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December 2019

Take a **fast from your phone**

Fasting is something of a buzzword today. It traditionally relates to how we eat, but a short fast from our mobiles can help us reconnect and improve our relationships.

Most of us carry mobiles with us, and rarely turn them off. Our phone is often the last thing we look at before going to sleep and the first thing we check when we wake up. Incoming texts, emails and notifications are a constant, with one study reporting the average user checks their phone 85 times a day.

Research from Deloitte's annual Mobile Consumer Survey report shows that 39 per cent of Australians are concerned about their levels of phone use and are trying to reduce how much time they spend on it.

Phones affect real life connections

Our phones can be our main link to family, friends and other networks. But the best human relationships are face-to-face and when you are with another person, phones can prevent those meaningful connections.

According to Beyond Blue, 43 per cent of people in Australia who are in a relationship believe their partner uses their phone too much and 70 per cent admit to using their phone during mealtimes with family or friends.

The presence of phones seems to prevent deeper, more meaningful conversations, which require trust, vulnerability and undivided attention. One 2014 study found that people feel less connected to the other person in a conversation when a mobile was present.

Constantly checking your phone can easily become a habit, but it's one you can break.

How to do a phone fast:

- Start with one or two days a week without using certain apps. Maybe only leave phone and texting notifications on.

“Almost everything will work again if you unplug it for a few minutes, including you.”

Anne Lamott

- Begin and end your day by not looking at your phone.
- Eating with friends, family or a partner? Make sure your mobiles are out of sight, switched to silent, or even better, out of the room.
- Take a break from your phone for a certain length of time each day. This could be the first and last hour of the day. ✕



WHAT'S INSIDE

| | |
|---|---|
| Your guide to enjoying the party season | 2 |
| How music heals your mind | 4 |
| A staycation is as good as a holiday | 5 |
| Dehydration danger | 6 |



5 December is International Volunteer Day. It is a chance for volunteers and organisations to celebrate their efforts, share their values, and promote their work. If you're interested in volunteering, why not use the internet to make it easy to find a local volunteer role that suits your interests, availability and location?

Your guide to enjoying the party season



All that rich, tempting food and free-flowing alcohol can do some damage if you go overboard. Being aware of what you're eating and drinking, and giving yourself permission to appreciate it, is key to enjoying the festive season.

Relish the party food:

1. Be kind to yourself. Ditch the words 'naughty' and 'guilty' around foods, and banish the 'shoulds'. By saying 'I shouldn't eat any pudding' you remove your sense of autonomy. Instead, give yourself permission to enjoy celebration foods, and remove any strict black-and-white 'off limits' rules. Ironically, when you give yourself permission to eat the whole Christmas pudding if you want, you're likely to find your desire to do so evaporates. Giving yourself more choice around food also seems to reduce the likelihood that you'll gain weight in the long term, say authors in a nutrition journal review.

2. Adopt the 'mostly:sometimes' mantra. Similar to the 80:20 rule, most of the time you will eat healthily, and sometimes you won't, explains registered nutritionist Rebecca Charlotte Reynolds. Now and

again it's okay to eat those delicious mince pies or slice of pavlova.

3. Listen to your body. Your body has the ability to tell you when you're hungry and when you're full – this is called intuitive eating. Intuitive eating is trusting your inner body with when, what and how much to eat, rather than relying on external rules. Tuning into when you feel full means you are less likely to eat beyond comfortable fullness.

4. Slow down at the buffet. When faced with mountains of food it's easy to pile it up on your plate. The buffet isn't going anywhere, and if you're still hungry when you've finished your plate, you can always go back.

5. Snack before the party. If you know you'll be tempted with rich, highly calorific foods then eat something light and healthy before you go. That way you can choose

the party foods you want to eat, rather than eating everything because you're ravenous.

6. Graze on the green stuff. When we're drinking and talking it's easy to be mindless rather than mindful about what we're eating. If you have the choice, opt for dips with vegetable sticks such as asparagus, carrot and celery rather than chips.

Look after your liver:

1. Know your limits with alcohol. Don't drink too much or too quickly. Have one drink per hour, swapping with water or a non-alcoholic drink in between. If you feel yourself getting drunk, stop.

2. Don't mix alcohol and other drugs. This means both prescription and recreational drugs. Make sure you know how alcohol will react with any medications you're on.



3. Combine drinking with food.

Eat before and while you are drinking, and avoid drinking on an empty stomach. The presence of food in the stomach and digestive tract will slow down the alcohol's absorption, but won't stop it.

4. Pour your own. If you pour your own drinks you can be sure of how much you have consumed. Be aware though, that cocktails and punches can contain more alcohol than you think.

5. Don't dehydrate. Alcohol can dehydrate you so make sure you drink plenty of water to stay hydrated.

6. Avoid mixing alcohol and caffeine.

Caffeine is found in many energy drinks, as well as coffee and tea. When alcohol is mixed with caffeine, the caffeine can mask the depressant effects of alcohol, making you feel more alert than you would otherwise. This may mean you drink more alcohol and become more impaired than you realise. ✕

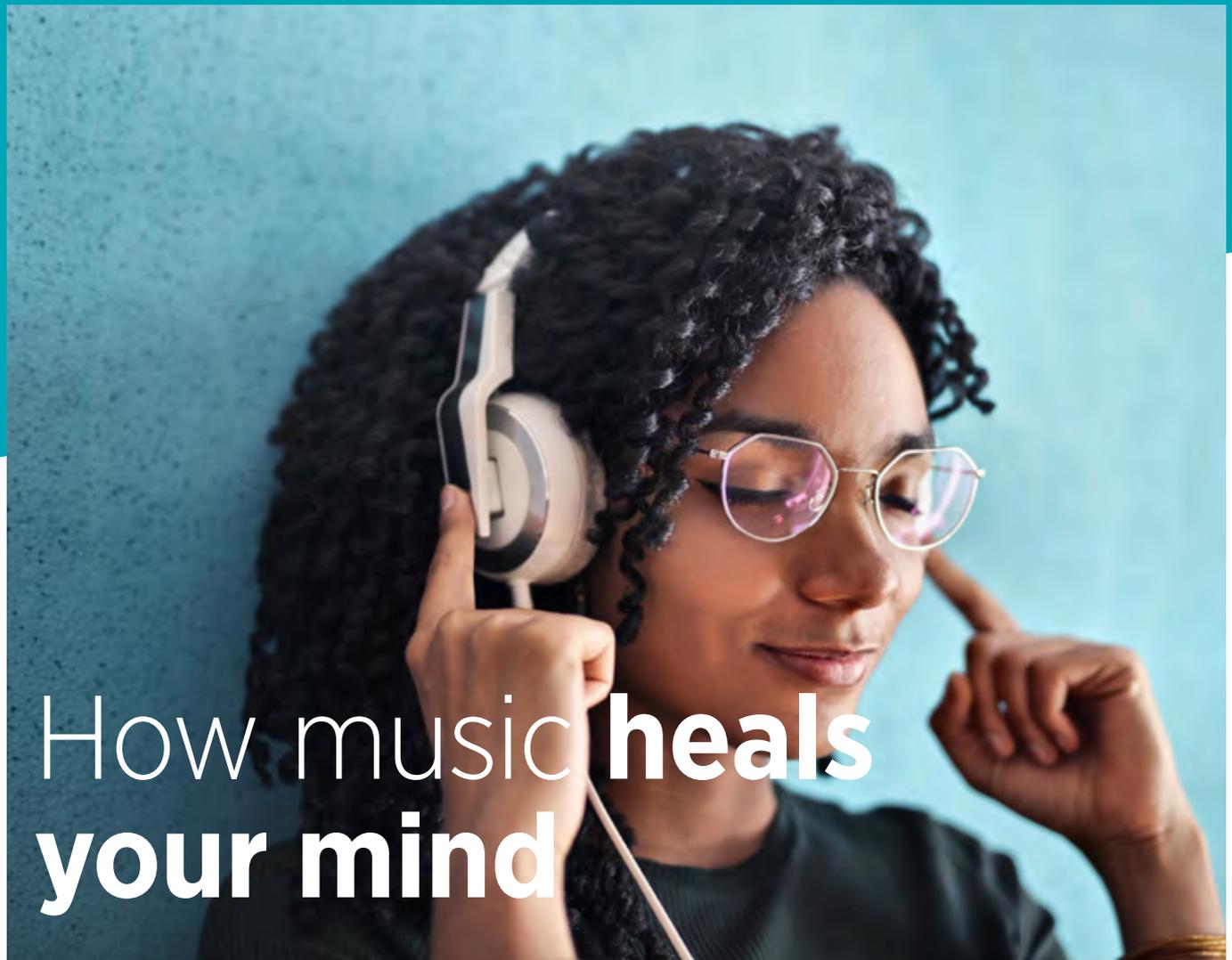
How many standard drinks in that?

There is no global consensus on recommended maximum intake for alcohol so the guidelines for safe drinking depend on where you are. In most cases, it is recommended to consume no more than two standard drinks on any day. The definition of a 'standard drink' also differs from country to country, although it is generally a drink that contains between 10g and 12g of pure alcohol.

In Europe, a typical 330ml bottle of 4.8% Alcohol by Volume (ABV) beer corresponds to 1.2 standard drinks, while in the USA, a 12 fl. oz bottle of 5% ABV beer is one standard drink.

The below is a list of what a standard drink is in Australia and several other countries:

- 150ml average serving (about half a glass) of white wine = 1.4 standard drinks
- 150ml average serving of red wine = 1.6 standard drinks
- 285ml glass (middy) full strength beer = 1.1 standard drinks
- 425ml glass (schooner) full strength beer = 1.6 standard drinks
- 375ml bottle full strength beer = 1.4 standard drinks
- 30ml nip (shot glass) high strength spirits = 1 standard drink
- 375ml (premix can) ready-to-drink spirits = 1.5 standard drinks
- 660ml (large premix bottle) ready-to-drink spirits = 3.6 standard drinks



How music **heals** your **mind**

Music therapy

Laughter is said to be the best medicine but music has therapeutic value, too, it seems. The healing powers of music have been used since ancient times and, in western medicine, music therapy began making inroads as a therapeutic tool in the 1950s. It is often used in hospital settings, particularly for cancer patients. When used in conjunction with conventional cancer treatments, music therapy has been found to help reduce pain and discomfort; improve mood and diminish stress; increase quality of life; and allow patients to better communicate their fears, sadness or other feelings. Visit cancercouncil.com.au for more information about music as a complementary therapy.

Music has the potential to evoke emotional responses to relax or stimulate us, or help us heal.

Music really does make the world go round. We listen to our favourite tunes in the car, at home, on the bus or train, while we exercise and entertain, and often in the workplace. It's a big part of our lives. It helps us relax and brings us enjoyment while we get on with the business of living our lives. But there's a lot more going on in our brains while we're listening to music than meets the eye.

It helps release dopamine. Study findings published in *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences* have found that dopamine — a feelgood neurotransmitter important for our cognitive, emotional, and behavioural functioning — plays a direct role in the reward experience derived from listening to music we love. The chemical is essential for the healthy functioning of the central nervous system and has beneficial effects on emotion, perception and movement.

It helps lift mood. A study by Stanford University shows that patients suffering from depression experienced increased

self-esteem and their mood improved after music therapy. Research shows the benefits of music therapy for other mental health conditions including schizophrenia.

It helps ease stress and anxiety.

Commuting can be a stressful experience, particularly in bigger cities. Listening to music during your commute and in the workplace, is an effective way to help you cope. In controlled clinical trials of people having colonoscopies or knee surgery, those who listened to music before their procedure had less anxiety and a reduced need for sedatives.

It helps you sleep. According to the US Sleep Foundation: "Music has a direct effect on the parasympathetic nervous system, which helps your body relax and prepare for sleep. Older adults who listen to 45 minutes of relaxing music before bed fall asleep faster, sleep longer, wake up less during the night, and rate their nights as more restful than when they don't listen to music." ✕

A staycation is as good as a holiday

Can't afford to travel right now? Find out how to have the time of your life without leaving home.

That expensive trip to a tropical island might sound like the perfect way to unwind, and it can be. But it's pricey and even if you could afford it, all the preparations – making bookings, packing, especially if you're travelling with children – can be a huge energy drain, leaving you in need of another holiday to recover. So, if your last getaway left you feeling stressed and worn out or you don't have the funds to travel to an exotic locale, it might be time to look a little closer to home.

Escape the culture of busyness

Forget the weekends, and all the cooking, cleaning and driving the kids to sport. A staycation is all about ordering in and steering clear of routine. With our busy modern lives, not having an agenda can be unsettling. Master the art of just being, with no schedules, no work and no time constraints. Forge out some mental space for yourself, minus the smartphone.

Go local

If you work full-time, you probably haven't had much opportunity to enjoy your own town or city and a staycation is just the ticket. Visit a museum or art gallery, book tickets to a play or check reviews and try that new restaurant you've been driving straight past for months.

Avoid the crowds

The middle of the week has a different feel to the weekends because most people are at work. Take the opportunity to go to a local beach mid-week without having to battle the weekend crowds. For a real staycation high point, treat yourself to a seafood lunch by the ocean. There are plenty of mouthwatering options available from fish and chip shops so it doesn't have to cost the earth.

Go on retreat

A week or two holidaying at home is the perfect opportunity to improve your health and wellness, without spending a cent on air travel. Make a list of some of the activities you might participate in on a health retreat and recreate them at home. Book yourself into a daily yoga class, one or two massages, go out for a daily fresh juice or make one at home. Spend time in the sun. Book appointments you never have time for, like a visit to the osteopath or chiro, and enjoy not rushing. ✕

**Master the art of just being,
with no schedules, no work
and no time constraints.**

Dehydration danger

It can be surprisingly easy to become dehydrated, particularly when you're working in hot weather. What are the risks of dehydration and how can you prevent it?

Your body is up to 75 per cent water and when you lose more water than you take in, many bodily functions will be affected. Without sufficient water you can't keep yourself cool, and dehydration can rapidly progress to the more serious heat exhaustion and heat stroke.

How you get dehydrated

You can become dehydrated if you:

- Do manual work in a hot environment, such as construction, road repair, or agriculture.
- Spend time in a hot or poorly ventilated indoor environment, such as a hot warehouse, laundry or kitchen.
- Spend time in a dry environment, like a long-haul plane flight.
- Spend time without access to water.
- Drink too much alcohol.
- Have severe vomiting or diarrhoea.

How do you know you're dehydrated?

Thirst is an indicator of dehydration, as are dry mouth, lips and tongue, a headache, light-headedness, and urine that's dark yellow. If you have mild dehydration drink some water, and make sure you drink small amounts regularly. Sports drinks or oral rehydration solutions from a pharmacy can help replace lost electrolytes.

Symptoms escalate if you become more severely dehydrated, and may indicate the early signs of heat exhaustion, says Queensland Health. These include:

- Extreme thirst and very dry mouth, lips and tongue
- Paleness and sweating
- Drowsiness
- Rapid breathing
- Fast, weak heart rate
- Dizziness
- Very little or no urine.

Severe dehydration can also lead to heat stroke, which can be fatal and needs immediate medical treatment. Call emergency services if you, or a workmate, is feeling very unwell or displaying the signs of heat exhaustion or heat stroke. Heat stroke has similar symptoms to heat exhaustion but includes confusion, fainting, lack of sweating and seizures. ✕

How much should you drink?

There is no golden rule on how much water we should drink – it depends on body size, activity and weather. If you are working in hot conditions it's important to stay hydrated, but don't wait until you're thirsty to drink. SafeWork NSW recommends drinking about 200ml every 20 minutes, and advises that it's better to have frequent small drinks of cool water rather than infrequent large drinks.



Ask an expert about ...

Q Will charring my steak on the barbecue increase my risk of cancer?

A The Cancer Council recommends that we all limit our consumption of burnt or charred meat. That's because heating meats at high temperatures forms substances called heterocyclic amines. In animal studies, these have been found to be carcinogenic (cancer-causing), although the evidence in human studies is not clear.

Because there is doubt over the safety of heterocyclic amines, it's recommended that we don't overcook or blacken meat on the barbecue. Marinating meat first can prevent it from charring, and also keeps the meat tender and adds flavour.

Lean red meat is an important contributor of dietary iron, zinc, vitamin B12 and protein in our diet. But the Cancer Council says there is convincing evidence that consuming too much red meat, and in particular too much processed meat, increases your risk of bowel cancer. It recommends consuming no more than 65g to 100g of cooked unprocessed (or fresh) lean red meat, three to four times a week, and limiting or avoiding processed meats such as ham, bacon, salami and hot dogs.

App of the month

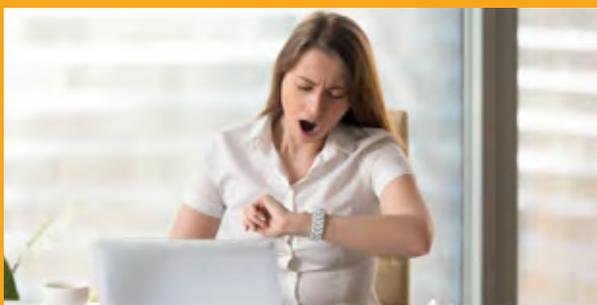
SuperBetter

SuperBetter helps build resilience – the ability to stay strong, motivated and optimistic even in the face of change and difficult challenges. The

SuperBetter framework brings the psychological strengths and mindset of gameplay to real life challenges. The creator Jane McGonigal is “dedicated to empowering individuals and communities to live epic lives that are full of joy and challenge and powered by strong social relationships, positive emotions and purpose.” Free from the App Store and Google Play.

Do you suffer from fatigue?

Sleep apnoea is a serious sleep disorder where sufferers briefly stop breathing for short periods during sleep because their airways become blocked. Most people are not aware this is happening, but it can cause loud snoring and daytime fatigue. These periods when you stop breathing can last from 10 seconds up to one minute and may happen up to several hundred times a night. This leads to repeated arousals from sleep – which you may not remember – that make you feel tired the following day. Being overweight, smoking, and drinking alcohol can all worsen the symptoms. Consult your doctor who will recommend appropriate changes and/or a sleep test.



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News Bites



Drink to your health

Water is the drink of choice to keep us hydrated, of course, but the occasional soft drink as a treat once a month or so won't do any major harm. But if you're throwing back two or more glasses of soft drink every day, however, you're putting your health in jeopardy, according to the European Prospective Investigation into Cancer and Nutrition. The study results showed that both sugar sweetened and artificially sweetened soft drinks were linked to a higher risk of death from all causes compared to consuming hardly any soft drinks. Artificially sweetened soft drinks were linked to a higher risk of circulatory diseases while sugar sweetened soft drinks were linked to a higher risk of death from digestive diseases. ✕

Good news on cancer

According to the Annual Report to the Nation on the Status of Cancer, it's good news all around with overall mortality rates continuing to decline for men, women, and children. Although the report also shows that men had an overall incidence rate that was around 1.2 times higher than that of women and a death rate 1.4 times higher than that of women. This highlights the importance of regular check-ups for men.

1 THING YOU CAN DO TODAY



Give the gift of love

It's good for you and good for your loved ones, so gift a heartfelt 'I love you' to those you care about.

It's a common experience to find ourselves tongue-tied when we try to say those three little words. We'll say it to our partner, our children and even our pets but what about those other members of the family or close friends? A fear of being emotionally vulnerable and being rejected can hold us back from freely expressing our love and gratitude.

Take a leap of faith

Put your insecurities aside and say those words. When we say "I love you" and mean it, the brain releases oxytocin, the bonding hormone, which causes you to feel a surge of positive emotion. Can't go that far? What about venturing halfway with 'I love being with you'.

Share the love

With the busy hustle and bustle of life and other stressors, it's easy to forget how much other people care about us. Small reminders can turn your entire day around, even if you haven't forgotten – it's always nice to hear that someone cares. That's because love comes with some serious health benefits, says Dr Helen Riess, director of the Empathy and Relational Science Program at Massachusetts General Hospital. "When people feel securely attached, their stress levels go down." ✕

EAT SMARTER

Sports drink switch

Drinking water should be enough to keep you hydrated while you work out. But if you exercise regularly for more than 60 minutes at a time or you're exercising in the heat, sports drinks can be a convenient way to replace electrolytes like sodium and potassium as well as fluid lost through sweating.

The problem is that shop-bought sports drinks also often contain more sweeteners and preservatives than we'd like so if you plan to drink them, it's a good idea to make your own.

How to make your own

A sports drink can be as simple or as complex as you like as long as it contains water, salt, potassium and a source of sugar.

Have orange juice handy?

Try this:

3 cups water
1 cup orange juice
½ cup lemon juice
3 tbs honey
½ tsp salt

Love fruit?

Try this:

¼ watermelon, deseeded
2 large glasses coconut water
pinch salt



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