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The Power of Boring

9 ORDINARY THINGS THAT IMPROVE YOUR HEALTH

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**OVERCOME
ANXIETY**

3 WAYS TO
FIGHT FATIGUE

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BETTER BRAIN

6 HEALTHY MEALS
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THE POWER — OF — BORING



9 Underrated Health Practices That Pack a Punch

Want to achieve optimal health? Forget the fads and stick with these tried-and-true practices that aren't flashy but are effective.

By Christa M. Hines

We live in a culture intoxicated by quick fixes and instant gratification.

Look no further than the abundance of restrictive diet trends, rigorous health challenges, and fly-by-night wellness solutions teeming on social media and in advertising. But what if the secrets to a healthy lifestyle aren't flashy, expensive, or hard to maintain?

Just as the fabled tortoise proved that slow and steady wins the race, the simple, accessible, and "boring" wellness practices we often ignore can be the most powerful ingredients to experiencing greater health, happiness, and longevity.

1 DRINK MORE

Water, that is. "While hydration doesn't top diet trends, it should!" says Rachelle Lemon, RD, a specialist in functional medicine at AdventHealth Whole Health Institute, Overland Park, Kansas.

"Hydration improves sleep quality, brain function, and mood. It also helps remove waste and prevent infections, facilitates the movement of nutrients into the cells, aids in digestion, and improves blood flow to the skin," Lemon says. "Plus, it makes you look better!" Drinking water enhances skin elasticity and reduces skin irritation, giving you a more youthful, radiant glow.

How much should you drink a day? "Aim for half your body weight in ounces," Lemon says. For example, if you're 150 pounds, drink 75 ounces of water per day.

2 GO FOR A DAILY WALK

Walking may sound boring, yet the benefits are impressive, helping with weight management and mental well-being. Aim for a 30- to 60-minute brisk walk every day. If you're just starting out, set a goal to walk for 10 to 15 minutes before work, during your lunch break, or after dinner. To keep yourself motivated:

- Vary your walks by choosing different routes and exploring local nature trails.
- Join a walking group.
- Use an app or journal to track your steps.
- Invite a friend for a walk and talk.

3 INCREASE — YOUR — FIBER INTAKE

Eating more fiber can help you improve digestion, manage hunger, promote prebiotic growth in the gut, and stabilize blood sugar. Fiber also supports mental wellness because it "boosts serotonin levels and enhances your learning capabilities and memory," Lemon says.

Studies have found that people who consume plenty of fiber are at less risk of dying from heart disease, stroke, type 2 diabetes, and colon cancer compared to those who consume very little.

According to Harvard Health, the average American eats only between 10 to 15 grams of fiber per day, which is about half of the USDA's recommended amount for adults. To increase your fiber intake, eat plenty of fruits, vegetables, and whole grains, which are all rich sources of fiber.

Not sure if you're getting enough? "Start by recording your food intake for a week or so to see how many grams you're getting daily," Lemon says. "Slowly, increase to 28 to 35 grams per day. My favorite fiber boost is chia pudding, which packs in 11 grams of fiber in 2 tablespoons."

What if the secrets to health aren't flashy, expensive, or hard to maintain?



4 EAT — WITH — INTENTION

Ever inhaled a meal while scrolling your phone or watching TV? Mindless eating, often brought on by distractions or stress, can lead to indigestion, heartburn, and overeating because we're not tuning into our body's hunger cues. Over time, mindless eating makes us more vulnerable to weight gain, heart disease, and type 2 diabetes.

From planning and preparation to presentation and eating, enjoying food with intention helps us become more aware of what we're putting into our bodies and why.

When planning your meals, think about the foods that nourish you. During preparation, notice how you combine foods to create flavors your body is craving, suggests Amy Zoe Schonhoff, founder of Mindfulness in the Heartland. Pay attention to the aromas, colors, and textures as you cook.

As part of the ritual of eating with intention, make your meal visually appealing. Set the table and arrange your food on dishes you love. To fully appreciate your meal and connect with your family, turn off the television and set aside phones and other distractions.

These eating practices are especially helpful if you tend to stress eat when you aren't hungry. According to Schonhoff, it's important to "intercept those moments and make more life-affirming choices in terms of how you're dealing with whatever is arising."

Instead of eating when you're angry, anxious, or sad, you can choose alternate activities, such as going for a walk, calling a friend, or stepping away and taking deep breaths.

5 CHEW MORE

Instead of rushing through a meal, carefully chew your food, which aids in digestion and blood sugar management.

"Chewing helps you break down the food into particles that signal your

stomach to release the gastric acids you need to break down food. As the food gets smaller, it's able to absorb better," says Michelle Robin, DC, author of *E Factor: Engage, Energize, Enrich—3 Steps to Vibrant Health*.

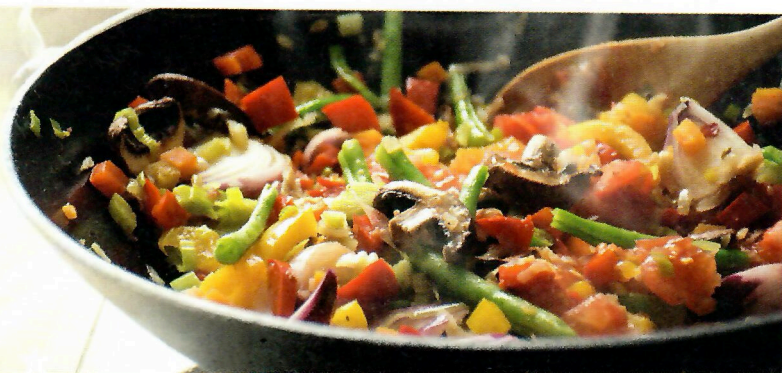
6 FAST BETWEEN DINNER — AND — BREAKFAST

When you abstain from food between dinner and breakfast, your body has time to manage blood sugar and repair itself at a cellular level in a process called autophagy, in which cellular components are removed and recycled.

"It could be as simple as an eight- to 10-hour fast, and it's a game changer," Robin says. "At night when your body's fasting, the brain starts to gobble up all of the debris that gets stuck."

Some studies suggest fasting can protect brain health, decrease inflammation, improve sleep, and reduce your risk for neurological disorders, such as Alzheimer's disease, Parkinson's disease, and multiple sclerosis.

When preparing meals,
pay attention to the aromas,
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7 INVEST IN LASTING HABITS — NOT FADS —

Restrictive diets are difficult to stick with in the long run because they typically require you to make a lot of changes in a short amount of time, which is often too much for the brain to handle.

“It makes sense

to want to see changes quickly, and that can serve as motivation to stick with it; however, if these changes don’t become habits, then you’ll be doomed to repeat the try-fail cycle of dieting, which happens more often than not,” Lemon says.

Unless a medical condition requires immediate changes, “ditch the drastic meal plan for a habit-focused meal strategy,” Lemon says. “This involves a much slower process, starting with taking on a few goals at a time. This is the way to long-term success.”

Choosing one meal or beverage at a time, replace processed foods that are high in salt, sugar, and fat with fresh fruits, vegetables, and legumes.

8 FOLLOW — A — ROUTINE

From meals to exercise, routines remove decision fatigue, help you better manage your time, and support your health goals. “I find that the day flows better when I’m more intentional. Intentional is

boring, yet the rewards are amazing,” Robin says.

Like many of us, Robin’s morning routine can vary. However, she has a few simple nonnegotiables, like starting the day by drinking water, practicing her balance by standing on one foot while brushing her teeth, doing a neck exercise, and gargling water. “Gargling in the shower with regular water is great for the vagus nerve, which helps calm down the nervous system,” she says.

9 BE KIND

According to a 2024 American Psychiatric Association poll, one in three Americans, especially young people ages 18 to 34, report feeling lonely at least once a week. Loneliness and disconnection lead to chronic health issues, including obesity, depression, and early mortality.

Creating community and positive connections could be one of the most important things you do for your well-being. “Simple acts of kindness are amazing for your health, creating changes in the neurotransmitters, especially oxytocin,” Robin says.


Oxytocin is one of several feel-good hormones produced by the brain and released into the bloodstream during positive social interactions. These hormones help soothe stress and anxiety, enhance self-esteem, and strengthen the immune system.

Try some small acts of kindness for yourself, such as:

- Smile and say hello to a stranger.
- Write a positive review about your favorite small business.
- Send a note of gratitude to a friend.
- Let a store manager know how much you appreciate a helpful employee.

Remember to shine some of that kindness on yourself too! Robin believes that one of the reasons social connection has declined is due to self-doubt. “Many people aren’t comfortable in their own skin anymore because they haven’t done the work of forgiveness for themselves or others,” says Robin.

Talk to yourself the way you would talk to a loved one. “Look yourself in the mirror and say, ‘I love you. I care about you,’” Robin says. “It’s boring, yet effective. It will help facilitate healing the wounds inside your heart.”

Positive affirmations might feel silly or self-indulgent, but they can boost your confidence and keep you motivated as you embrace the “boring” and powerful practices that support a healthier, happier life. 

If changes don’t become habits, then you’ll be doomed to repeat the try-fail cycle of dieting.

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