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**HEALTH & SAFETY
NEWSLETTER**

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JANUARY 2023

How to make **exercise a habit**

Another New Year, another set of resolutions. These may include spending more time with the family, eating more vegetables, and the popular resolution to exercise more.

Who doesn't want to feel fitter and healthier? So what stops us, and what can we do about it?

"Wanting to make exercise a habit and actually doing it are two different things," says James Clear, author of the bestseller *Atomic Habits*.

"Changing your behaviour is difficult. Living a new type of lifestyle is hard. This is especially true when you throw in very personal feelings about body image and self-worth."

Clear recommends developing a ritual to make starting your exercise session easier.

"Habits are behaviours that you repeat over and over again, which means they are also behaviours that you start over and over again. In other words, if you don't consistently get started, then you won't have a habit. In many ways, building new habits is simply an exercise in getting started time after time."

Habit stacking

How to make getting started easier? You can add your exercise routine on top of another, easier routine. This is known as habit stacking.

The formula is this:

Before/after/when [CURRENT HABIT], I will [NEW HABIT]. Some examples:

- Before I get into bed at night, I will get out my workout clothes for the following morning.
- After I get out of bed in the morning, I will put on my workout clothes.

- After I take off my work shoes, I will immediately change into my running shoes.
- When I see a set of stairs, I will take them instead of the escalator or lift.
- When I listen to my favourite podcast, I will go for a walk.

Unsure of the right trigger for your habit? Clear recommends brainstorming a list of your current daily habits – for instance, get out of bed, take a shower, make a coffee, eat lunch. You can make your list as long as you like, but what it gives you is a starting point to find the best place to layer your new habit into your lifestyle.

Clear also suggests making sure your cue is highly specific. Rather than saying: "When I take a break for lunch I will do 10 push-ups" change it to: "When I close my computer for lunch, I will do 10 push-ups next to my desk." ✕



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29 January is World Leprosy Day, which aims to raise awareness about leprosy (now called Hansen's disease) and teach people about this ancient disease that is easily curable today.

Nutrition myths that won't go away

Some myths about nutrition are so common that we don't even question them. And as a result, we end up doing unnecessary harm to our body and mind. Which of these myths did you believe until today?



Myth: You should avoid some fruits because they're high in sugar.

Bananas, grapes and figs have a bad reputation. But do they deserve it? We're told we must avoid them because they are full of nasty sugar. The fact is, for healthy individuals, the amount of sugar in reasonable portions of any fruit should not be a problem, say the experts at the Friedman School of Nutrition Science and Policy. Even those with diabetes won't necessarily see a blood sugar spike from consuming a usual portion of sweet fruit.

"In long-term studies, all types of fruits have been linked to lower risk of weight gain and type 2 diabetes," says Dariush Mozaffarian, dean of the Friedman School of Nutrition Science and Policy and editor-in-chief of Tufts Health & Nutrition Letter.

"The benefits of the vitamins, fibre, and phytonutrients outweigh any concerns about sugar."

A single serving of fruit will have less sugar than a single serving of most cookies or muffins, and unlike cookies, fruit contains fibre and nutrients including vitamins, minerals and beneficial plant compounds such as antioxidants.

Myth: You need extra protein in the form of protein powders

"As a dietitian, you won't find protein powders on my pantry shelf, nor do I recommend them readily," says dietitian Lyndi Cohen, writing in *Body & Soul*. "Protein powders are not only an unnecessary expense, but can be problematic, because they're often highly processed – and when you eat protein powders you tend to swap out real foods."

Save your money, suggests Cohen, and get your protein from real food: Oats made with milk contain about 11 grams of protein, one skinless chicken breast 30 grams, three large eggs 18 grams, or a 170g tub of Greek yoghurt about 17 grams.

How much protein do we need? Dietitians Australia say women need 0.75g per kilogram of body weight per day (if a woman weighs 70kg, for example, her recommended intake is approximately 52g), while men need a little more: 0.84g per kilogram of body weight.

Some people do need extra protein. If you're pregnant, breastfeeding or older than 70, for instance, you need 1g protein per kilogram of body weight, while athletes

need 1.4-2g per kilo of body weight. Most people will get plenty of protein from the foods they eat.

Myth: Eating too much sugar causes type 2 diabetes

Eating too much sugar is not the cause of diabetes, says Diabetes Australia, but it's a myth that's hard to shift. Because diabetes is a condition where blood glucose levels are too high, it's quite common to assume eating too much sugar is the reason.

"People can develop type 2 diabetes for a number of reasons including genetics (family history, which can't be changed), lifestyle (which can be changed) and some illnesses," says Diabetes Australia. Being overweight is one of the lifestyle risks that is strongly linked to type 2 diabetes, they say, but not everyone that develops type 2 diabetes is overweight.

Following a healthy lifestyle is the best way to reduce your risk of developing type 2 diabetes: making healthy food choices, exercising regularly, managing your blood pressure and cholesterol and not smoking.



Myth: Cutting carbohydrates is the best way to lose weight

Fat was once considered the main culprit in weight gain, but now carbohydrates have taken over, with many people avoiding pasta, rice, and bread as a way to shift the kilos.

But the research doesn't support the low-carbohydrate (low-carb) approach to weight loss as being better than any other.

"All in all, a low-carb or ketogenic diet is not the holy grail of weight loss," says dietitian Abby Langer. "Research shows that neither of those eating plans is more effective for weight loss than a low-fat diet."

And you may find a low-carb diet difficult to stick with long term.

"Going too low in carbs isn't fun," says Langer. "You might find that you're sluggish, you have less endurance and tolerance for exercise, your mood may suffer, and you likely won't feel satisfied at meals."

Eating fewer carbohydrates can be helpful if it means you cut down on those that are highly refined, sugary and easy to overeat: think chips, crackers, sugar-sweetened drinks, pies, cakes, and cookies. Cutting out the carbohydrates that are high in fibre, vitamins and minerals — starchy root vegetables, ancient grains, and legumes — may leave you missing out on essential nutrients, and your gut microbiome lacking the fuel it needs to thrive.

"For some people eating low carb works", says Langer, "but for many of us, it doesn't." If you want to lose weight, choose an approach you can stick with in the long term.

Myth: Everyone will benefit from a probiotic supplement.

Probiotics – microorganisms that help improve the number of 'good' bacteria in your gut – are amongst the most popular supplements around. Found in pills, powders and drinks, sales of the

supplements are expected to exceed US\$3 billion globally by 2024.

But the hype may be getting ahead of the science. While there are health benefits to taking probiotics, they aren't for everyone, say the experts at Healthline.

Some studies have found that bacterial overgrowth in the small intestine related to probiotic use can lead to bloating, gas, and other adverse side effects. And probiotic treatment following a course of antibiotics may actually delay the natural reconstitution of normal gut bacteria in some people, rather than promote it, found research published in the journal *Cell*.

If you're healthy and follow a diet high in dietary fibre, your gut will have all the fuel required to maintain a good balance of bacteria. There are times additional probiotics can be useful, but in these cases it's best to get advice from a qualified health practitioner who can prescribe you a suitable probiotic strain. ✕



Five ways to listen better

To be truly heard and understood is a core human need, yet how often do we feel heard? And more so, how often do we take the time to really listen to someone else?

Listening does not come naturally. We want to be heard far more than we want to hear.

It's rarely ill-intentioned. Often, we enthusiastically want to relate and show we understand or share their concern, or have had a similar experience. However, the outcome is the opposite: the relationship suffers, and the other person feels less connected, and more frustrated.

To improve your active listening, try these tips from experts:

1. Stop talking. The simplest but hardest tip of all. Give the other person space to talk, even after they seem to run out of puff. Often people only get to the real point after they've covered the superficial talk. Use the acronym WAIT to remind yourself: **W.A.I.T** stands for **"Why Am I Talking?"**

2. Clear your mind. Adam Bryant, author of *The Corner Office* and *The CEO Test*, says we should "think of listening as a form of meditation. You have to clear your mind of everything else, so you can focus entirely on what the other person is saying." Bryant advises putting your phone down, and if you're at your desk, turning your chair around so you're not looking at the monitor.

3. Don't jump ahead. "The best kind of listening is about being comfortable not knowing what you're going to say next, or what question you might ask," says Bryant. Have faith in your ability to respond naturally and sincerely to the other person, without formulating your response while they're talking.

4. Remove judgement. "Listening, done well, is an act of empathy. You are trying to see the world through another person's eyes, and to understand their emotions," Bryant says. Judging the other person for their words, tone of voice, actions or reactions is not going to help you achieve empathy.

5. Aim to learn. Use every conversation as a chance to learn more – about a topic, about a person. Billionaire venture capitalist and co-founder of LinkedIn, Reid Hoffman, says the most important quality he looks for in employees is an "infinite learning curve." "I'm looking for an ability to be learning constantly, and fast."

Bryant adds, "If you show interest and energy, people will respond and share what they know and how they learned it. It's a fast and free education, plus you'll build relationships." ✕

Common listening mistakes to avoid

Getting distracted. Someone is talking, but you're thinking about what to cook for dinner. You could be making eye contact and saying "yeah" and "OK" in all the right places, but you're not really listening.

Adding your anecdote. We often want to show we understand, and that we've shared a similar experience, and so off we go with a "yes, the same thing happened to me!" story, and we've hijacked the other person's conversation.

Waiting to talk. You know how it feels: you get the very clear sense that the other person is just waiting for your noise to stop, before they say their piece. They haven't listened, they just want to make their argument, or say something clever.

How to learn faster

Quick learning tip

Need to learn new information quickly? Say it out loud. A study from the University of Waterloo has found that speaking text aloud helps cement the information into your long-term memory.

It's called the "production effect", and it's thought that the benefit comes from the double impact of speaking and hearing yourself, along with active involvement.

The study involved 95 participants and tested four methods: reading silently, listening to someone else read, listening to a recording of oneself reading, and reading aloud in real time. The reading aloud resulted in the best recall.

Do you believe you're "not a quick learner?" Did that perhaps come from an overworked teacher at school? What if you are a good learner, and even more, what if there were proven techniques you could apply to improve how well you learn?

Being able to learn quickly has become an absolute essential of survival in the workplace. We constantly need to learn new systems, new techniques, or even new ways of doing our jobs as the culture and leadership changes.

Luckily, there are proven ways to speed up your learning, so you can achieve more in less time.

1. Keep a beginner's mind

Even if you've been studying this field or skill for years, try to approach your next learning like a beginner. When you see yourself as an expert, you tend to be blind to unusual happenings, you assume things are a certain way. Beginners are more open

to alternative ways of thinking and ask more questions.

2. Use a digital brain

A whole range of apps exist on your phone – use them. Not to procrastinate or distract yourself, but to help you remember things. A digital brain is like a second brain you can use to capture, organise, retrieve, and archive information, ideas and thoughts. If you use an online calendar, or a master password app, you're tapping into your digital brain, but there's so much more you can do. You can use apps to remember to do lists, facts, formulae, links to read later, and you can even record someone delivering a presentation or speech (with permission of course). Try an app such as [Evernote](#), [Bear](#) or [OneNote](#).

3. Spaced Repetition

You know how your high school teacher told you to revise regularly and often for exams? They were right. The best way to remember information is to recall it soon afterwards. Spaced repetition looks like this:

Within 24 hours of learning something,

write down notes for yourself and then review them by reading those notes then looking away to recall the most important points.

Within 48 hours (ie the next day), try to recall the information with minimal reading of your notes.

Within 72 hours, recall the information again, as you go about your day, eg while waiting in line or walking to the station.

A few days later, read through the information all over again.

4. Break it down

Trying to learn something new all at once can set you up for failure. Say you want to learn how to surf. Expecting yourself to be able to stand up on a surfboard right away and catch a wave will only make you feel overwhelmed. Instead, break down each task into manageable bits. For example, start by learning how to jump up from lying to standing. Then learn how to swap your feet. Practice each skill with full attention, before moving onto the next. ✕

What you need to know about psychosocial hazards

You might be familiar with the problems, but probably not with the new name.

Psychosocial hazards at work are aspects of work and situations that may cause a stress response which in turn can lead to psychological or physical harm. They can stem from issues such as:

- the way the tasks or job are designed, organised, managed and supervised
- tasks or jobs where there are inherent psychosocial hazards and risks
- the equipment, working environment or requirements to undertake duties in physically hazardous environments, and
- social factors at work, workplace relationships and social interactions.

This can include stresses such as high workloads, unclear job roles, workplace violence, bullying and sexual harassment. They can also include exposure to traumatic events, or feeling you don't have much control over your job, unresolved conflict within teams, or lack of support from supervisors.

Depending on your location, your employer may have legal requirements to manage psychosocial risks in the workplace. Even if there are no local laws about managing psychosocial risk in the workplace, your employer may also

have specific policies in place to manage these risks.

When psychosocial hazards aren't effectively managed, they can increase the risk of work-related psychological and physical injuries, incidents and errors.

It can be a tricky area to manage, because different people find different situations stressful. Extra care needs to be taken for vulnerable groups such as new employees, people who have experienced work-related injury, or people who have had previous exposure to a traumatic event.

Who is responsible?

As with physical hazards and other WHS matters, the responsibility lies with your employer -and with you. Your employer has a duty of care to keep you safe, while you have a duty to take reasonable care for your own work health and safety, AND to ensure your actions – or lack of action – does not harm others.

Your employer and manager should also consult with you and your team about potential hazards and ways to manage them. Your safety at work – both physical and mental – is a shared responsibility.



Ask an expert about ...

What plant-based foods should I eat?

There's no denying that plant foods are good for us. A recent review looked at 12 studies with more than 500,000 people who were followed for up to 25 years, and found those who ate the most plant foods were less likely to die from any cause.

On theconversation.com, laureate professor in nutrition and dietetics, Claire Collins, lists her top 4 plant foods to add to your weekly shop:

1. Tomatoes

Eating tomatoes is shown to reduce triglycerides, a type of fat in your blood

that increases heart disease risk, as well as lower total and "bad" cholesterol levels, and some studies indicate it can lower blood pressure.

2. Pumpkin

Pumpkin is full of beta-carotene, which is converted into vitamin A in the body and helps fight infection.

A review of studies found that people who had the highest intakes of foods rich in beta-carotene had an 8 to 19 per cent lower relative risk of having coronary heart disease, stroke, or dying from any cause, compared to those with the lowest intakes.

3. Mushrooms

A review of 17 studies on mushrooms and health found people who ate the most mushrooms had a 34 per cent lower risk of developing any type of cancer.

4. Oats

Oats are a good source of beta-glucan which helps lower blood cholesterol. Oats can also reduce your blood glucose, but only the thick rolled oats or intact oat kernels, not the quick rolled oats.

Up your intake of veggies by going vegan for the month of January. Visit Veganuary.com/en-au

App of the month

Productive.

More than just a habit tracking app, Productive is also designed to give you the tools you need to build healthy habits in the first

place. When you sign up, you're asked if you often procrastinate, if you're easily distractible, and what you want to achieve with Productive. You'll receive guidance depending on what you want to achieve, and a handful of 15-day programs on things such as How to Learn a New Skill, or How to be Healthy.

A free plan for up to four habits is available from the [App Store](#) and [Google Play](#), with a subscription for unlimited habits.

News Bites



Your dog can smell when you're stressed

Most dog owners would agree: dogs seem to have an uncanny ability to detect when their owners are stressed. Now UK scientists have discovered why. They say your dog can smell the changes in your breath and sweat that occur when you're stressed, with an impressive stress-spotting accuracy of 93.75 per cent.

The team collected samples of breath and sweat from people both before and after a fast-paced maths problem, along with self-reported stress levels and measurements of heart rate (HR) and blood pressure (BP).

Thirty-six people reported finding the task stressful and showed increases in HR and BP, so their samples were presented to dogs trained to match odours. The dogs were asked to pick out the stressed samples from a line-up that included non-stressed samples from the same person. The clever pooches picked accurately in 675 out of 720 trials, a hit rate of 93.75%, the scientists say. The findings could help train anxiety and PTSD service dogs, concluded the researchers. ✕

Don't rinse after brushing, say dentists

You probably think you know how to brush your teeth, but one thing many of us do without thinking is rinsing and spitting after brushing. This is not a good idea, says the Australian Dental Association.

When you have finished brushing, try to spit out the toothpaste and don't rinse with water. Leaving some toothpaste on your teeth is a really great way to give your teeth some extra ongoing protection. The active ingredients in toothpaste, such as fluoride, need time to release and attach to the teeth, and rinsing too quickly after brushing will remove these, along with all their benefits. ✕

Can you eat what you like and sweat it off tomorrow?

A recent study of more than 350,000 people in the UK says no. The study, published in the *British Journal of Sports Medicine*, addressed physical activity, diet, and then the two of them together.

"Those people who were more physically active had lower rates of mortality during follow-up," says I-Min Lee, a senior author of the research and professor medicine at Harvard Medical School. She said this was to be expected.

The study also found, not surprisingly, that people who were most active with the best diet quality did the best, while the people who were inactive, with the worst diet, did the worst.

But the researchers noted that you couldn't use one to counteract the other. "In other words," says Professor Lee, "inactivity or poor diet quality each was an independent risk factor: having one rather than both put you in an in-between risk group."

Her take-home message? "You can't outrun a bad diet, nor can you outeat an inactive lifestyle. You should strive to be counted as good in both habits."

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THING YOU CAN DO TODAY

Visit somewhere new in your hometown



Ever played tourist where you live? Imagine you've travelled across the world to stay in your town or city. What would you want to see? Which foods would you want to eat? What would amaze you?

Experiencing your hometown with new eyes can feel like a mini-holiday and can help refresh your perspective on life. You might have discovered this when friends or family come to stay and you show them around. They're often enthusiastic about things you've started to take for granted.

To really gain the benefits of a staycation, try researching your hometown just as you would if you were a tourist. Look it up on TripAdvisor, or check out Google Reviews for things to do nearby.

Choose one place nearby that you've never been. It could be a new café, or a new park, or even a monument that's been there for a hundred years. And, like every good holiday, don't forget to take photos and post on social media – you might inspire others to do the same.

EAT SMARTER

Pineapple

How can something this sweet, juicy and refreshing be good for you too?

Pineapple is not only a perfect snack or dessert, it also has surprising health benefits.

It contains an enzyme called bromelain, which has two seemingly different benefits: it's good for your digestion, and good for tenderising meat. Bromelain breaks down proteins, so it helps your gut digest your dinner AND helps soften that piece of chicken on the BBQ.

Some studies even indicate that bromelain can reduce inflammation, swelling and bruising after injury or surgery. It's even thought to help with pain relief.

Pineapple is also high in vitamin C. In fact, one cup of fresh pineapple chunks will give you more than 130 per cent of your daily vitamin C requirements. And it's full of other goodies such as thiamine, manganese, vitamin B6, folate and antioxidants.

How to avoid pineapple tongue burn

Ever eaten fresh pineapple and felt as though your taste buds have been wiped out? That's the bromelain. It breaks down proteins, including the protective mucus that coats your tongue. To avoid this problem, while gaining the many benefits of pineapple, you could try one of these tricks:

- Soak the fresh pineapple in salt water first
- Eat the pineapple with dairy such as yoghurt
- Cook the pineapple, as this destroys the bromelain (but also reduces the benefits)
- Cut out the tough core, where bromelain is the most concentrated.



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