

Completely Well

August 2021



Wellness
BOX
INC.
INSPIRING HEALTH

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More Energy and Less Pain with Good Posture

Stand up straight! Yes, you have probably heard this before. But why? Sure, standing up straight makes all of us look better, but it is also better for us. Good posture will help your body function more effectively and reduces muscle and joint pain.



Imagine your skeleton as a framework or scaffolding in which your organs and circulatory system function and on which your muscular system hangs, just as an example. Now imagine that your skeleton framework is slumped and imagine the stress placed on every part of your body. In many ways, this is what happens when we don't maintain good posture. When you have poor posture, muscles are strained and joints may experience additional pressure. You can experience headaches, backache, shoulder and jaw pain, fatigue, increased arthritic discomfort, and weaker abdominal muscles.

But here's the good news. Good posture can give you more energy, improve your mood, and make you feel better! But what is good posture? Good posture is often referred to as spine neutral, meaning that the natural curve of the spine is maintained, shoulders back and relaxed, weight evenly distributed, head and neck straight but not stiff with ears over the collarbones. A lot to think about? With a little practice, good posture should feel relaxed and comfortable. To work on improving posture, start in a sitting position in a chair that has a firm back. Place both feet on the ground and move back in the chair until your lower back is in contact with the chair back. Sit up straight, but avoid a stiff posture. Relax slightly into the chair, letting your shoulders fall slightly back, sometimes referred to as "in your back pocket." Check for tension in your face, shoulders, back, or legs and breathe out to release the tension.

Once you have established good sitting posture, work on good standing posture — weight balanced, hips and legs straight but not locked, back straight but with the natural curve, shoulders back and relaxed, and neck and head in a straight neutral position. Be aware of your posture when walking, standing talking with someone, or sitting working or watching television. Gently checking and correcting your posture is something that almost anyone can do, and it can make you feel better and look better. Give it a try!

Food Allergy or Food Sensitivity

We consume a variety of foods each day, relying on the nutrition to provide energy, vitamins, and nutrients the body needs. While most of us make our choices depending on our mood and personal tastes, some people must navigate the challenges of a food allergy, a condition that can range from mild to possibly life threatening. Others may find that certain foods cause an upset stomach, possibly a headache or intestinal discomfort. While these instances may not be an actual allergy, they may be food sensitivity. Both food allergies and food sensitivities need to be managed for the health of the individual.

Food Allergies: Food allergies involve the immune system's response to a food or food group. When a certain food is eaten, the body sees it as something to be attacked, so it sends a large number of antibodies, which produce the allergic response. Possible allergic reactions include a rash, hives, itchy skin, an upset stomach, and diarrhea. Though not as common, some people suffer a serious allergic reaction called anaphylaxis. Anaphylaxis causes the airways to narrow and the blood pressure to drop quickly, a dangerous condition that can be fatal without an injection of epinephrine. Those

with a severe allergy should have an emergency epinephrine shot on them at all times. If you are with someone who is experiencing anaphylaxis, call 911 immediately. Common foods known to cause allergic reactions are tree nuts, milk, eggs, peanuts, shellfish, wheat, and soy. If you suspect a food allergy, contact your doctor for testing and treatment if needed.

Food Sensitivities: Unlike food allergies that are an immune response, food sensitivities are a response of the gastrointestinal system. Food sensitivities can develop over time, becoming more common as we age. Our bodies may no longer make all of the needed enzymes to break down certain foods. Symptoms of food sensitivities include stomach cramps, bloating, diarrhea, and sometimes headaches. If you believe you have food sensitivities, keep a journal to monitor what you

eat and how you feel. You can see if there are patterns that indicate a problem. You can also try eliminating one type of food at a time and seeing if symptoms improve. Discussing your symptoms with your doctor is recommended, and he or she may recommend you work with a dietician or nutritionist.

If you are experiencing any allergic reactions or symptoms of food sensitivity, consult with your medical professional to see what is causing the trouble and what you can do about it. Both food allergies and food sensitivities can be identified and treated or prevented, keeping you safe and feeling well.





Go For a Hike

There are many ways to get needed exercise, but one of the best ways to improve your physical and emotional health is to take a hike. A hike is basically walking on a trail or path out in nature. The benefit of hiking has to do with the challenges of the terrain and the beauty of the environment. Here are some facts about the benefits of hiking:

- Hiking is a great cardio exercise, especially when the hike includes changes in elevation and an uneven surface. While you should always be careful when hiking on an uneven surface, the benefit is that it requires more muscle and energy to navigate this type of path. Hiking regularly can lower blood pressure, help you lose weight, and improve your heart health.
- Hiking is a weight-bearing activity, which can help strengthen your bones. This is good for everyone, but it is especially important for women as they get older.
- Another benefit of hiking is that it will help build and strengthen muscle. You will use your leg muscles, but you will also use your core muscles to maintain your balance as you maneuver a trail.
- Walking in nature is a great way to improve mood and decrease anxiety. The combination of walking, which is beneficial for mental health, and being outside is a great antidote for daily worries and concerns. However, if you find that your worries are persistent or you have more than a case of the blues, be sure to contact your doctor for a more thorough discussion and plan to help you feel better.
- Hiking is a great activity to do with a family member or friend or alone. If you choose to hike alone, be sure you let someone know where you will be and how long you will be gone. Bring a cell phone and enough water to stay hydrated. Don't hike an unknown trail alone or go hiking when bad weather is imminent.

If you are interested in trying hiking, do your research. Check out the trails near you, how long they are, what kind of terrain (dirt, paved, stone, etc.), and their difficulty. Be sure to have proper shoes with good treads for whatever terrain you will be hiking. Dress appropriately, in long pants and long sleeves if the trail is narrow or you will be hiking among plants. This will help you avoid ticks and poison ivy. Bring plenty of water, apply sunscreen if necessary, and consider using a stick or walking pole to help with the changes in elevation. Of course, observe all signs and rules for the trail you will be walking, and stay safe. Don't tackle a long trail your first time out. Choose a shorter trail, take your time, and enjoy the scenery. Hiking is a great way to add challenge and beauty to your exercise routine. See if it's right for you!

Preventive Psoriasis

We've all experienced dry, itchy skin from time to time. Perhaps our skin was irritated by a new soap or detergent, or winter weather left our skin dry and patchy. However, about 8 million Americans experience a more persistent skin condition: psoriasis. Our skin cells grow at a regular rate, on average about every 28 days. The old cells are shed and new cells are ready. Those with psoriasis experience an extremely rapid skin cell growth in certain parts of the body, usually 3-4 days, resulting in raised, patchy areas of skin that are irritated or itchy. Psoriasis is not contagious, and while it is not completely clear what causes it, there seems to be some connection to the immune system and to genetics.

The most common form of psoriasis is plaque psoriasis, affecting about 80-90% of all diagnosed with psoriasis. The most common areas that are affected are elbows, knees, scalp, and lower back. Diagnosis is done by examination and, sometimes, a biopsy. Psoriasis can be mild, moderate, or severe and can vary depending on

overall health and other factors. In fact, flare-ups of psoriasis can be caused by medications, stress, and climate. It's important for patients to take care of their overall health to avoid flares.

Treatment includes creams, light therapy, and medications. Many treatments are aimed at slowing the growth of skin cells while others help with the discomfort and itching. Reducing overall inflammation is another important part to limiting the effects of psoriasis. In addition to these treatments, patients may be encouraged to do stress reduction activities, including exercise, meditation, and yoga.

If you have any concerns about your skin, discuss them with your doctor. Your skin is your first line of defense and needs to be as healthy as possible.



Produce of the month

Kohlrabi

Cabbage, Brussels sprouts, and Kale. Probably all familiar vegetables. How about kohlrabi? If you haven't heard of it, don't worry. While not a new vegetable, its popularity is on the rise, and you will be seeing it more frequently at your local farmers markets and grocery stores. A member of the cruciferous family, kohlrabi is a vegetable with a long leafy stem and full, round bulb, usually pale green, white, or purple on the outside and white on the inside. Kohlrabi is an excellent source of vitamins and is low in calories.

The Basics: Buy kohlrabi that has no noticeable blemishes or soft spots. Smaller bulbs tend to be sweeter than large bulbs. Remove the stem and store the leaves separately from the bulb. Both should be refrigerated in containers or bags. When ready to prepare, wash and dry thoroughly. If using the bulb, peel first to remove the tough outer layer. Then you can enjoy it raw or cooked. The leaves are best cooked with a seasoning of your choice, sauteed or simmered.

Try This: Chopped raw kohlrabi can be added to a salad for added crunch. You can roast kohlrabi the way you would roast Brussels sprouts, with some olive oil, salt, and pepper. If you are interested in a low carb noodle, try cutting kohlrabi into thin noodles using a spiralizer. Cook the noodles in a skillet with olive oil until they soften. Toss with parmesan cheese or a fresh pesto sauce.

The Facts: A cup of kohlrabi is about 36 calories and only about 8 grams of carbohydrates. It is an excellent source of vitamin C and a good source of potassium and fiber.



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WellnessBoxInc.com
(888) 244-6090
Thompson@wellnessboxinc.com