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**HEALTH & SAFETY
NEWSLETTER**

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August 2023

Let's talk about **flossing**

Did you try flossing your teeth recently, and then stop when your gums bled? It's a common problem.

Many of us avoid the whole idea of flossing. We don't even like to talk about it. And when we try it, we discover our gums bleed so we stop, out of fear.

We fear it's serious, like gum disease. And we fear our dentist will judge us or tell us off like a naughty child for not looking after our gums. So we avoid the dentist as well.

But in actual fact, a bit of blood when you floss is normal, particularly if you don't floss often. It doesn't mean it's healthy – healthy gums don't bleed. But it doesn't

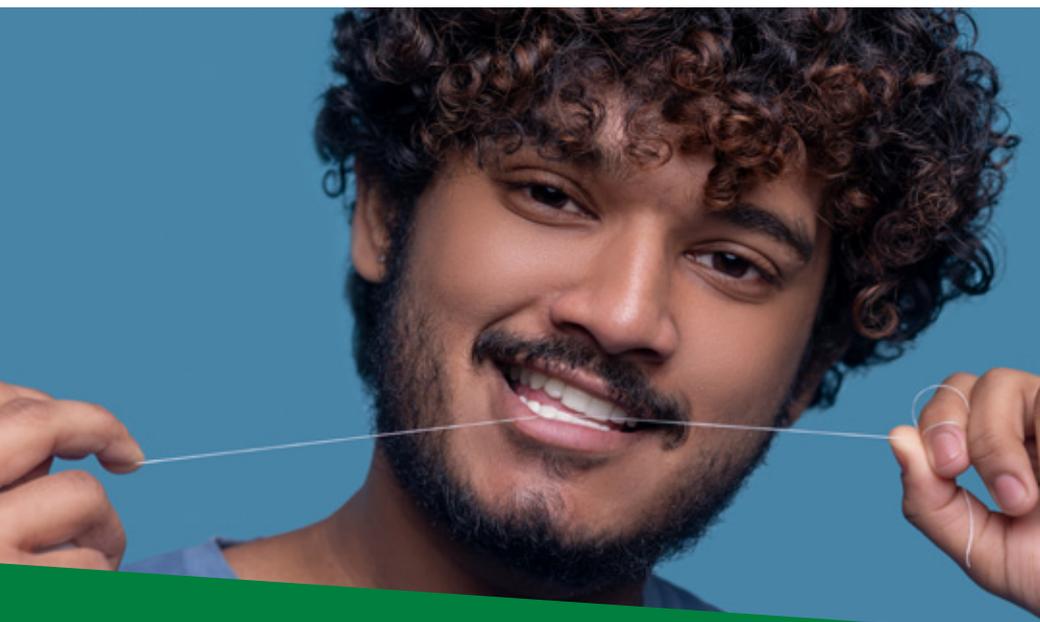
mean you should stop: it means you should floss more often.

The cause of the bleeding is the plaque which has built up between your teeth. Plaque is a sticky film of bacteria that forms on the surface of the teeth, between the teeth and above and below the gums. If plaque is not cleared away, it can lead to gum disease, as plaque can irritate and inflame your gums. When you try to remove the plaque buildup by brushing or flossing, your swollen, inflamed gums start to bleed.

Keep flossing twice a day, and if the bleeding doesn't stop after a few weeks, see your dentist for a proper clean and advice.

How to floss

1. Take approximately 30 - 45 cm of floss and wind it around your middle fingers on each hand. Hold the floss so that the string is tight and use your thumbs and index fingers to control it.
2. Gently slide the dental floss between the teeth.
3. Use a gentle up and down motion to rub the floss along the side of each tooth. The floss will be able to go slightly under the gums to remove the plaque from this area also.
4. Remove the used floss and then move on to the next space using a new section of floss or rinsing the string on a flossette under running water.



WHAT'S INSIDE

How to love exercise	2
Should you be worried about antinutrients?	4
What is the mind-body connection?	5
How lighting affects your work	6



World Humanitarian Day is observed on August 19th every year to honour humanitarian aid workers all over the world. The day is more than just a day that recognizes humanitarian workers who dedicate their lives working for humanitarian causes. It is also a day to honour all aid and health workers who continue, despite the odds, to provide life-saving support and protection to people most in need.

How to love exercise



Do you have a friend who enthuses about how awesome their mega-hard workout was? Yet you've hated exercise since primary school? Here's how to learn to love physical activity.

The U.S. Office of Disease Prevention and Health Promotion has identified five key factors in loving exercise: enjoyment, self-efficacy (that is, having the choice), social support, accountability and integration into your daily life.

Author and coach, Tony Robbins says the first factor, enjoyment, is all about mindset.

"Learning how to enjoy exercise is part mindset and part practice," says Robbins. "By adopting the attitude that exercise is enjoyable, you're able to embrace fitness as part of a holistic wellness strategy."

Robbins advises looking at your beliefs, your goals and your preferences.

1. Reconsider your beliefs

Many of us formed negative beliefs about exercise from enforced gym classes at school. These beliefs may no longer apply. Robbins says, "Take time to examine your beliefs regarding exercise...Where did the negative beliefs come from? Are they still true in your adult life or are you clinging to outdated beliefs that no longer serve you?"

2. Reconsider your goals

If you're only exercising to lose weight, you'll find it discouraging. Plus, you'll miss out on all the other benefits such as helping you feel better – mentally, emotionally and physically.

Robbins says, "When you start focusing on energising your body, improving your health and enhancing your life, you will start to view exercise as a healthy decision instead of an obligation."

Instead of focusing on the number on the scale, focus on how you feel after your workout, or even the next day. Do you feel more energised? More relaxed? Over time you'll start to feel stronger and more confident.

3. Reconsider your choices

Hate running? Don't do it. Do something else.

Try something else, just for fun, with no expectation. Remember, any type of physical activity that elevates your heart rate is a form of exercise.

YouTube is full of free videos of wildly different and interesting exercises. Try a dance tutorial, or drumming on the ground.

Or, if you find socialising motivates you, consider joining a local social group. This could be a weekend hiking group or a community team sport. Or just arrange a regular time to walk with local friends or colleagues.

Unique exercise ideas to inspire you

Use these budget-friendly ideas as a starting point for new and fun ways to move.

- **Skip rope.** Look up skipping routines in YouTube – there are thousands! You don't need to buy a proper skipping rope, just use an old rope or long strap at home.
- **Go to a playground.** This one's more fun with a friend! Go to a kids' playground and play on the equipment. Try the monkey bars, go up and down the slide as many times as you can. (Tip: better to do when playgrounds are emptier, such as toddler dinnertime, and make sure the equipment can hold your weight!)
- **Birding.** It's walking – with a purpose. Go for a walk or hike and look for birds. You could use an app such as Merlin Bird ID, or just write it in a notebook. Or if birds aren't your thing, look for particular cars, or bikes or a random focus such as unique letterboxes or street art.

Should you be worried about antinutrients?

Can we reduce antinutrients?

Soaking, boiling or other high-heat processes remove many antinutrients, and in some cases, such as certain lectins, it's essential that we destroy them.

"Many lectins are toxic if they are not inactivated by some form of processing," says nutritionist Catherine Saxelby on her website foodwatch.com.au. "For example, raw kidney beans are toxic in this regard and other beans can cause vomiting and diarrhoea if they have not been cooked sufficiently."

Boiling beans for at least 10 minutes inactivates the lectins, as does the canning process. Be warned that cooking in a slow cooker without first boiling for 10 minutes will not destroy the lectins.

Search online for 'antinutrients' and you might be concerned. According to some sites, you should steer clear of foods you've always thought were healthy.

Antinutrients are compounds in plants that help protect them from threats like bacterial infection and insects. They are high in foods like wholegrains, legumes, and leafy greens – foods we're told to eat more of.

The problem with antinutrients is that they can bind with certain minerals in our bodies – notably calcium, iron, potassium, magnesium and zinc – making them less available.

Common antinutrients are:

- oxalates, found in leafy greens, tea, beans, nuts
- lectins, found in beans, peanuts and wholegrains
- phytates, from wholegrains, seeds, legumes and nuts, and
- tannins, found in tea, coffee, legumes, berries, chocolate and wine.

Antinutrients sound pretty scary – after all, we don't want to be eating foods that may lead to a mineral deficiency. A quick online search might alarm you even more. Many sites claim these 'plant

toxins' are behind inflammation, autoimmune disease, weight gain and kidney problems. Fortunately, most of these claims are not backed by evidence.

Do we need to ban the beans?

According to *Tufts Health & Nutrition letter*, there's no evidence that antinutrients in commonly consumed foods lead to mineral deficiencies. It says that a varied diet should give us plenty of minerals, and the small percentage we cannot absorb because they are bound to antinutrients should not be a problem.

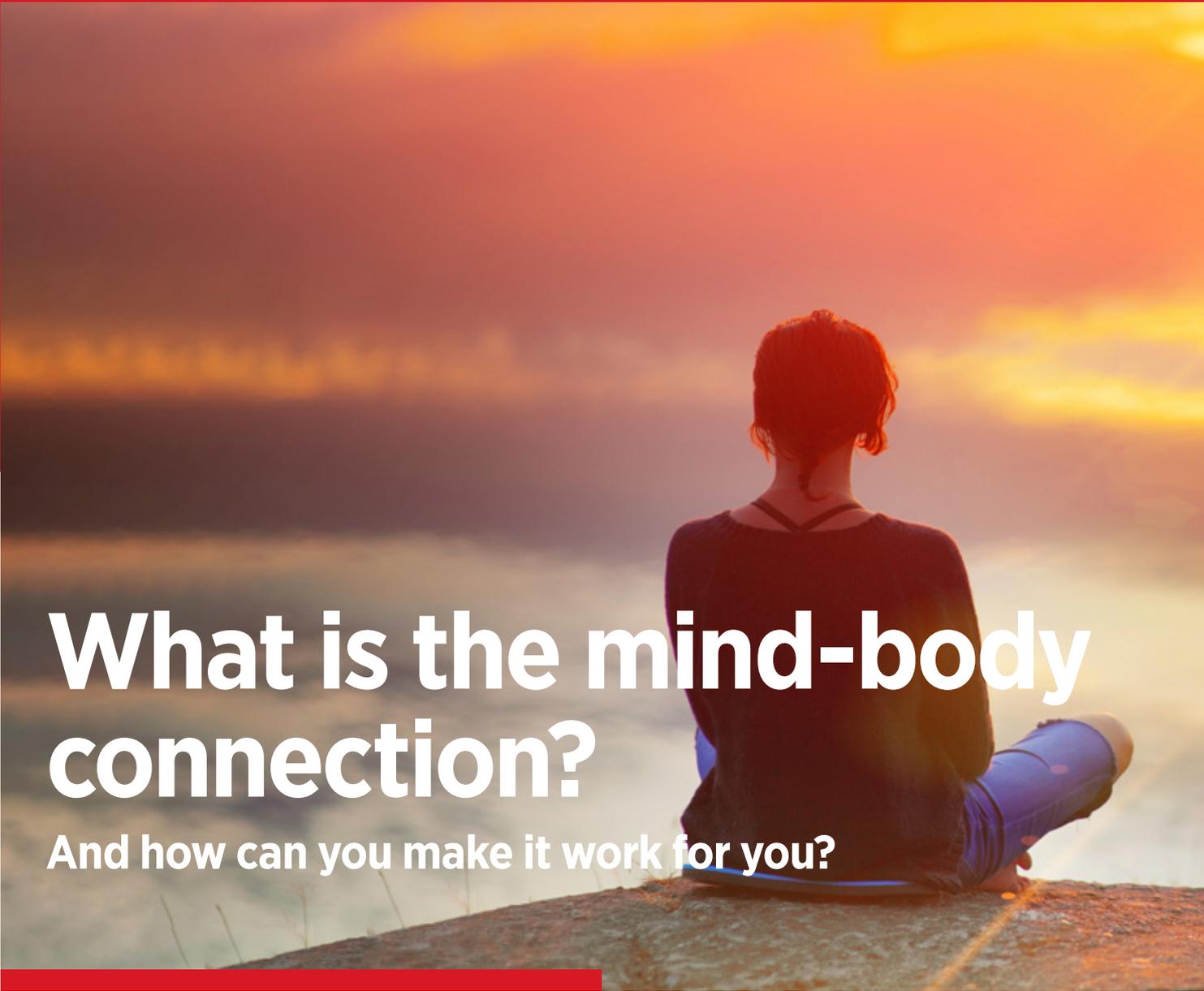
If you eliminated or reduced the foods that contain antinutrients you would lose vital sources of dietary fibre, vitamins including A, C, E, B group, K and E, minerals, healthy fats, phytochemicals, and antioxidants like lutein and zeaxanthin. The health benefits of a diet rich in plant foods far outweighs the minerals lost through antinutrients.

The benefits of antinutrients

Many antinutrients, rather than something to avoid, are now even considered health-promoting, says Jill Joyce, Assistant Professor of Public Health Nutrition at Oklahoma State University. Writing in the *Conversation*, Professor Joyce says that the most

frequently eaten antinutrients can support the immune system, lower the risk of cancer, type 2 diabetes and cardiovascular disease, inhibit the growth of bacteria and fungi, and may decrease cholesterol levels and blood pressure.

This doesn't mean you should never give them a second thought. If you're at risk of a disease related to mineral deficiencies, such as osteoporosis with calcium deficiency or anaemia with iron deficiency, speak to an Accredited Practising Dietitian for advice on how to monitor your food choices for antinutrient content.



What is the mind-body connection?

And how can you make it work for you?

You know your thoughts affect how you feel, but did you know they affect your biology and physiology too? Your thoughts can even influence your immunity and your risk of heart disease.

The idea that the mind and body are connected was an accepted part of eastern medicine for thousands of years, and now western medicine is catching up. Research shows that our mental and emotional health affects our physical health, and vice versa. But what does the mind-body connection really mean? And how can you make it work for you, not against you?

What is this connection?

In essence, the mind-body connection means our minds and bodies are part of one integrated system. Our minds can affect how healthy our bodies are, and on the flipside what we eat, how much we exercise,

even our posture can impact our mental state.

One of the leaders in this field is Dr James Gordon, founder of the Centre for Mind Body Medicine and professor of psychiatry and family medicine at Georgetown University Medical School.

Dr Gordon says, “the brain and peripheral nervous system, the endocrine and immune systems, and indeed, all the organs of our body and all the emotional responses we have, share a common chemical language and are constantly communicating with one another.”

You would have already experienced one of the most direct and common impacts of the mind-body connection: stress.

How stress connects mind and body: for good and bad

Dr Jennifer Kilkus, Assistant Clinical Professor within the Department of Psychiatry at Yale School of Medicine, explains:

“When our brain perceives a threat, our bodies experience a cascade of physiological processes.

“The adrenal glands release the stress hormones adrenaline and noradrenaline into the body. The hypothalamic-pituitary-adrenal axis also plays a role through a series of processes that result in the release of cortisol, another type of stress hormone.

“When this happens, the heart races, breathing rate increases, and your blood moves away from areas of the body that are more associated with ‘maintenance’ processes, like digestion, to your arms and legs so you can run or fight.”

Life-and-death emergencies are an example of how this mind-body connection work for good: your body is primed to act.

But the flipside is also true, and this connection can cause problems when you face chronic stress, and your body keeps activating this flight-or-fight response over and over.

3 ways to make your mind-body connection work for you right now

1. Meditation and mindfulness

If you're new to meditation, try some guided meditations on YouTube or a free app such as [Insight Timer](#). One of the easiest mindfulness techniques comes from translational neuroscientist Catherine Kerr. She suggests focusing on your toes whenever you find yourself spinning into negative thoughts. On one foot, start with your left toe, and notice how it feels. Then notice each toe, and the feeling between your toes. Over time you can expand your practice to scan your whole body.

2. Deep breathing

Your breath is your best way to “hack” your body and mind. Start by noticing your breath, then try taking slow deep breaths. You can use counting to help you: breathe in for four counts and out for four counts. Or try the classic 4 7 8: breathe in for four counts, hold for seven, then breathe out for eight. The art of breathing may seem unrealistic, but with proper techniques, you can enhance your body and relieve yourself from stress.

3. Hydration and fuel

Just as your emotional health can impact your physical health, meeting the most basic of your physical needs can help look after your psychological state. Most of us know how hunger can quickly turn a good mood into a bad mood. When you are well resourced physically (think a good night's sleep, a nutritious breakfast and a big glass of water), you'll be better equipped to manage your emotions and life's stresses.

“Those same stress hormones that are so helpful in preparing us to survive in an emergency situation can take a toll when they repeatedly circulate in our body,” says Dr Kilkus. “Immunity is suppressed, and inflammation occurs throughout the body that can cause damage over time.”

In fact, stress is associated with numerous diseases including heart disease, arthritis and the common cold. A 2012 study by Carnegie Mellon University reports, “Stress wreaks havoc on the mind and body. Until now, it has not been clear exactly how stress influences disease and health. Now researchers have found that chronic psychological stress is associated with the body losing its ability to regulate the inflammatory response.”

The medical evidence

A well-known but still misunderstood way your mind affects your body is through the placebo effect. Rigorous studies consistently show that a placebo such as a sugar pill instead of an active drug, or a

saline injection instead of pain relief, can be just as effective as the real thing. In fact, our brain can release its own opioids when it thinks it's receiving an analgesic, resulting in real pain relief. The placebo effect works across different demographics and populations, and for many different medical interventions.

Author of *The Expectation Effect*, David Robson says, “our beliefs become self-fulfilling prophecies through changes to our behaviour and our physiology.”

Robson points to the evidence on ageing as a clear example.

“People who have a negative belief about aging – who associate aging with a kind of inevitable decline with disability and with a lack of independence – they actually age much more quickly. Their actual biological aging is accelerated. And this can be seen right down to the cellular level.

“People with a more positive attitude to their later years are less likely to develop hearing loss, frailty, and illness—and even

Alzheimer's disease—than people who associate aging with senility and disability. In a very real sense, we are as young as we feel inside.”

How to influence your own mind-body integration

Sometimes called “body intelligence”, there are hundreds of techniques and systems that use the mind body connection for better health by encouraging greater awareness of your physical body. Many have authoritative research studies backing up their efficacy, while others are still untested or emerging. The most common ones include meditation, yoga and even exercise.

Others include tai chi and qi gong, the Feldenkrais Method, biofeedback, laughter yoga, music therapy, acupuncture and massage. Most techniques focus on the stress response and managing your nervous system.

See the box above for actions you can try today.

How lighting affects your work

Eyestrain from struggling to see your computer, narrowly missing a discarded box on the floor, nearly tripping over an electrical lead – these hazards can all be related to poor lighting in the workplace.

You need sufficient lighting to move safely around the workplace and perform your job without adopting an awkward posture or straining your eyes.

According to SafeWork NSW, poor lighting can result in:

- eyestrain, headaches or fatigue from poor posture due to low visibility
- neck, shoulder and back pain from straining to see items in poorly lit areas
- increased risk of injury from slips, trips and falls – particularly when working in and around moving or stationary

machinery, equipment and/or near stairs in dim or unlit areas

- psychological issues, such as anxiety, stress or depression, when exposed to gloomy lighting over a period of time
- security risks due to violence and aggression particularly near dark and unlit areas at night.

But lighting doesn't have to be dim to become a hazard. Too much light or excessive illumination can lead to headaches, fatigue (from exposure to flickering lights or over-illumination), even stress and anxiety.



Glare or reflections can affect your eyes. Eye discomfort, squinting, eye strain and impaired vision can result from constantly adjusting your eyes to the bright light against the average light in the area.

What you can do

To get optimum lighting for your task:

- turn on the light if available
- use task lighting if your work area is in shadow
- reposition your work to a better lit area of your desk
- position your monitor at right angles to the window to reduce glare
- use blinds or curtains to prevent glare
- if moving into a low light area, stop and wait for your eyes to adjust before proceeding
- report broken lights or other lighting issues to your supervisor
- if you have frequent headaches, consider getting your eyes tested.



Ask an expert about ...

Q What is the least recognised sign of stroke?

According to the Australian Stroke Foundation, the least recognised but key sign of stroke is an inability to lift both arms. Nearly 60 per cent of stroke patients present with this common stroke indicator, yet the Australian Stroke Foundation's recent annual F.A.S.T. National Awareness Survey found only 10 per cent of Australians would connect this symptom with stroke. If it goes unnoticed, this could have deadly consequences.

"Every minute a stroke strikes, up to 1.9 million brain cells are attacked," says Stroke Foundation Interim Executive Director Stroke Services and Research Mr Kelvin Hill.

"The longer a stroke goes untreated, the more damage it does, which can result in death and long-term disability."

A stroke happens when blood supply to the brain is interrupted. Blood contains oxygen and important nutrients for your brain cells. Blood may be interrupted or stop moving through an artery, because the artery is blocked or bursts. When brain cells don't get enough oxygen or nutrients, they die.

The F.A.S.T. acronym highlights the three most common signs of stroke – face, arms, and speech.

Face: Check their face. Has their mouth drooped?

Arms: Can they lift both arms?

Speech: Is their speech slurred? Do they understand you?

Time: Is critical. Stroke is a medical emergency so always call 000 straight away if you see any of these signs.

"Knowing F.A.S.T. saves lives. We're asking all people to learn F.A.S.T. and not to forget that 'A' is an inability to lift both arms and is an important indicator that someone is having a stroke," Mr Hill said.

App of the month

Beacon

Beacon is a cyber safety educational app, designed to keep parents and carers of kids aged 0-18 up to date with

trusted information that helps keep their kids safe online. Beacon provides parents and carers with the knowledge they need to help navigate their children's digital behaviour and reduce harms associated with being online. It offers articles and videos; tailored content and alerts; an interactive, personalised digital family agreement; and other services.

While it is Australian, the information is useful to parents everywhere.

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

Losing weight is beneficial, even if you put it back on

Losing weight can be difficult and it's particularly frustrating if you find some of those lost kilos slowly creep back on.

But it's still worthwhile, say researchers from the University of Oxford. Their research found that people who had obesity and regained weight lost through weight loss programmes still had long-term improvements in risk factors for heart disease and type 2 diabetes, such as cholesterol, blood pressure and blood glucose levels.

We need more research to understand why weight regain doesn't completely reverse the health benefits of weight loss. But it could be that improvements in diet and exercise benefit health independent of weight loss, or that weight loss delays the onset of health issues.

"If you are regaining weight, first of all, you're not alone," says lead researcher Jamie Hartmann-Boyce. "But it also doesn't mean that it wasn't worth it. It doesn't mean that there weren't benefits."

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News Bites



New hope for chronic back pain

Having a sore back is much more than a nuisance. It's the greatest global cause of disability, with few safe and effective treatments. That may be about to change, thanks to a ground-breaking Australian-led study published in *The Lancet*, that builds on what we are learning about chronic pain and how best to treat it.

The researchers used a treatment called cognitive functional therapy (CFT) to change the way patients think about their backs and respond to their pain. During personalised and intensive coaching sessions, patients were encouraged to stop worrying about posture or a straight back, or to fear bending. The physiotherapist helped the patients challenge their fears, move naturally and return to normal life.

"Not protecting your back, breaking those posture rules, relaxing your body, not engaging your core, engaging with movement in a fearless way – that actually gives you relief," said Curtin University's Professor Peter O'Sullivan, co-author of the study. Much of chronic back pain is driven by beliefs, fears, emotions and protective responses, he says.

The trial found that CFT halved the level of disability experienced by patients with chronic low back pain. It reduced their average pain levels by about 35 per cent, relief that remained at the one-year follow-up.

Learn to ask for help

In a recent survey, 42 per cent of US adults said they had felt lonely at least one or two days during the previous week. Loneliness increases your risk for depression and even premature death.

Connecting with people by learning to ask for help is one way to alleviate loneliness, writes clinical psychologist Jelena Kecmanovic in *The Washington Post*. Yet she finds that many people assume that others don't like being asked for help.

"I often invite my patients to imagine how they would feel if an acquaintance or friend asked them for a favour," she says. "That's when they realise that being asked for help can be a gift – it often engenders good feelings related to being perceived as a trusted source of support and fulfils the need for being needed."

Research consistently finds that humans underestimate how positively helpers feel and how willing people are to help, even when they're strangers.

1 THING YOU CAN DO TODAY



Plan to play

When was the last time you played? If you answered 'can't remember' it might be time to redefine what play is, and plan to fit more of it into your day.

Why? Because research shows that play is critical for our wellbeing – the positive emotions we feel during play increase joy and decrease distress, says psychologist Trudy Meehan.

If you think you don't know how to play Dr Stuart Brown, researcher and founder of the National Institute for Play, has identified a number of play personalities that can help you find out what kinds of play work best for you.

Perhaps you're a Competitor and enjoy playing games with specific rules, such as soccer. If you find joy in making things – think woodworking, fixing machinery, or sewing – then it's likely you're a Creator or Artist.

We've probably all met a Director – someone who enjoys planning and directing, like hosting themed birthday parties, while the Explorer loves new places or discovering new experiences.

So how do you plan to play? Start with a 'playlist', suggests Trudy Meehan. This could be a list of playful activities or hobbies you have enjoyed or would like to try. Things like dancing, making art, playing with a pet or children, throwing a frisbee, visiting a museum, singing or going sightseeing. Plan out what you can do every day over the next week to play, then start playing – even if it's just for five minutes.

EAT SMARTER

Peanut butter

Whether you're in team smooth or team crunchy, peanut butter is one of the world's most popular spreads. But is it a healthy choice? That depends.

A product that's 100 per cent peanuts has many nutritional benefits:

- **Protein.** Peanuts are a legume (like beans, peas and lentils) and so are protein rich.
- **Fibre.** Peanut butter has 1.8g fibre in a tablespoon.
- **Heart-healthy fats.** Half the fat in peanut butter is made up of oleic acid, a healthy type of monounsaturated fat.
- **Vitamins and minerals.** Vitamins E, B6 and B3, folate, magnesium, copper and manganese, and heart-healthy polyphenols.

But peanut butter isn't always just peanuts, found researchers from consumer advocacy group *Choice*. They tested peanut butters on offer in supermarkets and found many contain added sugar and salt. The amount varies, so it pays to read the label. If the product is not 100 per cent peanuts, look further. Some contain both sugar and salt, while others just a pinch of salt.

Some 'light' varieties have 25 per cent less fat, but *Choice* warns that the trade-off is a product that's about 25 per cent less peanuts and padded out with a type of starch typically used as a thickener or filler.

If it's important to you, you might also want to check if you can buy peanut butter made from local ingredients.



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