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**HEALTH & SAFETY
NEWSLETTER**

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Get sugar wise to protect your teeth

“Don’t eat sugar – it’s bad for your teeth.” We heard this as children, and we tell our own children too. Why is sugar so damaging? And how do we avoid it, when it seems to be added to everything?

Sugar is one of the biggest factors that can contribute to the development of tooth decay, says the Australian Dental Association (ADA). Tooth decay is more than a nuisance. It can cause pain and infection, and in children can affect nutrition, speech and jaw development. If left untreated, tooth decay can go deeper into the tooth, which may start to look yellow, brown or black.

How does sugar damage teeth?

Have you ever noticed that sticky film on your teeth? That’s plaque, and its stickiness means bacteria can cling to it. When plaque isn’t regularly removed by brushing and flossing, it can accumulate minerals from your saliva and harden into a substance called tartar that can only be removed by your dentist.

When you eat sugary foods and drinks, the bacteria in plaque feed on the sugars, producing acids in the process. It’s these acids that cause problems like cavities (decay) along with gingivitis and other forms of tooth decay.

Where is the sugar?

We know sugar is added to sweet food – confectionary, cakes, biscuits. You’ll also find it in many savoury foods including sauces, marinades, salad dressings, in breakfast cereals, and added to granola and protein bars.

Sugar is particularly easy to overconsume in soft drinks, with one 600ml (20oz) bottle of soft drink containing 16 teaspoons of sugar. The World Health Organization (WHO) recommends that adults consume no more than six teaspoons of free sugar (sugar added to food and drink) a day to decrease

the risk of tooth decay and unhealthy weight gain.

How to protect your teeth

Read labels. There are over 50 names for added sugar, including syrup, molasses, glucose, fruit juice concentrate, honey, coconut sugar and rice malt syrup. When you’re shopping, look out for these on the list of ingredients.

Swap out sugary snacks for a piece of fresh fruit, or some plain, unsalted nuts and soft drinks for a glass of water.

Brush and floss. Brush your teeth twice a day, and floss daily to remove the plaque between your teeth.

Visit your dentist. The ADA recommends seeing your dentist every six to 12 months so any tooth decay or gum disease can be spotted early and treated. ✕



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Tip for improving your dental health

Don’t go to bed without brushing your teeth. Many of us neglect brushing our teeth at night. However, brushing before bed gets rid of the germs and plaque that accumulate throughout the day.

Things people say about fitness that **may not be true**

Are you guilty of spreading misinformation about exercise and fitness? Here are 5 of the most common things we hear – just how true are they?

1. Sitting is the new smoking

We probably do sit too much, and physical inactivity isn't good for us, but "let's not demonise a behaviour as normal as sitting," says Harvard professor of evolutionary biology Daniel E Lieberman.

"People in every culture sit a lot. Even hunter-gatherers who lack furniture sit about 10 hours a day."

That said, there are healthier ways to sit. 'Active sitting' means getting up every 15 minutes or so to wake up your metabolism, and research shows this leads to better long-term health. Dr Lieberman also suggests that if you sit all day for work, pick a leisure activity that doesn't involve lots of sitting.

2. Running will damage your knees

We tend to think of our joints a little like a car's tyres or shock absorbers – that they will eventually wear out with overuse. Even though knees are a common site of running injuries, studies have shown that running, walking and other activities help keep knees healthy, says Dr Lieberman, and runners are, if anything, less likely to develop problems such as knee osteoarthritis.

He recommends learning how to run properly and train sensibly, which means not increasing your distance by too much, too quickly.

3. You can't be fat and fit

Several studies have found that the association between early death and being overweight or obese disappears when fitness is taken into account, says Corneel Vandelanotte, Professorial Research Fellow, Physical Activity and Health at Central Queensland University Australia.

"When you're not active you have a higher risk of heart disease, diabetes, high blood pressure, osteoporosis, some cancers, depression and anxiety."

Even though someone who is a healthy weight but inactive may look OK, you can't assume they are healthy, he says.

"People who are fit and of normal weight have the best health outcomes, so there are still plenty of reasons to try to shed some weight," says Professor Vandelanotte.

4. If you don't sweat, you're not losing weight

Not so, says Exercise & Sports Science Australia. Sweat is how your body cools itself. It's a biological response that cools your skin and regulates internal body temperature, and people vary considerably in how much they sweat. You can burn a significant amount of energy without ever breaking into a sweat.

5. If you have a chronic disease, you should avoid exercise

"This is not the case," says Julie Broderick, Assistant Professor of Physiotherapy at Trinity College Dublin.

"Being more active will benefit a range of chronic conditions, including cancer, heart disease and chronic obstructive pulmonary disease. Be as active as your condition allows, aiming for 150 minutes a week of moderate activity if possible."

If you have complex health needs, make sure you consult your doctor before starting a new exercise regime and get exercise advice from a physiotherapist or other exercise professional. ✕

Why are my eyes so sore?

Your eyes feel gritty, as if you've got sand in them, or you notice your vision is blurry by the end of the day. You may have dry eyes and treatment involves more than just eye drops.

Dry eyes can feel really uncomfortable. When your tears don't provide adequate lubrication it's more than just a minor irritation. Dry eyes can affect your vision, and if left untreated can increase your risk of eye infections, lead to eye inflammation and may even damage your cornea.

"Gritty eyes are a common symptom of dry eyes," says Dr Janice Xue, a Sydney based optometrist who specialises in treating dry eyes.

"Other symptoms can include stinging, redness, and watering. Often these symptoms can worsen as the day goes by and can be exacerbated by factors such as dry air conditioning, dust, contact lens wear and certain medications."

Having dry eyes can also affect your vision, says Dr Xue. You can experience blurry vision that comes and goes, which can make it harder to see while driving (particularly at night), reading or watching your favourite TV show.

What causes dry eyes?

The front surface of our eye is protected by a tear film which is responsible for hydrating and protecting the eye, explains Dr Xue. This tear film is made up of three main layers: lipid (top) layer; aqueous (middle) layer and mucin (bottom) layer.

There are several causes of dry eye, says Dr Xue. The most common type is known as evaporative dry eye, a condition where you usually produce enough tears, but they evaporate too quickly.

"This results in the loss of the top lipid layer that is meant to protect our eyes from the outside environment," she explains. "Evaporative dry eye is caused by a dysfunction in the Meibomian glands. These glands are responsible for producing oils that lubricate the eye."

If the Meibomian glands get blocked, they can't release the oils that lubricate your eyes and prevent the evaporation of tears. ✕

How to treat dry eyes

"While most people just use lubricating eyedrops when their eyes feel dry, they will often find it only provides temporary relief," says Dr Xue. She recommends the following steps to improve the oil secretions of your eyes:

- **Warm compresses:** Apply a warm steamy compress (40°C/104°F) with a wet facecloth for 5-10 minutes to soften and open up the pores of the blocked glands. You can also use a microwavable eye compress mask, available from optometrists and pharmacists.
- **Lid massage:** After the warm compress, gently massage your outer lids (as close to the lid margin as possible) to release the blocked oils into your eyes.
- **Nutritional supplement:** Omega 3 fatty acids help reduce dry eye symptoms by reducing inflammation of the Meibomian glands, allowing for a healthier oil secretion to be released. You'll need 1600mg high grade fish oil and 1000mg of flaxseed oil a day.
- **Blink more often:** We often forget to blink when we continuously stare at the computer for long periods. Every time we blink, our eyelids act as a windscreen wiper to re-lubricate our eyes with the oils from our eyelids.

If your dry eye symptoms persist, visit your local optometrist for an assessment.



The pursuit of happiness

We all want to be happy. The desire to feel good — and avoid feeling bad — drives pretty much every minute of our lives. But are we making ourselves unhappy by trying too hard?



We spend a lot of time and energy chasing happiness.

We eat good food that makes us happy, or if not, at least happy with our weight and our health. We work hard so we can be happy when we receive the satisfaction, recognition or money at the other end — or to avoid the pain of missing the mark.

We're even willing to suffer hardship to make others happy, because in the end that makes us happy.

Are we wasting our time? Should we stop trying so desperately hard to be happy all the time? Emerging research says yes.

Professor at the Melbourne School of Psychological Sciences of the University of Melbourne, Brock Bastian, was co-author of a ground-breaking research study published in *Scientific Reports*.

The research looked at the world's happiest countries, according to the international ranking of the World Happiness Report.

They discovered something odd: in countries which rank the highest in national happiness, people are also more likely to experience poor wellbeing due to the societal pressure to be happy.

Brock writes, "So living in happier countries

may be good for many. But for some, it can end up feeling like too much to live up to, and have the opposite effect."

Brock's research covered 40 countries, and he says it's true across cultures and demographics. It's not just for people in countries high on the happiness ranking, it's also true for everyday people.

"...our past research has shown that the more people experience pressure to feel happy and not sad, the more they tend to experience depression.

"That is, they experience lower satisfaction with their lives, more negative emotion, less positive emotion and higher levels of depression, anxiety and stress."

Does happiness really mean success?

In his book, *The Other Side of Happiness*, Bastian shares further research and neuroscience.

"Coaches, consultants and psychologists have been pushing the message that to live well we need to seek out the positive and reframe the negative," he says. "In today's world, feeling happy is no longer simply a state of mind; it has become a marker of

mental health and success. On the flip side, pain and sadness are viewed as signals of failure and sickness."

Brock says research proves that "pain and suffering are neither antithetical to happiness nor simply incidental to it. They are necessary for happiness. Without pain, there is no way to achieve real happiness."

The recent pushback against happiness

You might have heard the term toxic positivity. The mental health website [Very Well Mind](#) defines it as "the belief that no matter how dire or difficult a situation is, people should maintain a positive mindset. It's a 'good vibes only' approach to life."

The term toxic positivity is being used to call out the unrealistic and unhelpful advice so often seen on social media – and certain friends.

It's the whole "think happy thoughts and you will be happy" mantra.

It's easy to see why we fall for it, because this false positivity is ingrained with us from childhood, all through our culture. "Don't worry be happy," advised Bobby McFerrin (over and over again). "Smile though your heart is aching," sang Nat King Cole.



And yet we know from personal experience that grimly trying to be happy, despite all evidence to the contrary, only makes us sadder.

The joy of sadness

So if trying to be happy makes us sad, could sadness make us happy?

Yes! says Susan Cain, author of *Quiet* and now her new book, *Bittersweet: How Sorrow and Longing Make Us Whole*.

Cain writes about the “curiously piercing joy at the beauty of the world” that comes from the feeling she calls ‘bittersweet’: “a tendency to states of longing, poignancy, and sorrow.... The recognition that light and dark, birth and death — bitter and sweet — are forever paired.”

Cain says bittersweetness is “an authentic and elevating response to the problem of being alive in a deeply flawed yet stubbornly beautiful world”. She says western society especially “prizes cheerful goal orientation”.

“We’re taught from a very young age to scorn our own tears (‘crybaby!’), then to censure our sorrow for the rest of our lives.”

This cheerfulness denies the longing and yearning that we all feel, says Cain. She asks, why would sadness have survived evolutionary pressures, if it wasn’t necessary?

So what should we do instead of grimly trying to be happy?

Dr Susan David, Harvard Medical School psychologist, author and consultant, says we need to apply “emotional agility”: a process of “holding difficult emotions and thoughts loosely, facing them courageously and compassionately, and then moving past them to ignite change in your life.”

In her TED talk, *The gift and power of emotional courage*, David says the worst thing you can do is try to push down your annoying feelings.

“When we push our difficult emotions aside we fail to learn from them and recognise those difficult emotions contain signposts to things that we value, and if we can pay attention to the data we can adapt.”

David says the first step is to label our emotion, so we can separate from it. She advises using the phrase, “I’m noticing that I’m feeling...”, such as “I’m noticing that I’m feeling sad.”

“Research now shows that the radical acceptance of all of our emotions — even the messy, difficult ones — is the cornerstone to resilience, thriving, and true, authentic happiness.”

When feeling difficult emotions, follow this four step process from Dr Susan David:

- 1. Show Up:** Face your thoughts or feelings with curiosity and acceptance.
- 2. Step Out:** Label your emotions so you can detach from them. See them for what they are, simply emotions, not who you are.
- 3. Walk Your Why:** Use your core values to decide what to do about the emotion. For example, if you value fairness, you may choose to have a difficult conversation, rather than avoiding it because doing so reflects fairness to the individual, yourself and those around you.
- 4. Move On:** In moving forward, make small, purposeful adjustments to align your mindset, motivation and habits with your core values. Make sure that these tweaks are connected to who you want to be in your life.

Fatigue at work

In an ideal world, we'd never be tired at work. We'd be alert, energised and operating at our optimal level. We don't live in an ideal world, and sometimes you might face fatigue at work.

Fatigue is more than tiredness. Safe Work Australia defines it as "a state of mental and/or physical exhaustion which reduces a person's ability to perform work safely and effectively."

It's a real problem for two reasons.

Firstly, fatigue leads to more errors and higher risk of injury at work. This has implications for both you and your team-mates.

Secondly, long-term fatigue isn't just hard to cope with, it also leads to long-term health issues such as heart disease, diabetes, high blood pressure, anxiety and depression.

Do not ignore fatigue

If you're feeling fatigued, you must speak

up. Don't try to brush it off, or try to hide it.

In the workplace, you have a responsibility to take reasonable care for your own health and safety and a responsibility to not adversely affect the health and safety of others.

Safe Work Australia advises a systematic process for managing the risks posed by fatigue which involves:

- identifying the factors which may cause fatigue in the workplace
- if necessary assessing the risks of injury from fatigue
- controlling risks by implementing the most effective control measures reasonably practicable in the circumstances
- reviewing control measures to ensure they are working as planned.

Just as important for office workers

While terminology such as "effective control measures" may sound more suited

to blue-collar worksites or shift workers, it's just as important for those who work in the office.

According to Safe Work Australia, factors which could exacerbate fatigue for office workers include:

- workloads and work schedules
- work-related travel and work outside of normal hours (for example work a person has taken home to complete)
- work practices, for example the degree of choice and control workers have over work hours, the pace of work and rest breaks, and the type of work culture.

Talk with your manager about the causes of your fatigue, to identify whether any workplace issues may be adding to the problem, and then work out a plan to reduce these factors.

Remember, fatigue is not weakness. It's a natural biological reaction to experiencing too much or too little, such as too much exertion, or too little sleep. ✕



Ask an expert about ...

Falling asleep

"How can I fall asleep naturally" is the top question of most people who face sleep issues and insomnia.

Australian sleep expert, Olivia Arezzolo, recommends the following sleep method:

- **Block out blue light** for two to three hours before bed. Either turn off screens or use blue light glasses
- **Take lavender capsules.** Some studies show lavender reduces symptoms of anxiety

- **Have a goodnight phone alarm**, one hour before bed to remind you to turn off screens
- **Take a shower around one hour before bed**, so your body temperature drops after going from the shower to the cooler bedroom
- **Take a magnesium supplement**, ideally one featuring magnesium glycinate, di- or bi- glycinate, or chelate
- **Meditate or read** before bed
- **Wear an eye mask** to block any light.

Arezzolo says the decision on when to go to bed depends on your sleep chronotype. She says people are either a bear, lion or wolf.

- **Bears** rise with the sun and wind down in the evening, and struggle after lunch.
- **Lions** are early risers, furiously work in the morning, tailing off after midday
- **Wolves** get up late and are more energetic at night.

App of the month

Goodbudget

Goodbudget is a budget tracker that uses the old-fashioned 'envelope' method of saving: you set yourself limits for certain categories of

spending (like groceries, eating out, debt payoff) and it limits you to only spending what you have. You can share budgets with a partner or friend, sync across multiple devices and to bank accounts (if you wish), track your expenses, display your spending by category, and generate reports. A paid version is available with more features.

Available free from the [App Store](#) and [Google Play](#).

News Bites



Switch in diet helps depressed young men

Following a Mediterranean diet can help with depression in young men, found a 12-week randomised control trial from the University of Technology Sydney, published in the *American Journal of Clinical Nutrition*.

Lead researcher Jessica Bayes was surprised by how willing the young men were to embrace a new diet. "Those assigned to the Mediterranean diet were able to significantly change their original diets, under the guidance of a nutritionist, over a short time frame."

Those on the diet showed a decrease in depression symptoms, with many keen to continue with the diet once the study ended.

"There are lots of reasons why scientifically we think food affects mood," says Bayes. "For example, around 90 per cent of serotonin, a chemical that helps us feel happy, is made in our gut by our gut microbes. There is emerging evidence that these microbes can communicate to the brain via the vagus nerve, in what is called the gut-brain axis."

"To have beneficial microbes, we need to feed them fibre, which is found in legumes, fruits and vegetables," she said. ❌

The real cost of fashion

If you're a follower of 'fast fashion', University of South Australia researchers have a warning about its impact on the environment.

"Keeping up with the latest trends comes at a price," says UniSA PhD candidate Erin Skinner.

"Every year, Australians each consume more than 27kg of textiles, discarding 23kg of this into landfill. Globally the fashion industry produces about 20 per cent of the world's wastewater. This translates into 2700 litres of water to make one cotton T-shirt."

"And when it comes to CO2 emissions, the fashion industry produces more emissions than the shipping and aviation industries combined."

The researchers have 3 tips for consumers:

- 1. Step off the 'trend-mill':** spend some time considering your personal style so you aren't tempted by every influencer micro-trend.
- 2. Shop your wardrobe!** The most sustainable garment is the one you already have – wear it.
- 3. Remember:** loved clothes last. No matter where you shop, treat your clothes with kindness so they last as long as possible. ❌

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Quench your thirst with food

The average sedentary man requires about 2.9 litres of fluid a day and the average sedentary woman requires about 2.2 litres. That can seem like a daunting task on some days, but here's the catch; you don't have to drink all that water.

Roughly 20% of our daily H2O intake comes from solid foods, especially fruits and vegetables. While it's still important to drink plenty of water, especially in the summer months, you can also quench your thirst with these hydrating foods, all of which are at least 90% water by weight.

- Cucumber
- Celery
- Tomato
- Capsicum
- Cauliflower
- Watermelon
- Spinach
- Strawberries
- Broccoli
- Grapefruit

1

THING YOU CAN DO TODAY

Take a break from your phone



Life without a screen is close to impossible. We use devices to work, connect, and to play.

According to a recent report from Datareportal, worldwide, the average person spends a total of 6 hours and 57 minutes looking at a screen each day - with almost four hours of that on a mobile phone. The younger you are, the longer your daily average screen time.

Research is mounting that “excessive media and phone use is not good for us physically, mentally or emotionally,” says professor of psychology, Mary Gomes PhD.

“It is no surprise that incoming texts, emails, and notifications are a near-constant presence for many people. Our moment-to-moment experience is being fragmented on an unprecedented scale,” she says.

Gomes regularly assigns a media fast in her classes, with her students reporting the following benefits:

- **More ‘present-moment awareness’.** Students described more presence, sensory awareness, mindfulness and flow.
- **Deepened connections.** The full richness of human relationships is best found face-to-face, says Gomes. The students reported improved connections with family, friends and classmates, finding a difference in conversations when phones were out of the way.
- **Productivity and learning.** Any work that requires a focused mind will benefit from a media break, and studies have found the more distant the phone, the better the performance: when phones were placed in another room, learning improved notably, more than when they were tucked away in nearby backpacks. In the UK, secondary schools that banned phones on campus saw significant increases in student test scores.

Gomes believes we can all benefit from a fast from our phones, whether it’s a temporary breather, or an opportunity to create enduring change.

EAT SMARTER

Carrots

The rise of cauliflower and kale to veggie superstardom has meant the humble carrot has lost some status. But there aren’t many veg as versatile as carrots. Eat them raw as a snack, grated in salads, cooked and blended in soups and added to casseroles and bakes. You can even make them into a cake. What’s not to love?

Carrots are a rich source of plant compounds called carotenoids, mainly a type called beta-carotene, which your body can convert to vitamin A. Carotenoids have powerful antioxidant activity, have been linked to improved immune function and are important for skin and eye health.

When you cook carrots and add a little fat or oil you increase your ability to absorb beta-carotene.

Carrots are good for your gut as they contain a combination of soluble and insoluble fibre. Soluble fibre can lower blood sugar levels and feed the friendly bacteria in your gut. Certain soluble fibres can also impair the absorption of cholesterol from your digestive tract, lowering blood cholesterol.

Roast carrot salad

Wash and trim 1.5kg carrots and quarter lengthways, then slice a red onion into wedges. Place both in a roasting tin lined with baking paper. Mix together 1 Tbsp olive oil, zest of 1 lemon, 1 Tbsp honey and pour over the carrot mixture, tossing well. Roast for 30-40 minutes at 180°C.

Arrange the carrots and some salad leaves in a bowl, top with toasted pumpkin or sunflower seeds, and chopped parsley and mint. Drizzle over a dressing made with olive oil and lemon juice and serve.



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