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**HEALTH & SAFETY
NEWSLETTER**

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APRIL 2021

4 ways to help beat the blues

Some days we feel flat for no obvious reason. And that's OK. It's impossible to feel happy and positive every day.

We all feel moody at times, it's part and parcel of our emotional rhythm. If you find yourself suffering from a temporary case of the blues, here are four steps you can take.

1. Start moving.

Want an instant mood lift? Exercise can have an immediate impact on how you feel. While researchers aren't sure exactly why it makes us feel better, exercise is believed to increase the brain chemical serotonin, which helps your brain regulate mood. It also boosts your level of natural mood lifting endorphins.

Exercise increases energy levels, limits the effect of stress on your brain, gives you a focused activity that helps you feel more in control, and helps with your sleep. Sydney's Black Dog Institute says studies have shown that people who exercise regularly

experience fewer symptoms of depression and anxiety than those who don't.

2. Head to a local park.

Nature can have a powerful effect on our mental state, says Dr Jason Strauss, instructor in psychiatry at Harvard-affiliated Cambridge Health Alliance. There's a strong connection between time spent in nature and reduced stress, anxiety and depression. While exercising in nature brings double benefits, simply listening to natural sounds or looking at something pleasant like trees and greenery can distract your mind from negative thinking.

3. Challenge your thinking.

When you feel low you can tend to overthink. If you think that everything is going wrong, ask yourself if that's really true, suggests psychologist Alice Boyes.

It's easy to feel that all you experience is bad luck, she says, but if you do a more honest analysis of what's going wrong and what's going right, you'll see that the ratio of good to bad things in your life might be more 50:50 than 10:90.

4. Try something new.

Sometimes when we feel low, we're simply bored with the same old activities, people, perspectives, and routines, says Boyes. If this rings true for you, try something new. It could be a visit to somewhere you've never been, or something as simple as a walk in a different area or cooking a new recipe.

Sometimes a low mood can signal a more serious medical condition such as depression. If you're finding it hard to work, socialise or function, make sure you see your doctor or a healthcare professional. ✕



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28 April is Pay It Forward Day, a global initiative that aims to make a difference by creating a ripple of kindness felt across the world. What can you do? Pay for someone's cup of coffee, help someone out in need, donate blood, or let others know about Pay it Forward. Find more at payitforwardday.com.

Why you should **add weights** to your workout



Walking, running, swimming, cycling – and almost any team sport – these are fabulous ways to exercise. They all boost your metabolism and help you manage your physical and mental health.

But if you want to super-charge your health, and your fitness goals, then adding some strength training can make a huge difference.

In short, weight training will help you feel better, move better, and even look better.

Strength training and weight training refer to using some kind of resistance to work your muscles. This could be free weights, weight machines, resistance bands or even your own body weight.

It's especially important as you get older. According to Harvard Health, the average 30-year-old will lose about a quarter of their muscle strength by age 70 and half by age 90. Without strength training, your body will become weaker over the years, and less able to do everyday things.

The proven benefits of doing weights are significant. They include:

- stronger bones and muscles
- better sleep
- faster metabolism, so you can burn more kilojoules/calories at rest
- better blood sugar control
- improved cardiovascular fitness
- better cholesterol levels
- improved weight management

- reduced lower back pain
- relief for arthritis pain and motion range
- increased confidence.

Weight training brings some other, more surprising benefits too.

Research shows it may help reduce depression and anxiety. A Harvard analysis of 33 studies involving more than 1,800 people found that people with mild to moderate depression who did weight training at least twice a week saw significant reductions in their symptoms, compared with those who didn't.

Strength training also helps prevent heart disease. A study in *Medicine & Science in Sports & Exercise* revealed that less than an hour of weekly resistance exercise reduces the risk of developing metabolic syndrome by up to 70 per cent. Metabolic syndrome is a cluster of conditions including high blood pressure, high cholesterol and elevated blood sugar, that raise your risk of heart disease.

Great! How do I start?

To begin with, you only need a 20-minute workout, at least two days a week. Avoid doing consecutive days, so your muscles have time to rest and rebuild.

The good news is that you don't need to join a gym to get started. You can use your own body weight with exercises such as pushups, lunges and squats. Check out free videos on YouTube with a search terms such as "strength training at home no equipment".

If you can get to a gym, ask the instructors to show you how to use the equipment.

Remember, you won't see results straight away, but you'll probably feel the benefits. It takes around four to eight weeks to see any visible difference in your body, depending on how much exercise you did before and how often you train.

If you have an underlying health condition, check with your doctor before starting a new exercise program. ✕

Cardio or weights? Which is better?

If you've only got 45 minutes for a workout, should you spend that precious time on cardio or weights?

This debate has been raging among health professionals for years, with most agreeing the answer is "both" and "it depends".

And certainly, if you want to build muscle, then weights and strength training is the best choice. Likewise, if you want to be able to run long distances, then cardio would help you reach your goals.

But what about the rest of us? Those who exercise to feel good and be healthier?

A combination of both is best. You can achieve this by either separating your workouts – for example, warming up on a treadmill at the gym and then moving over to the weights – or by combining body-weight exercises such as burpees or jumping squats.

What to do if you're low in iron



You may put your fatigue down to a busy job, or the demands of a growing family. But it could also be due to iron deficiency – and it's easily fixed.

Feeling wiped out? Finding it hard to concentrate? Picking up every bug going around? Or maybe you can't exercise at the intensity you used to, find yourself getting breathless walking up a gentle hill, or notice you're often a little dizzy or lightheaded. It's time to see your GP, as these are all signs of iron deficiency.

What does iron do?

You learnt at school that iron transports oxygen around the body in your blood, but it's also involved in energy production and immune function. So if you're not getting enough iron – due to insufficient intake from your diet or a problem absorbing it – you can end up with a whole range of symptoms from fatigue, brittle nails and pale skin to dizziness, cold hands and feet and trouble concentrating. You can even develop unusual cravings for substances such as ice or dirt, a condition known as pica.

Who is most likely to be lacking in iron?

Worldwide, iron deficiency is the most common nutritional disorder. Those most at risk include menstruating women (because of blood loss), pregnant and lactating women, babies and toddlers, teenage girls and female athletes.

There's also some evidence that globally, vegetarians and vegans are more at risk too, because they don't eat any meat or fish – foods that contain the more absorbable form of iron called haem iron. However, vegetarians who eat a well-balanced diet are no more likely to have iron deficiency anaemia than non-vegetarians.

If I think I'm low in iron, should I take a supplement?

It's important to hold off on the supplements until you know iron is the problem.

The only reliable way of telling if you are iron deficient is through a blood test, so always visit your doctor to get checked out. All those symptoms such as fatigue, dizziness and breathlessness can indicate

Should I eat more red meat?

Depending on your level of deficiency, you may be able to restore your iron levels through eating more iron-rich foods. While red meat is a particularly good source of iron, Australians actually get most of their iron from non-meat sources, such as wholegrains.

Good sources of iron include:

- Meat, poultry, organ meats like liver, and seafood. These contain the more absorbable heme iron.
- Wholegrains, and iron-fortified breakfast cereals and breads.
- Dark green leafy vegetables such as broccoli, spinach and kale; dried fruits including raisins, prunes and dried apricots; nuts and seeds; and legumes such as dried beans, peas, lentils, and soy beans (including tofu).
- Vitamin C increases iron absorption, so eat plenty of brightly coloured fruits and vegetables with your meals.
- Avoid tea and coffee around mealtimes as the tannins in them can bind to iron, making it harder for your body to absorb.

other health conditions, too. Incorrectly self-diagnosing can be dangerous and may delay you getting the treatment you need.

Another reason not to rush into buying iron supplements is that even if you are iron deficient it may not be a problem with your diet. You could have difficulties absorbing iron due to a gastrointestinal disorder such as coeliac disease, or you've been a bit heavy handed with zinc supplements, which can affect iron absorption too.

Taking additional iron when you don't need to can also interfere with your body's absorption of other vital minerals, such as zinc and copper.

And if you do need supplements, always take them exactly as your doctor advises. That's because the human body isn't particularly good at excreting iron, and you could poison yourself if you take more than the recommended dose.

Children are especially at risk of iron toxicity, so always keep iron supplements tightly capped and out of children's reach. ✕



It's tough being a man: men's mental health

It's no wonder men are facing such high levels of mental health problems. The pressure of being a man in today's society is immense. Fortunately, our culture is changing and support is easier to access than ever.

From a very young age, boys are told to never show weakness. In the playground, in the media, even by their family, they are conditioned to put on a strong confident front at all times. As a result, men feel they must be fearless and stoic, even – and especially – in difficult times. They must be strong providers and protectors. Tears are seen as a sign of failure, and a cause of great humiliation.

So with all those feelings pushed down, and with that intense pressure, it's not surprising that mental health issues are so high. And it's even less of a surprise that so few men feel able to recognise it, or get help for it.

It's not surprising, but it is devastating. And fatal.

Worldwide, three times as many men than women commit suicide, and in some countries the number is much higher.

According to the World Health Organization, 2.8 per cent of men worldwide are living with an anxiety disorder, and 2.7 per cent of men are suffering from depression. As ways of measuring this data vary from country to country, this figure is likely to be much higher in reality.

Things are changing

There is hope – and change. It's becoming more socially acceptable for men to talk about

mental health, and in many societies boys are being raised to express and manage their emotions.

"Men are opening up to one another, and engaging in more intimate and communicative friendships," says Brittany Ralph, a PhD candidate in Australian masculinity.

"This shift is by no means universal, and there's still a long way to go. But what it signals is that the fear that used to drive men inward – of humiliation and rejection by one's peers – is proving largely unfounded."

In addition, men now have many ways to seek help, beyond sitting on a couch in traditional therapy. (see box on the side)

And then there's loneliness

One in three men believes that there is no-one to help them out if in they're in need, according to Relationships Australia. Half of all men don't have as many friends as they would like.

The COVID-19 pandemic has produced a loneliness epidemic in both men and women. A number of surveys conducted in 2020 has seen a rise in people saying they feel lonelier now than before COVID.

Our usual social opportunities were taken away – going into the workplace, attending

sporting events with friends or family, or catching up at the pub. The natural, informal socialising stopped. With COVID, we had to make the effort to reach out to others, and usually by phone or online video, which doesn't suit everybody.

During 2020, telephone help services such as Lifeline and Beyond Blue reported dramatic increases in calls from people experiencing anxiety and loneliness.

But even before COVID, loneliness was a serious issue around the world. The 2018 Australian loneliness report found that one in four people reported problematic levels of loneliness, and men had higher levels of loneliness than women. The UK now has a Minister for Loneliness, following a report which found that more than nine million people in Britain often or always feel lonely. And US studies have highlighted a "loneliness epidemic", especially among seniors.

In 2017, author Billy Baker wrote an article which went viral. It was called, "The biggest threat facing middle-age men isn't smoking or obesity. It's loneliness." He describes how easy it is for men to lose touch with friends, particularly once they start a family.

Baker points to research which shows that people who are socially isolated are much

“The only thing more exhausting than being depressed is pretending that you’re not.”

– @anthemofhope, Twitter

Non-traditional ways to get support

more likely to die during a given period than their socially connected neighbours, even after correcting for age, gender, exercising and eating right.

A study by Brigham Young University, using data from 3.5 million people collected over 35 years, found that people who are lonely or isolated have a 26-32 percent higher chance of dying prematurely.

Loneliness is hard to talk about. It makes many men feel embarrassed, as if people will think they don't have friends. Yet it is incredibly common, which means that many other men you know probably also feel lonely.

So what can you do about it?

- HeadsUpGuys, a program of the University of British Columbia, gives a great piece of advice: **prioritise and make time for more social connection.**

- Start by setting aside a couple of hours a week to do something social and give yourself a chance to connect with others.

- You can also use the time you already have available – such as when you're commuting to work – to check in with others.

Remember, lots of people are also looking for deeper connections too, so you may be helping them as much as you are helping yourself.

Getting help with your mental health has never been easier. You don't even have to do it face-to-face, unless you want to, and there are many ways you can access support at a time and place that works for you.

Here are some non-traditional, non-confronting and free ways to get support:

Helplines

24/7 free phone lines where you can talk with a counsellor in complete confidentiality.

These vary from country to country, so a quick internet search will help you find your local helpline.

Online

Online groups and chat can help you. Use online chat from a phone, tablet or computer. Often it's easier to write what you're really feeling instead of saying it. For a more structured group feel, an online group that meets up via video link might be more your thing.

- Men's support groups - these can be online as well as in-person. You can search for one online or near you that shares your goals and ideals.
- Online chat such as the Australian Mensline online chat: mensline.org.au
- Digital mental health resources: Looking up your government's health webpage for mental health will often show you reputable resources specific to your location.

Talk to friends and family

The Australian website [Beyond Blue](https://beyondblue.org.au) has great tips on how to start talking to people about how you're feeling. Search for “have the conversation”.

Movember Conversations is also a great resource for showing how to start a conversation. Visit it here: conversations.movember.com

Keeping your workplace safe from fire

We always think it won't happen to us. When we see stories of fire on the news, how often do we look around our own homes and workplaces to assess our risk?

Imagine the impact of a fire at your workplace – at the very least it will threaten employee safety, and potentially destroy expensive equipment and affect production.

To decrease the risk of fire at your workplace, follow these vital steps:

1. Keep your workspace clean and tidy.

Clutter increases the 'fire load' of an area or building, which means there are more items that can catch and fuel fire. Clutter in corridors, stairs and fire exits can prevent the swift evacuation of people, so these should be always kept clear.

2. Store flammable materials safely. All stock should be safely stored, but particular care should be given to any flammable

materials and liquids. These should always be kept in appropriate containers, so read the label and Safety Data Sheet for instructions. Never store oily or solvent soaked rags – these should be placed in a covered metal container and disposed of regularly.

3. Keep an eye on electrical equipment.

Electrical equipment is often the cause of workplace fires. Old wires with frayed ends, overloaded plug sockets that overheat, and faulty electrical equipment can quickly become fire hazards. Always report any suspect or faulty equipment.

4. Only smoke in designated areas.

Observe any 'no smoking' signs and always dispose of cigarettes in the bins provided. ✕

If you see smoke or fire

Fire and Rescue NSW recommends the following procedure:

1. Remain calm, do not panic or shout, and remember RACE

- **RESCUE:** Rescue any people in immediate danger – if it's safe to do so.
- **ALARM:** Raise the alarm - ring the Fire Brigade; notify your switchboard; notify the staff member in charge.
- **CONTAIN:** if practicable, close all doors and windows to contain the fire – only if safe to do so.
- **EXTINGUISH:** Try to extinguish the fire using appropriate firefighting equipment only if you are trained and it is safe to do so.

2. After carrying out RACE:

- Follow the instructions of your Fire Warden
- Prepare to evacuate if necessary
- Leave the light on
- Save records if possible



Ask an expert about ...

Q I have smoke alarms in my house. How should I maintain them and when should I replace them?

Fire & Rescue NSW replies:

A working smoke alarm provides a critical early warning, giving you and your family time to escape. It can take as little as three minutes for a fire to take hold and takes only two quick breaths of thick, black smoke to render someone unconscious.

As smoke alarms can be affected by dust, insects, humidity and age, they need to be replaced at least every 10 years. Importantly, technology has also evolved and improved over this time. We recommend replacing old, outdated smoke alarms with new interconnected alarms in every bedroom, living space and even the garage in your home.

All smoke alarms should comply with your country's standards. A quick web search should provide you with the information you need to check that your smoke alarm meets those standards.

We recommend that:

Every month: smoke alarms should be tested (by pressing the test button) to ensure the battery and alarm work.

Every six months: smoke alarms should be cleaned with a vacuum cleaner to remove dust or particles that could prevent them from working properly or set off false alarms.

Once a year: replace the batteries in your smoke alarms if they are lead or alkaline batteries.

Every 10 years: the sensitivity in smoke alarms will reduce over time, so every 10 years replace all smoke alarms with new 10-year lithium powered smoke alarms or earlier if specified by the manufacturer.

Be Alarmed!

You should designate an annual date to change the batteries in your smoke alarms and put a reminder in your diary to do so.

In Australia, research in 2019 found that nine per cent of people have never changed the battery in their smoke alarm, and 17 per cent have no plans to do so. ✕

App of the month

7 Minute Workout

There are a number of copycat apps on the market, but the J&J Official 7 Minute Workout App is the fast, simple science-based way to work out anywhere, anytime. It was designed by Chris Jordan, Director of Exercise Physiology at the Johnson & Johnson Human Performance Institute and has helped people around the world get the most out of every minute. The app offers 72 exercises with video tutorials and 22 preset workouts, varying in intensity and duration from 7 to 32 minutes.

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

The benefit of exercise 'snacks'

Fitting in frequent, short bursts of movement, even if they are as brief as one or two minutes, can benefit your heart health, blood glucose levels and insulin sensitivity, according to Professor David Dunstan, head of the Physical Activity Laboratory at Melbourne's Baker Heart and Diabetes Institute.

While a 30-minute run or gym visit is still beneficial, clocking up multiple exercise 'snacks' during your day can break up prolonged sitting that increases your risk of high blood sugar and sluggish blood flow.

A recent study of sedentary workers with type 2 diabetes found significant improvements to their blood vessel health when they took frequent breaks for leg raises, squats and calf raises.

How often should you take a break? The researchers found a six-minute break every hour was good, but a three-minute break every 30 minutes was better.

The best way to remind yourself? Set a timer. ✕



Food for mood

Research from the University of Otago in New Zealand suggests that eating more fruit and veggies can help young people feel calmer, happier and more energetic.

Investigating the relationship between emotions and food, researchers from the Departments of Psychology and Human Nutrition asked 281 adults (with an average age of 20) to complete mood assessments, using nine positive and nine negative adjectives, alongside detailed food diaries.

The results showed a strong day-to-day relationship between more positive mood and higher fruit and vegetable consumption, but not other foods, regardless of BMI of the individuals.

The researchers suggest that at each meal, cover half your plate with vegetables, and make a habit of snacking on whole foods such as apples. ✕

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Is it safe to eat eggs with cracked shells?

It's best not to. That's because a crack in the shell can allow bacteria from dirt or chicken droppings to enter the egg, potentially causing you to get very sick.

A study published in the *Journal of the Science of Food and Agriculture*, found that eggs with large cracks in the shells were more likely to contain the food-poisoning bacteria *Salmonella* compared to eggs without cracks.

Australia's Food Safety Information Council advises that as well as avoiding buying eggs with large cracks in the shells, if eggs get a crack in them while you handle or transport them, it's safest to discard them or cook them thoroughly as soon as possible, for example in a baked cake.

1

THING YOU CAN DO TODAY



Relax in reclined butterfly

It's the end of a long day. You're stressed and need to relax. Like many people, you may turn to technology – checking Facebook or Instagram, surfing the web, or watching Netflix. It's questionable how much watching a screen helps you relax, but the practice of yoga has long been known for its ability to reduce stress and lower your heart rate.

Even if you only have a few minutes to spare, this simple yoga pose can help you become calm and still, quiet a racing mind, and gently ease tight shoulders.

Supported reclined butterfly pose

Providing a gentle stretch for the inner thighs, hips and fronts of the shoulders, this pose is also a wonderful opener for the chest, which often gets constricted when we work at a desk or sit behind a wheel.

How: Lie back on a bolster (or a couple of firm folded blankets, towels or pillows) with your bottom on the floor and the edge of the bolster at the small of your back.

Place your feet flat on the floor with the inner edge of your feet together. Gently let your thighs fall open so that the soles of your feet are touching, and lie back along the length of the support. If you need to, support your knees with a couple of books or blocks and support your head with a pillow.

Move your arms away from your body and turn the palms upwards.

Breathe slowly, inhaling for a count of four, exhaling for a count of four. Hold the pose for at least five minutes. ✕

EAT SMARTER

Avocados

Remember back in the days of fat phobia we avoided avocados at all costs? Times have changed and avocados, despite being rich in fat, are now among our favourite vegetables (although they are technically a fruit).

When you spread avocado on your toast or add it to your salads, you're getting the following benefits:

Healthy monounsaturated fat, which is the kind that nutritionists want us to eat more of.

Healthy fats can reduce your risk of developing type 2 diabetes, help maintain heart health and promote healthy skin. There's even evidence that despite being high in fat, avocados can help with weight maintenance, with research finding that people who eat avocados generally weigh less and have a smaller waist than people who avoid them.

Added fibre. Most Australians don't eat enough fibre, which is important to feed your friendly gut bacteria. Fibre can also aid weight loss, help lower blood sugar and fight constipation. One cup of avocado has a surprisingly high 10 grams of fibre.

A wide range of nutrients. Avocados are full of folate, niacin, vitamins C, B5, E and K, potassium (important for helping to lower blood pressure) and antioxidants.

Love baking but want to reduce kilojoules and fat? Then you can easily swap butter for avocado, and add nearly 20 vitamins, minerals and plant compounds. Experiment with your favourite recipes, replacing one cup of butter with one cup of pureed avocado. ✕



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