



Kinship
Carers
VICTORIA

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Wellbeing

magazine

Edition #6

SELF-CARE FOR KINSHIP CARERS

Dear Kinship Carers,

The advice in this magazine has been derived from many different sources, and while it is not advice that is specific to kinship carers, it is advice which we hope you will find can be applied to your situation as a kinship carer.

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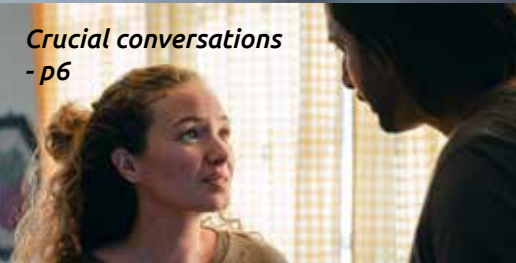
*Cover photo of poppies by Corina Ardeleanu on Unsplash.
Poppies symbolise peace, sleep, fruitfulness and fertility.*

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Kinship carers' Self-care survey

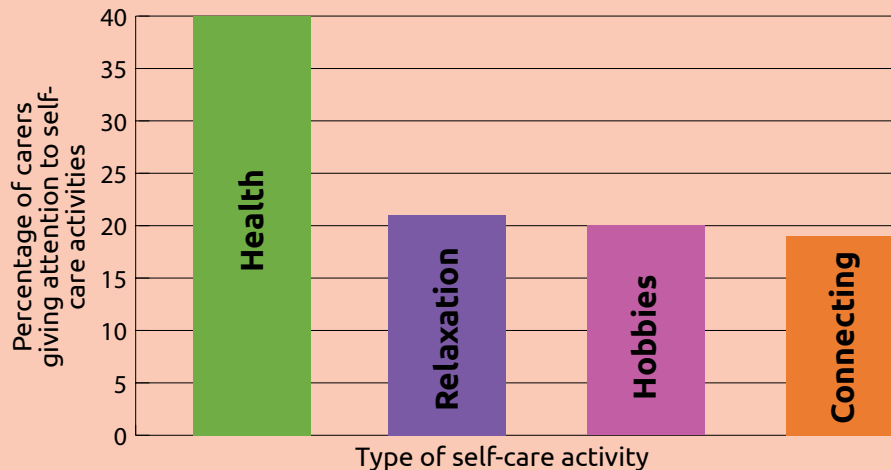
In October 2021 GPV/KCV interviewed 30 kinship carers about their wellbeing. At a time when the carers were under extraordinary pressure due to Covid-19 and financial constraints, GPV/KCV wanted to ask them how they maintain their own wellbeing. It was hoped that a picture about preferred strategies would become clear.

A total of 777 self-care activities were logged by the respondents. The percentages below represent the number of times across all activities and all respondents that this particular activity occurred. This does not represent the actual number of carers who engaged in the activity. For example, most carers mentioned that while they pay attention to their diet, not all attended to it regularly.

KCV is not reporting on individual plans but urges each carer to look at the strategies employed and outlined in this report and to decide for themselves what they might best do to take up some activities that are deemed to be important but in which they do not engage.

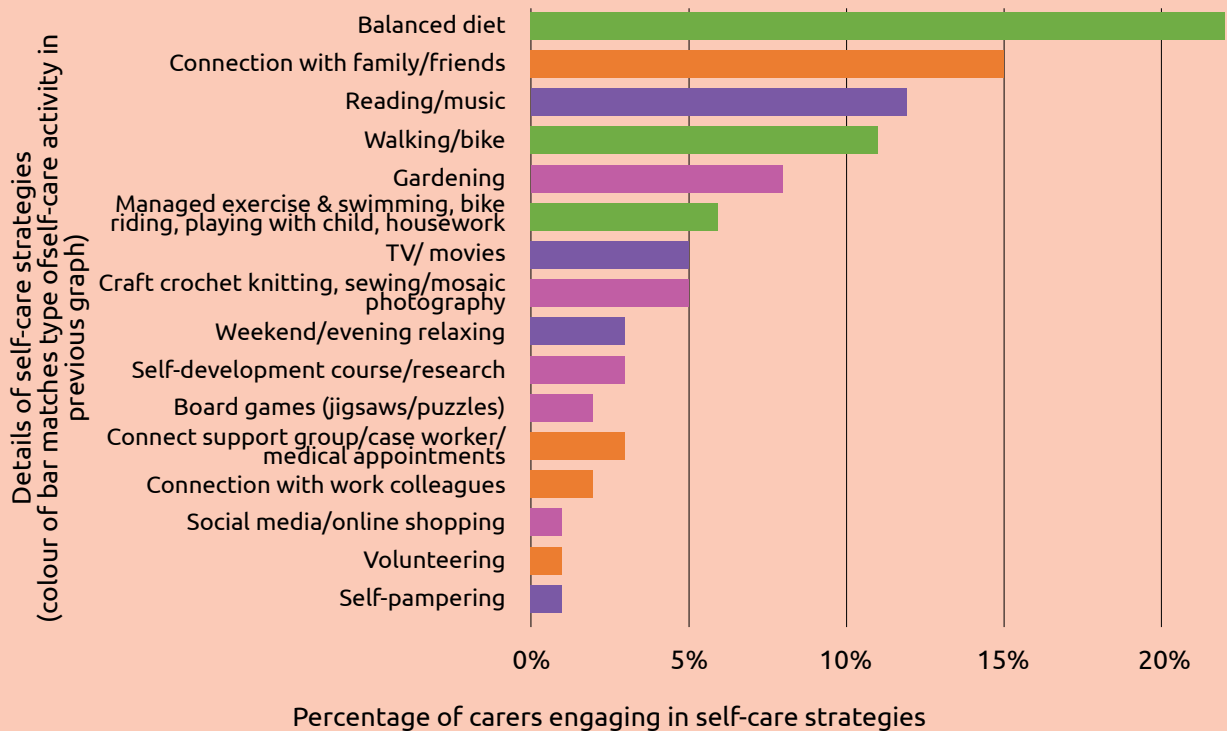
THE OVERALL PATTERN OF SELF-CARE

Across all the respondents there was even attention given to three areas of self-care and considerably more attention given to one area, as shown in the graph below. However, not all carers fitted this pattern. For example, some carers barely attended to their own health, some had few opportunities for connecting with others, and some found it hard to fit in any relaxation activities.



THE DETAILED STRATEGIES OF SELF-CARE

It is pleasing that the most popular activities are often spoken of as the ones that make significant contribution to a sense of wellbeing. If carers do not engage in the top six activities regularly, we would suggest that they make efforts to do so. For example, even a brief walk outside would be useful.



It is disappointing that so few carers engaged in self-pampering activities. We would implore carers to do more of this. Activities such as having a bubble bath, using a very nice shower gel, having your nails done – even if it is by a friend – or having an occasional massage should not be viewed as an indulgence; they should be viewed as an investment in your long-term self-care.

Crucial conversations

Ten tips for handling difficult conversations with family

Addressing an issue with a family member can be stressful, but with the right tools, you can keep the conversation productive. Use these 10 tips to prepare for difficult conversations.

From time to time, we all must have a difficult conversation with a family member. Whether it's about the dishes in the sink or finances, a whole range of topics can lead to uncomfortable feelings. However, putting off conflict can lead to misunderstandings and hurt feelings.

When it comes time to discuss what matters, here are 10 tips for handling difficult conversations with family.

1. PREPARE

When you decide to approach a family member about a difficult subject, prepare ahead of time to ensure a positive outcome. Keep expectations modest and set realistic goals to keep the conversation on track. Consider past conversations you've had with your family member. What worked and what didn't? Develop a strategy based on past knowledge and you're well on your way to achieving resolution.

2. EXPECT A POSITIVE OUTCOME

When preparing for a difficult conversation, adopt a positive mentality. If you go into a conflict

thinking it will be a failure, it will often not go your way. Instead, tell yourself that although the conversation will be difficult, it will result in an improved relationship between you and your family member.

3. SET A TIME AND PLACE

We all live busy lives, and sometimes it's best to set a time and place for a difficult conversation so that all parties involved can devote equal attention. Choose somewhere quiet and free from distraction, whether that's in your living room or a local park. Also, pick a time when everyone can give the conversation their undivided attention.

4. SET A TIME LIMIT

Setting a time limit can help keep your difficult conversation productive. Keep the conversation to no more than one hour. Schedule another session to continue the conversation if you need to do so.

If children are involved, a shorter time span may help them remain more engaged than they would be in an hour-long exploration.

5. SET SOME GROUND RULES

Shared ground rules will go a long way toward establishing a positive connection between you and your family members. Certain rules, like no interrupting, no shouting and no personal attacks can help keep heated discussions from becoming, well, overheated.



Conversation rules like no interrupting, no shouting and no personal attacks can help keep discussions from becoming overheated.

6. BRING UP THE ISSUE

Be sure to approach the topic at hand with a sense of openness — attempt to learn and collaborate in the spirit of finding a common solution. There's nothing wrong with airing your grievances in this space, but watch your language and make sure you are being clear without being accusatory.

7. WHEN SOMEONE IS SPEAKING, LISTEN

Many people will spend time during a difficult conversation constructing their next statement, as opposed to listening. Take the pressure off yourself. You don't actually need to talk that much during a difficult conversation. Instead, focus on listening, reflecting and observing.

8. EXAMINE YOUR ASSUMPTIONS

When your family member says something that angers or upsets you, have the self-awareness to take a step back, repeat what your family member said to you, and clarify its meaning.

Use an 'I' message to address your concerns effectively: 'I feel upset when you say that. It makes me feel like I am not smart enough to understand your feelings ... is this truly what you mean?' Statements like these lead to greater understanding between you and your family member.

9. BE OKAY WITH BEING WRONG

Approach your difficult conversation with the mindset that your point of view isn't the only correct perspective on the situation, and that you may actually learn something if you admit wrongdoing. Although it may sting in the moment, it can lead to a deeper understanding between you and your family member.

10. WRAP IT UP

When the time comes to end the conversation, be sure to conduct a conversation summary. Where did you develop practical solutions, and where did you decide it was better to agree to disagree? Be sure to thank your family member for taking the time to have the discussion, even if it did not turn out as planned, and say that you love them.

Nobody enjoys bringing up difficult subjects with family, but being able to do so productively can help you build relationships while managing differences effectively. With time and practice, anyone can employ the above techniques and confront challenging topics head-on. As you practice honesty and develop shared problem-solving techniques, the stronger your connection with your family member will be.

SOURCE

<https://health.umms.org/2020/10/05/difficult-conversations-with-family/>

During a difficult conversation focus on listening, reflecting and observing



10 ways that singing benefits your health



Written by Rebecca Joy Stanborough, MFA on 10 November 2020 – <https://www.healthline.com/health/benefits-of-singing#benefits>

People love to sing. Whether or not they can carry a tune, people seem to understand that there's something positive — something healthy — in the act of raising their voices in song.

In fact, there's solid scientific evidence to prove that singing is, in fact, good for your body and your mind.

In this article we'll take a closer look at how singing can benefit your physical and mental health, and how to use singing as a form of therapy.

WHAT ARE THE BENEFITS OF SINGING?

Decades of research has shown that singing individually and in groups is good for you on many levels.

Here, according to science, are 10 key benefits of raising your voice in song.

1. Relieves stress

Singing appears to be a stress-reliever. A 2017 study measured the amount of cortisol, the stress hormone, in participants' saliva before and after they sang.

Researchers in that study found that the amount of cortisol was lower after singing, an indication that people felt more relaxed after they'd belted out a tune.

They also found singing reduces stress levels whether the participants were singing in a group or by themselves.

There's a small catch, though: cortisol only goes down if you're singing in a place that doesn't make you anxious. A similar 2015 study tested salivary cortisol levels after a singing performance, finding that cortisol levels went up in this scenario.

2. Stimulates the immune response

There's some evidence singing may boost your immune system and help you fight off illnesses.

A 2004 study compared the effects of singing with the effects of simply listening to music. In two separate sessions, research subjects either sang or listened to music.

Those who sang showed higher levels of immunoglobulin A, an antibody your body secretes to help you fend off infections. Listening to music (without singing along) reduced stress hormones but didn't stimulate the body's immune system.

3. Increases pain threshold

When you sing in a group, whether it's a large choir or a smaller group, the act of collective singing causes your body to release endorphins. This hormone can help promote positive feelings, and even change your perception of pain.

A 2012 study found that singing, drumming, and dancing in a group triggers the release of hormones that raise your pain tolerance in ways that just listening to music doesn't.

Researchers note that the feelings of social connection, rather than the music itself, seem to be behind the boost in pain tolerance.

4. May reduce snoring

Regular singing may change the way you breathe, even when you're not singing. Researchers in a 2008 study interviewed the spouses of choir members, along with the spouses of people who don't sing.

The researchers found that significantly fewer choir members snored. This led them

to recommend regular singing as a potential treatment for snoring. Studies have also shown that people who play wind instruments also snore less than the general population.

These findings have prompted some experts to suggest that singing and playing wind instruments might be helpful for people with obstructive sleep apnea (OSA).

5. Improves lung function

Because singing involves deep breathing and the controlled use of muscles in the respiratory system, it may be beneficial for certain lung and breathing conditions.

Studies have shown that the breathing techniques used with singing may offer benefits for people with the following conditions:

- chronic obstructive pulmonary disorder
- asthma
- cystic fibrosis
- cancer
- multiple sclerosis
- quadriplegia

While singing doesn't treat or cure any of these conditions, you may benefit from gaining strength in your respiratory muscles.

Singing also increases the amount of oxygen in your blood, research shows. In addition to the pulmonary benefits, singers also experience improved mood and a greater sense of social connection.

6. Develops a sense of belonging and connection

When you sing together with others, you're likely to feel the same kind of camaraderie and bonding



Regular singing may change the way you breathe, leading to a reduction in snoring and sleep apnea



Singing, especially in groups, has been shown to have a myriad of positive effects on health

that players on sports teams can sometimes experience.

In one 2014 study involving 11,258 schoolchildren, researchers found that children in a singing and musical engagement program developed a strong sense of community and social inclusion.

In a 2016 study involving 375 adult participants, researchers found that people who sang together in a group reported a higher sense of wellbeing and meaningful connection than people who sang solo.

One of the neurochemicals released when people feel bonded together is oxytocin, also known as the love hormone.

Spontaneous, improvised singing causes your body to release this feel-good hormone, which may help give you a heightened sense of connectedness and inclusion.

7. Enhances memory in people with dementia

People with Alzheimer's disease and other types

of dementia experience a gradual loss of memory. Studies have shown that people with these conditions were able to recall song lyrics more easily than other words.

In one singing study by the Alzheimer's Foundation, participants said it was 'nice to be able to remember something'.

However, the singers found they remembered more than just the lyrics. For some, singing familiar songs suddenly brought back life memories they'd forgotten, too.

Researchers found that singing songs learned at a younger age caused a spontaneous return of autobiographical details for many people.

8. Helps with grief

Singing in a group doesn't just help you with physical pain; it may also help with the emotional pain you feel after you've lost someone you love.

In a 2019 study conducted among people dealing with grief, researchers found that for those who sang in a choir, depression symptoms didn't get

worse over time and their sense of wellbeing remained stable.

In fact, the choir singers felt a gradual improvement in their self-esteem during and after the 12-week study. Those in the control group who didn't participate in the singing intervention didn't report this benefit.

Researchers concluded that group singing may be a good option for people who need additional support during a time of grief.

9. Improves mental health and mood

A 2018 study done in the United Kingdom evaluated 20 people in a singing program known as The Sing Your Heart Out project. The participants included people with mental health conditions, as well as the general public.

Researchers found that the participants reported improvements in their mental health, mood, sense of wellbeing and feeling of belonging as a result of these singing workshops.

10. Helps improve speaking abilities

Decades ago, scientists began researching the effects of singing among people who have a hard time with speech due to a neurological condition.

To date, researchers have found that singing improves the speaking ability for people with:

- autism
- Parkinson's disease
- aphasia following a stroke
- stuttering

Singing stimulates multiple areas of the brain at the same time. This may enable people with an impairment in one part of the brain to communicate using other areas of their brain.

Singing can also prolong the sounds in each word, which may make it easier to pronounce them.

Singing also makes it easier to incorporate hand-tapping, a method that can help people maintain speaking rhythms that are otherwise challenging.

SINGING GROUPS/ORGANISATIONS

Sing Australia

<https://www.singaustralia.com.au/>

Your Sing Australia group connects you to others in your community, giving you the opportunity to build new friendships and support networks.

MaCapella Singers

<https://www.macapella.com/>

MaCapella Singers is an a cappella singing group for women ... but it is so much more! It is also a meeting place where great friendships are forged.

Sweet Adelines

<https://www.sweetadelines.org.au/>

Sweet Adelines International is an independent, non-profit music education association that teaches people to sing in choruses and quartets.

PubSing

<https://www.facebook.com/>

PubSingCastlemaine/

Learn a well known song in three parts, then belt it out in a big friendly group over a beer and a laugh. No experience necessary. Everyone welcome.

Processed food 'may be driving us mad'

By Simon Collins. Originally in *The New Zealand Herald National* – 27 August 2016

Eating processed foods with little nutritional value may be making us mad as well as sick, new research shows.

Canterbury University psychologist Julia Rucklidge says the decreasing nutritional value of our food may be contributing to an 'epidemic' of mental illness, with one in every eight NZ adults now on anti-depressants.

Research has shown that eating more fresh foods consistent with a Mediterranean-style diet, and eating less Western foods, could reverse spiralling rates of conditions such as attention deficit/hyperactivity disorder (ADHD), anxiety and depression.

Eleven years ago, when Rucklidge started using vitamins and minerals to treat mental illness, she says people were 'completely uninterested'.

'Many didn't believe there was a possibility that nutrition can influence your mental health,' she said.

But she was in Auckland for her second workshop for professionals at Massey University's Albany campus after a first workshop sold out, and she now gets so many inquiries about her work that she has had to set up a standard email reply.

'Suddenly there is an insatiable demand from people to get this type of information,' she said.

Community mental health nurse Olivia Sheehan said she had always encouraged her clients



A shift from natural wholefoods to processed foods has likely played a role in increasing rates of mental illness

to exercise and eat well rather than relying on medicines, but after attending Rucklidge's workshop she would put much more stress on nutrition.

'I actually hadn't considered that aspect before but I certainly will in the future,' she said.

Dietician Anna Sloan said Rucklidge's research was proving the link that dieticians had always understood between diet and mental wellbeing.

'The more people can move away from processed foods, getting back to those whole grains, fruit and vegetables, small amounts of nuts and healthy oils, the better,' she said.

Rucklidge has conducted a randomised controlled trial of adults with ADHD which found that 64 per cent of those who received extra vitamins and minerals showed significantly fewer ADHD symptoms after eight weeks, compared with 37 per cent of those who received an inactive placebo.

But her most remarkable study was done with 91 Christchurch people with high stress levels immediately after the February 2011 earthquake. Symptoms of post-traumatic stress disorder dropped from 65 per cent to 19 per cent among those who received extra vitamins and minerals, compared with a slight increase from 44 per cent to 48 per cent of a control group that did not get the supplements.

She believes governments should consider issuing nutritional supplements to everyone in any future area affected by an ongoing disaster like the Canterbury quakes – or at least make sure food handouts are nutritious.

'A lot of the food that may be given out is not food that is actually going to nourish the individual and sustain them in order to get through this,' she said.

She says our shift from natural wholefoods to packaged processed foods and takeaways has likely played a vital role in the increasing rates of mental illness that have coincided with an increase in patients on Pharmac-funded anti-depressants from 8.4 per cent of all adults in 2006 to 12.7 per cent this year.

'Our diet has changed so rapidly over 50 years that it's hard not to believe that it's having impact on our mental health,' she said.

'My work shows that, because we show an impact of using vitamins and minerals on mental health, it simply proves the point that the diet these people are eating is simply not adequately meeting their nutritional needs.'

FOODS TO REDUCE

- Packaged processed food
- Refined sugar and sugary drinks
- Takeaways

NUTRIENTS THAT CAN HELP

- People need enough of all vitamins and essential minerals
- Individual needs vary, so get advice before taking supplements

FOODS WITH GOOD NUTRIENTS

- Fresh fruit and vegetables, especially leafy vegetables

Treat your food as if it's your medicine

Taimi Allan, CEO of Changing Minds, used nutrition to beat depression.

Twelve years ago, when she was 30, Taimi Allan laid out all the psychiatric medications that she was taking and turned to her husband Stewart.

'I said to my husband: "I started on one pill when I was 15 and I'm on 10 at 30, what is this going to look like when I'm 60"?' she asked.

'And he said: "I'm not living with the person that I married any more; I'm living with this half-zombie person. Do you want to see who the real Taimi is underneath all this? Are you willing to take the risk"?''

It was a crucial turning point. The 'real Taimi' who met Stewart 15 years ago has acted on stage and screen since she was 15. Her credits include roles in *McLeod's Daughters*, *Step Dave* and *Shortland Street*, and today she and Stewart run their own production company Tigerstew Productions and performing arts school The Green Room as well as being chief executive of the mental health advocacy agency Changing Minds (Taimi) and music director at St Cuthbert's College (Stewart).

For 15 years before that turning point, Taimi's life was a psychological rollercoaster that 'sent me into these spirals of very, very deep depression, and then high levels of functioning and high working and not sleeping very much'.

'Every time you go into hospital you are put on

more drugs and given more treatment, and that sets up a real cycle of hopelessness, or it did for me anyway. I'm getting all this help, but actually I'm not getting any better, I'm getting worse.'

Desperate for a way out, at 23 she accepted a course of electric shock treatments. The shocks left her with awful migraines and permanently wiped some of her childhood memories – but had absolutely no effect on her mental illness. 'Those were my worst moments,' she said.

What finally worked was changing her diet. At 28, someone suggested that she should get her thyroid gland checked. She found that it had 'died'. In fact, it had probably sputtered out, producing spurts of hormones that may have explained her highs and lows.

She found a doctor, Titirangi 'anthroposophic physician' Dr Ulrich Doering, who was willing to support her in trying dietary and lifestyle changes enabling her to gradually reduce her medications over two years.

Dr Doering introduced her to amino acids, which she still takes to supplement her diet. And that reminded her of a book her father had given her, Patrick Holford's *Optimum Nutrition for the Mind*, which mentioned amino acids.

'So I went home and started reading it and it opened this amazing world to me,' she said. 'I started being really mindful about what I eat,

knowing that the things I was eating and drinking and what I was doing with my body had a direct effect on my mind.'

She found she was allergic to wheat and dairy products, and cut them out of her diet. She cut back on sugar and ate more fish and leafy green vegetables.

She endured intense pain which felt like electric shocks in the back of her neck as she came off her psychiatric medications. Her parents were worried, but Stewart supported her.

'I had my husband saying, "I don't want you to die either, honey, but you're not really living, so can we try and find a way where you are just enjoying more of life"?''

Now she feels that diet has put her back in control of her own life.

'You need to treat your food as if it's your medicine,' she said.

'I'm not saying it's the total answer, but I'm sure for most people it's a piece of the puzzle, and for me it was a huge part of the puzzle.'

SOURCES:

<https://www.mensfitness.com/nutrition/what-to-eat/eat-to-beat-stress-10-foods-that-reduce-anxiety>

<http://www.health.com/food/12-superfoods-for-stress-relief>

<http://www.naturesway.com.au/article/stressed-may-need-b-vitamins/>



What you eat and drink can have a significant effect on your physical and psychological wellbeing



9 Ways to Boost Your Body's Natural Immunity Defences

Written by SaVanna Shoemaker, MS, RDN, LD on 1 April 2020 — Medically reviewed by Kathy W Warwick, RD, CDE, Nutrition

<https://www.healthline.com/nutrition/how-to-boost-immune-health>

If you want to boost your immune health, you may wonder how to help your body fight off illnesses.

While bolstering your immunity is easier said than done, several dietary and lifestyle changes may strengthen your body's natural defences and help you fight harmful pathogens, or disease-causing organisms.

Here are nine tips to strengthen your immunity naturally.

1. GET ENOUGH SLEEP

Sleep and immunity are closely tied.

Getting adequate rest may strengthen your natural immunity.

In fact, inadequate or poor quality sleep is linked to a higher susceptibility to sickness.

In a study in 164 healthy adults, those who slept fewer than six hours each night were more likely to catch a cold than those who slept six hours or more each night.

Getting adequate rest may strengthen your natural immunity. Also, you may sleep more when sick to allow your immune system to better fight the illness.

Adults should aim to get seven or more hours of sleep each night, while teens need 8–10 hours and younger children and infants up to 14 hours.

If you're having trouble sleeping, try limiting screen time for an hour before bed, as the blue light emitted from your phone, television and computer may disrupt your circadian rhythm, or your body's natural wake-sleep cycle.

Other sleep hygiene tips include sleeping in a completely dark room or using a sleep mask, going to bed at the same time every night, and exercising regularly.

SUMMARY

Inadequate sleep may increase your risk of getting sick. Most adults should get at least seven hours of sleep per night.

2. EAT MORE WHOLE PLANT FOODS

Whole plant foods like fruits, vegetables, nuts, seeds and legumes are rich in nutrients and antioxidants that may give you an upper hand against harmful pathogens.

The antioxidants in these foods help decrease

inflammation by combatting unstable compounds called free radicals, which can cause inflammation when they build up in your body in high levels.

Chronic inflammation is linked to numerous health conditions, including heart disease, Alzheimer's and certain cancers.

Meanwhile, the fibre in plant foods feeds your gut microbiome, or the community of healthy bacteria in your gut. A robust gut microbiome can improve your immunity and help keep harmful pathogens from entering your body via your digestive tract.

Furthermore, fruits and vegetables are rich in nutrients like vitamin C, which may reduce the duration of the common cold.

SUMMARY

Several whole plant foods contain antioxidants, fibre and vitamin C, all of which may lower your susceptibility to illness.

3. EAT MORE HEALTHY FATS

Healthy fats, like those found in olive oil and salmon, may boost your body's immune response to pathogens by decreasing inflammation.

Although low-level inflammation is a normal response to stress or injury, chronic inflammation can suppress your immune system.

Olive oil, which is highly anti-inflammatory, is linked to a decreased risk of chronic diseases like heart disease and type-2 diabetes. Plus, its anti-inflammatory properties may help your body fight off harmful disease-causing bacteria and viruses.

Omega-3 fatty acids, such as those in salmon and chia seeds, fight inflammation as well.

SUMMARY

Healthy fats like olive oil and omega-3s are highly anti-inflammatory. Since chronic inflammation can suppress your immune system, these fats may naturally combat illnesses.

4. EAT MORE FERMENTED FOODS OR TAKE A PROBIOTIC SUPPLEMENT

Fermented foods are rich in beneficial bacteria called probiotics, which populate your digestive tract.

These foods include yogurt, sauerkraut, kimchi, kefir and natto.

Research suggests that a flourishing network of gut bacteria can help your immune cells differentiate between normal, healthy cells and harmful invader organisms.

In a three-month study of 126 children, those who drank just 2.4 ounces (70 mL) of fermented milk daily had about 20% fewer childhood infectious diseases, compared with a control group.

If you don't regularly eat fermented foods, probiotic supplements are another option.



Fermented foods such as yoghurt are rich in beneficial bacteria called probiotics

In a 28-day study in 152 people infected with rhinovirus, those who supplemented with probiotic *Bifidobacterium animalis* had a stronger immune response and lower levels of the virus in their nasal mucus than a control group.

SUMMARY

Gut health and immunity are deeply interconnected. Fermented foods and probiotics may bolster your immune system by helping it identify and target harmful pathogens.

5. LIMIT ADDED SUGARS

Emerging research suggests that added sugars and refined carbs may contribute disproportionately to overweight and obesity.

Obesity may likewise increase your risk of getting sick.

According to an observational study in around 1,000 people, people with obesity who were administered the flu vaccine were twice as likely to still get the flu than individuals without obesity who received the vaccine.

Curbing your sugar intake can decrease inflammation and aid weight loss, thus reducing your risk of chronic health conditions like type-2 diabetes and heart disease.

Given that obesity, type-2 diabetes and heart disease can all weaken your immune system, limiting added sugars is an important part of an immune-boosting diet.

You should strive to limit your sugar intake to less than 5% of your daily calories. This equals about two tablespoons (25 grams) of sugar for someone on a 2,000-calorie diet.

SUMMARY

Added sugars contribute significantly to obesity, type-2 diabetes and heart disease, all of which can suppress your immune system. Lowering your sugar intake may decrease inflammation and your risk of these conditions.

6. ENGAGE IN MODERATE EXERCISE

Although prolonged intense exercise can suppress your immune system, moderate exercise can give it a boost.

Studies indicate that even a single session of moderate exercise can boost the effectiveness of vaccines in people with compromised immune systems.

What's more, regular, moderate exercise may reduce inflammation and help your immune cells regenerate regularly.

Examples of moderate exercise include brisk walking, steady bicycling, jogging, swimming and light hiking. Most people should aim for at least 150 minutes of moderate exercise per week.

SUMMARY

Moderate exercise can reduce inflammation and promote the healthy turnover of immune cells. Jogging, biking, walking, swimming and hiking are great options.

7. STAY HYDRATED

Hydration doesn't necessarily protect you from germs and viruses, but preventing dehydration is important to your overall health.

Dehydration can cause headaches and hinder your physical performance, focus, mood, digestion and



Dehydration can cause headaches and hinder your physical performance, focus, mood, digestion, and heart and kidney function.

heart and kidney function. These complications can increase your susceptibility to illness.

To prevent dehydration, you should drink enough fluid daily to make your urine pale yellow. Water is recommended because it's free of calories, additives and sugar.

While tea and juice are also hydrating, it's best to limit your intake of fruit juice and sweetened tea because of their high sugar contents.

As a general guideline, you should drink when you're thirsty and stop when you're no longer thirsty. You may need more fluids if you exercise intensely, work outside or live in a hot climate.

It's important to note that older adults begin to lose the urge to drink, as their bodies do not signal thirst adequately. Older adults need to drink regularly even if they do not feel thirsty.

SUMMARY

Given that dehydration can make you more susceptible to illness, be sure you're drinking plenty of water each day.

8. MANAGE YOUR STRESS LEVELS

Relieving stress and anxiety is key to immune health.

Long-term stress promotes inflammation, as well as imbalances in immune cell function.

In particular, prolonged psychological stress can suppress the immune response in children.

Activities that may help you manage your stress include meditation, exercise, journaling, yoga and other mindfulness practices. You may also benefit from seeing a licensed counselor or therapist, whether virtually or in person.

SUMMARY

Lowering your stress levels through meditation, yoga, exercise and other practices can help keep your immune system functioning properly.

9. SUPPLEMENT WISELY

It's easy to turn to supplements if you hear claims about their ability to treat or prevent COVID-19.

However, these assertions are unfounded and untrue.

According to the National Institutes of Health (NIH), there's no evidence to support the use of any supplement to prevent or treat COVID-19.

*Vitamins
and other
supplements
may
strengthen
your body's
general
immune
response*



However, some studies indicate that the following supplements may strengthen your body's general immune response:

Vitamin C. According to a review in over 11,000 people, taking 1,000–2,000 mg of vitamin C per day reduced the duration of colds by 8% in adults and 14% in children. Yet supplementing did not prevent the cold to begin with.

Vitamin D. Vitamin D deficiency may increase your chances of getting sick, so supplementing may counteract this effect. Nonetheless, taking vitamin D when you already have adequate levels doesn't seem to provide extra benefits.

Zinc. In a review in 575 people with the common cold, supplementing with more than 75 mg of zinc per day reduced the duration of the cold by 33%.

Elderberry. One small review found that elderberry could reduce the symptoms of viral upper respiratory infections, but more research is needed.

Echinacea. A study in over 700 people found that those who took echinacea recovered from colds slightly more quickly than those who received a placebo or no treatment, but the difference was insignificant.

Garlic. A high quality, 12-week study in 146 people found that supplementing with garlic reduced the incidence of the common cold by about 30%. However, more research is needed.

While these supplements demonstrated potential in the studies mentioned above, that doesn't mean they're effective against COVID-19.

Furthermore, supplements are prone to mislabeling because they aren't regulated by the Food and Drug Administration (FDA).

Thus, you should only purchase supplements that have been independently tested by third-party organisations like United States Pharmacopeia (USP), NSF International, and ConsumerLab.

SUMMARY

Though some supplements may fight viral infections, none have been proven to be effective against COVID-19. If you decide to supplement, make sure to purchase products that have been tested by a third party.



Garlic can help reduce the incidence of the common cold



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