doctor. Doctors may prescribe alternative medicines or give treatment for the muscle spasms should the medication have no substitute.

### **All Other Conditions**

Many conditions may cause muscle twitches and spasms besides the ones listed. Magnesium and calcium deficiencies can also cause muscle problems, as can conditions such as kidney disease. Neuropathy, nerve damage, can also be a cause, as well as an autoimmune disorder called Isaacs' syndrome. Taking water pills (diuretics) for a variety of conditions can also cause spasms by an individual urinating a lot and causing an electrolyte imbalance. Muscle twitches in general mean there is an imbalance or medical condition that must be corrected or treated.

### Dehydration

As hinted at earlier, muscle spasms and twitches are often caused by dehydration, which occurs when the individual has not consumed enough water, leading their body to retain less water than it needs. Severe dehydration can lead to potentially life-threatening conditions. Individuals are more likely to become dehydrated in hot weather and while exercising. In addition to lack of fluids, the depletion of electrolytes can lead to muscle spasms. If electrolytes are depleted, it may help to hydrate by using electrolyte-rich sports drinks. Muscle cells

need magnesium, calcium, potassium, sodium, glucose, and water to function normally. If any of these are in short supply, the muscle can spasm and cramp because it's unable to function normally.

### **Atherosclerosis**

Atherosclerosis is a condition that can cause muscle cramping and spasming. This condition, also known as peripheral artery disease, occurs when the arteries become narrowed. The muscle problems happen when the narrowed arteries cause improper blood flow, leading to a lack of nutrients being delivered to the muscle cells. Because atherosclerosis often increases blood flow in the legs, physical activity may cause pain and cramping in the leg muscles. Multiple factors can increase an individual's risk of developing atherosclerosis, including inactivity, hypertension, smoking, diabetes, and high cholesterol levels in the blood. Other symptoms vary depending on the severity of the narrowing and potential blockages, along with the locations where the narrowing and blockages occur.

### Obesity

Some research indicates obesity can cause pain, including muscle twitching and spasming. This appears to be true even in individuals who don't have any other health issues. Many chronicconditions occur more commonly in those who are overweight, including type 2 diabetes, back pain, fibromyalgia, depression, and arthritis. In one study, when compared to individuals of average weights, those with a body mass index (BMI) of 25 to 29 had around twenty percent more pain. With a BMI between 30 and 34, that increased to sixty-eight percent. BMIs between 35 and 39 re-

ported around 136 percent more instances of pain, and when the BMI reached 40 or more, people reported around 254 percent more pain. While researchers aren't exactly sure what causes the relationship between obesity, muscle spasms, muscle twitching, and overall pain, they believe it may be related to the way fat cells can create inflammation-increasing chemicals.

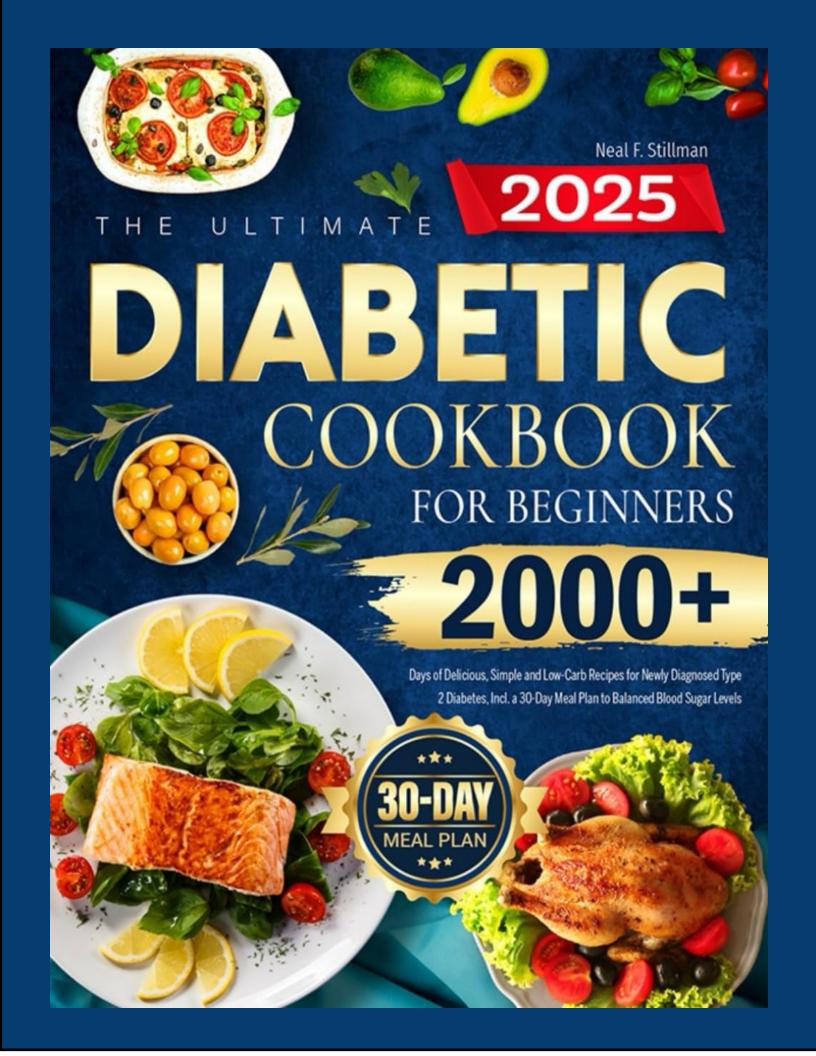
diabetes I and diabetes II. Several factors contribute to muscle cramping. When the glucose levels in the blood are too high or too low, it leads to spasms in the muscles. For muscles to relax and contract properly, they need the right level of glucose and balanced electrolytes. Nerve damage can also lead to muscle cramps, as can poor circulation. Certain medications that treat diabetes can cause muscle spasms as a side effect. Treatment varies depending on the cause and may include treatment for neuropathy and dietary supplements.

### **Acid Reflux**

Acid reflux has been associated with specific muscle spasms called esophageal spasms. These spasms cause painful contractions in the esophagus. An esophageal spasm might feel like sudden and severe pain in the chest. The episodes can last anywhere from several minutes to several hours. Most individuals only experience these spasms occasionally, and some might not require treatment. However, if the spasms occur more frequently, they might prevent drink and food from properly moving through the esophagus. If an individual experiences acid reflux symptoms like the return of their food and drink up their throat, they might also be experiencing esophageal spasms. *Content by Schaefer. Carla MD* 









# 7 Sneaky Causes Of Back Pain

Story by Kyli Rodriguez-SHWR

Following a day of helping your friend move to a second-floor apartment or going for a 3-mile hike, it's completely normal to wake up with an ache in your back. That said, if you notice you're experiencing back pain on a regular basis, there could be something more serious going on.

"Depending on what is injured, you can have muscle pain, bone pain and/or nerve pain," said Dr. Santhosh A. Thomas, staff physician at Cleveland Clinic's Center for Spine Health at the Richard E. Jacobs Health Center. He added that back pain can extend to the legs or butt, intensify with pressure, and even feel worse when you cough or sneeze.

About 65 million people in the United States report experiencing a recent episode of lower back pain, while 16 million people said they have chronic back pain. While herniated disks, spinal trauma, and pulled muscles are well-known causes of back injuries, there may not always be an obvious trigger for ongoing discomfort.

These are sneaky causes of back pain that experts say can fly under the radar:

### Simple, Repetitive Daily Habits Done With Poor Posture

Simply put, body mechanics describe how you twist, turn, lift, maintain posture, and move during daily life. "Things we have done a thousand times can all of a sudden become painful or can start the process. Even simple things like bending to tie your shoes or picking up something small from the ground," Thomas said.

Adam Goode, professor in the department of orthopaedic surgery at the Duke University School of Medicine, further explained that he tends "to see more individuals having the abrupt onset of lower back pain early in the spring when the weather is nicer, and activities such as yard work, spring cleaning, or sports are beginning back up."

Fortunately, experts agree that pain from activities such as these tend to quickly pass and become less of a trigger with improvement of poor posture and better lifting habits.

### **Underlying Physical Health Conditions**

An underlying health disorder may present with back pain as a symptom. "Many of our internal organs have shared nerve pathways that also supply the skin, soft tissue, and muscles of the back. Therefore, conditions affecting these internal organs can cause 'referred back pain,'" explained Dr. Jay Karri, a physiatrist and interventional pain specialist at the University of Maryland Medical System and assistant professor at the University of Maryland School of Medicine.

According to Thomas, gastrointestinal issues, kidney stones, infections, pancreatitis, and ankylosing spondylitis (AS) are physical health disorders that commonly present with back pain as a symptom. Another one is endometriosis, a serious condition that affects an estimated 6.5 million people in the United States alone, yet remains dramatically underdiagnosed.

### Anxiety, Chronic Stress And Other Mental Health Conditions

Much like underlying physical health disorders, mental health conditions may also be the root cause of discomfort.

"Recent research has strongly shown psychological conditions ranging from anxiety to depression to

chronic stress can lead to back pain," Karri said. "It's not 'all in your head.' We have found in recent years that the same neural pathways responsible for ... biochemical imbalances also propagate chronic pain conditions."

### Lack Of Movement, Exercise Or Stretching

Though rest is an important aspect of healing, an aching back may indicate a need to incorporate additional physical activity into your week. Karri explained that "while a tendency may be to limit movement during severe back pain, movement is generally helpful in most instances."

"For athletes and weekend warriors, a sports-focused and more rigorous exercise program may prove more effective," he added. "For older people or those with more limitations, tai chi or chair yoga, which are gentler programs, can be just as effective."

### Or, An Exercise Routine That's Too Intense

Incorporating movement is crucial to keeping your back healthy, but beginning a new exercise routine at too high of an intensity can have an adverse effect.

"Pain or injury from an exercise often stems from doing too much too soon," said Goode. "Some increase in symptoms may be normal when starting a new exercise program. Appropriate instruction on the types and the progression of exercise is important to decrease the risk of injury."

### **Your Sleep Position**

If you notice you're waking up after a night's rest with a sore back, the way you're curling up in bed may be to blame. Despite common misconceptions, there is no "best" or "one size fits all" sleep position: Basic anatomy and health conditions can impact what feels most comfortable to you.

For example, according to Karri, if you begin to develop lower back pain, a doctor may recommend "trialing new sleep behaviors, including changing your sleeping position, shifting your pillow placement, or even undertaking a nighttime stretching routine."

### **Smoking**

Thomas said to "avoid smoking, as this is a known cause for back pain and disc deterioration." In fact,



research has overwhelmingly found that smoking cigarettes not only increases the risk of developing osteoporosis as you age, but damages the arteries in your back muscles and joints. Nicotine is also a vasoconstrictor, meaning it causes blood vessels to narrow — in turn decreasing the amount of nutrients and oxygen the spine receives.

If you aren't prepared to quit smoking, try reducing how much you smoke (anything is better than nothing!) and practice tobacco harm reduction, such as choosing modern smokeless tobacco products.

### **How To Treat Your Pain**

When you begin to notice back tenderness flaring up, promptly trying to pinpoint the trigger and address the pain is key. "Whether it's a shower, a heating pad, or an ice pack, superficial heat or cold can prove extremely helpful in treating more superficial causes of back pain, including muscle and soft tissue pain," Karri said.

However, experts agree that it may be time to speak with a doctor if a sore back begins to interfere with your daily activities and sleep, or if you experience serious symptoms like bladder issues, accompanying fevers and weakness.





# Understanding the scientific benefits of various breathing techniques,

A simple breath, often taken for granted, holds the power to reshape your brain and unlock a world of cognitive potential—a discovery that's captivating scientists and enthusiasts alike. It's a revelation that's breathing new life into our understanding of the mind-body connection, offering a tantalizing glimpse into the hidden depths of our own neural networks.

Imagine, for a moment, that the key to unlocking your brain's full potential has been right under your nose all along. Literally. The air that fills your lungs with each inhale isn't just keeping you alive; it's potentially rewiring your brain, enhancing your cognitive abilities, and even influencing your emotional state. It's a concept so simple, yet so profound, that it's left researchers and meditation gurus equally

breathless.

But what exactly is deep breathing, and how does it work its magic on our gray matter? At its core, deep breathing is a conscious practice of slow, controlled inhalations and exhalations that engage the diaphragm. It's the kind of breathing you might notice in a sleeping baby or a contented cat—natural, effortless, and deeply relaxing. Yet, in our fast-paced, stress-filled lives, many of us have forgotten how to breathe this way.

### The Brain's Breath of Fresh Air

When we take a deep breath, we're doing more than just filling our lungs with oxygen. We're sending a powerful signal to our brain that ripples through our entire nervous system. It's like hitting a reset button on our body's stress response, telling our brain to switch from "fight or flight" mode to "rest and digest."

This shift is orchestrated by the parasympathetic nervous system, often called the body's "rest and relaxation" response. When activated through deep

breathing, it acts as a counterbalance to the sympathetic nervous system, which governs our stress reactions. It's like having an internal peace negotiator, calming the tensions between different parts of our nervous system. But the benefits don't stop there. Deep breathing also stimulates the vagus nerve, a superhighway of neural information that connects the brain to various organs throughout the body. This stimulation can lead to a cascade of positive effects, from reducing inflammation to improving mood and cognitive function. It's as if each breath is sending a gentle wave of calm throughout your entire body, washing away stress and leaving clarity in its wake.

### **Riding the Brain Wave**

As we delve deeper into the neurological impacts of deep breathing, we uncover a fascinating world of brain waves and neural connections. When we engage in deep breathing exercises, our brain waves begin to shift, often moving from the high-frequency beta waves associated with active thinking to the more relaxed alpha waves or even the deeply meditative theta waves.

This shift in brain wave patterns is like changing the channel on your neural TV, tuning into a frequency of calm focus and heightened awareness. It's in this state that many people report experiencing moments of insight or creativity, as if the quieting of mental chatter allows new ideas to bubble up to the surface. But the changes don't stop at the surface level. Deep breathing has been shown to increase activity in the prefrontal cortex, the brain's command center for executive functions like decision-making, emotional regulation, and attention. It's as if each breath is gently massaging this crucial area of the brain, helping it to function more efficiently.

Moreover, research suggests that regular deep breathing practices can enhance connectivity between different regions of the brain. Imagine your neural pathways as a complex highway system. Deep breathing acts like a traffic controller, helping to create more efficient routes and reduce congestion, allowing for smoother communication between different areas of the brain.

### **Breathing New Life into Cognitive Function**

The cognitive benefits of deep breathing are as diverse as they are impressive. From sharpening focus to boosting creativity, the simple act of conscious breathing can have far-reaching effects on our mental capabilities.

One of the most immediately noticeable benefits is improved concentration. In a world full of distractions, the ability to focus is increasingly valuable. Deep breathing acts like a mental spotlight, helping to illuminate the task at hand while dimming the background noise of distracting thoughts and external stimuli. But the benefits extend beyond just focus. Many practitioners report enhanced memory and learning capabilities after incorporating deep breathing exercises into their routines. It's as if each breath is clearing away the mental cobwebs, making room for new information to be absorbed and retained more effectively.

Creativity, too, seems to flourish in the fertile soil of a well-



oxygenated brain. Many artists, writers, and innovators have long recognized the power of breath to unlock creative potential. It's not uncommon to hear of "eureka" moments occurring during or immediately after a deep breathing session. Perhaps it's the increased blood flow to the brain, or maybe it's the quieting of the inner critic—whatever the mechanism, the link between breath and creativity is undeniable.

Emotional regulation is another area where deep breathing shines. By activating the parasympathetic nervous system, deep breathing helps to dampen the body's stress response, making it easier to maintain emotional equilibrium in challenging situations. It's like having an internal thermostat for your emotions, helping you to stay cool under pressure.

Breathing techniques have been studied extensively for their numerous health benefits. Here are some key scientific benefits:

### **Stress Reduction**

Conscious breathing activates the body's relaxation response, reducing the production of stress hormones like cortisol. Techniques such as deep, slow breathing can help lower anxiety levels and improve mood.

### **Improved Focus and Concentration**

Mindfulness meditation, which often includes focused breathing, has been shown to improve focus and concentration by calming the mind and reducing distracting thoughts.

### **Enhanced Emotional Regulation**

Breathing exercises can help regulate emotions by controlling the breath, which in turn helps manage reactions to stress, anger, and anxiety.

### **Better Sleep Quality**

Deep, rhythmic breathing before bedtime can relax the body and mind, making it easier to fall asleep and stay asleep throughout the night.



### **Enhanced Lung Function**

Deep breathing exercises can improve lung capacity and function by fully oxygenating the body and removing toxins.

### **Pain Management**

Breathing techniques have been used for centuries as a natural pain management tool, helping to reduce pain perception and improve tolerance.

### **Improved Digestion**

Conscious breathing can stimulate the relaxation response, enhancing blood flow to the digestive organs and aiding in better digestion.

### **Increased Energy Levels**

Deep breathing increases oxygen intake, supporting cellular function and energy production, which can lead to improved physical performance and mental clarity.

### **Autonomic Nervous System Regulation**

Controlled breathing can shift the body from a sympathetic (fight-or-flight) state to a parasympathetic (rest-and-digest) state, promoting overall relaxation and well-being.

### **Enhanced Meditation Practice**

Incorporating conscious breathing into meditation can deepen mindfulness, increase focus, and enhance the overall effectiveness of meditation practices.

These benefits highlight the powerful impact that simple breathing techniques can have on both physical and mental health. Incorporating these practices into your daily routine can lead to significant improvements in your overall well-being.

Would you like to learn more about specific breathing tech-

niques or how to incorporate them into your daily routine?

### Here are five daily breathing exercises to help improve your day:

### 1. \*\*Deep Breathing

- \*\*How to Do It\*\*: Sit or lie down in a comfortable position. Close your eyes, inhale deeply through your nose, and let your abdomen expand. Exhale slowly through your mouth.
- \*\*Duration\*\*: 5-10 minutes
- \*\*Benefits\*\*: Reduces stress, lowers blood pressure, and increases oxygen flow.

### 2. \*\*Box Breathing (Square Breathing)

- \*\*How to Do It\*\*: Inhale deeply through your nose for a count of four. Hold your breath for a count of four. Exhale slowly through your mouth for a count of four. Hold your breath for a count of four. Repeat.
- \*\*Duration\*\*: 5-10 minutes
- \*\*Benefits\*\*: Enhances focus, calms the nervous system, and reduces anxiety.

### 3. \*\*4-7-8 Breathing

- \*\*How to Do It\*\*: Inhale quietly through your nose for a count of four. Hold your breath for a count of seven. Exhale completely through your mouth for a count of eight. Repeat.
- \*\*Duration\*\*: 4-8 rounds
- \*\*Benefits\*\*: Promotes relaxation, helps with sleep, and reduces stress.

### 4. \*\*Alternate Nostril Breathing (Nadi Shodhana)

- \*\*How to Do It\*\*: Sit comfortably and close your right nostril with your right thumb. Inhale deeply through your left nostril. Close your left nostril with your right ring finger, and exhale through your right nostril. Inhale through your right nostril, then close it and exhale through your left nostril. Repeat.
- \*\*Duration\*\*: 5-10 minutes
- \*\*Benefits\*\*: Balances the mind and body, improves focus, and reduces anxiety.

### 5. \*\*Pursed Lip Breathing

- \*\*How to Do It\*\*: Inhale slowly through your nose for a count of two. Pucker your lips as if you were going to whistle and exhale slowly through your lips for a count of four. Repeat.
- \*\*Duration\*\*: 5-10 minutes
- \*\*Benefits\*\*: Improves lung function, helps with shortness of breath, and promotes relaxation.

Incorporating these breathing exercises into your daily routine can help you feel more relaxed, focused, and energized. Enjoy your practice!



### Natural Ways to Ensure You Get Enough Vitamins and Minerals

Story by Larie Cruz RD

Getting the right balance of vitamins and minerals is essential for overall health. While supplements can help, natural sources are the best way to nourish your body. Here are some practical ways to ensure you're getting enough nutrients naturally.

### **Embrace the Rainbow**

Eat a Variety of Colorful Fruits and Vegetables. Each color in fruits and vegetables represents different nutrients. For example:

**Orange and yellow** (carrots, sweet potatoes) provide betacarotene (Vitamin A).

**Green** (spinach, kale) is rich in iron, folate, and Vitamin K. **Red and purple** (beets, berries) contain antioxidants and Vitamin C.

### **Prioritize Whole Foods Over Processed Foods**

Whole foods, such as nuts, seeds, whole grains, and legumes that are minimally processed and as close to their natural state as possible, contain more nutrients than processed foods. Processing often strips foods of essential vitamins and minerals, reducing their nutritional value.

### **Incorporate Healthy Fats**

Vitamins A, D, E, and K are fat-soluble, requiring healthy fats for absorption. Include sources like:

- Avocados
- Olive oil
- Nuts and seeds

### • Fatty fish like salmon

Opt for Fermented Foods for Better Nutrient Absorption Fermented foods, which are foods that have been through a process of Lacto-fermentation in which natural bacteria feed on the sugar and starch in the food creating lactic acids, like yogurt, kimchi, and sauerkraut, contain probiotics that improve gut health, allowing your body to absorb nutrients more effectively.

Soak Up the Sun

Spend Time in the Sun for Vitamin D. Sun exposure is the best way to get Vitamin D, which is essential for calcium absorption and bone health. Aim for 10-30 minutes of sun exposure a few times weekly.

Stay Hydrated with Mineral-Rich Water

Natural spring water and mineral water contain essential minerals like magnesium and calcium. Proper hydration also helps your body transport nutrients efficiently.

A natural, whole-food diet ensures you get the vitamins and minerals your body needs. By making mindful choices, you can optimize your nutrition and overall well-being.

### References

- 1. Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health. "The Nutrition Source."
- 2. National Institutes of Health (NIH). "Vitamin and Mineral Supplement Fact Sheets."

You May Also Like

<u>Get Comfortable Cooking with Herbs and Spices – DHW Blog</u>
<u>Seven Herbs Already in Your Kitchen that May Aid in the</u>
<u>Fight against Microbes – DHW Blog</u>









