

Deer Valley Wellness

Healthy Minds, Healthy Bodies

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Mindfulness

Mindfulness can be described as awareness of surroundings or a presence in the moment.

Research shows that mindfulness can help reduce stress, lower blood pressure, reduce chronic pain, and improve sleep. Did you know that mindfulness does not have to occur as a full meditation session to be beneficial?

Mindfulness can be practiced while seated, standing, walking and even while doing other activities like yoga or swimming.

The main goal when practicing is to fully give in to the moment, allow the senses to observe what is going on, and release any thoughts of judgement for what is actually happening.



Practicing Mindfulness

Luckily practicing mindfulness doesn't require any special equipment to get started, but having a plan beforehand is definitely helpful.

1. Pick a position that is comfortable and quiet.
2. Set a time goal. Even just five minutes a day can be beneficial.
3. Follow the breath. Follow it as it enters and leaves the body. When the mind wanders (which it will) use the focus on the breath to bring the awareness back.
4. Be kind to the wandering mind. Observe when thoughts drift and bring awareness back. This IS the practice—noting when thoughts go away and bringing them back to the present.



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Fiber: Say Hello To Your New Best Friend

Fiber is plant material that can not be digested by humans. It is fiber's inability to be broken down during digestion that makes it so beneficial.

There are two types of fiber: soluble and insoluble. **Soluble fibers** are able to absorb water, forming a gel-like substance that slows down digestion. **Insoluble fibers** stimulate the digestive tract, moving food matter through the intestines, enabling the body to remove waste regularly.

Need More Fiber In Your Diet?

- Include at least 1 whole grain with each meal.
- Include at least 1 serving of vegetables with each meal.
- Substitute hummus for butter or mayonnaise on sandwiches.
- Switch out juices for smoothies.
- Snack on nuts and fruit.

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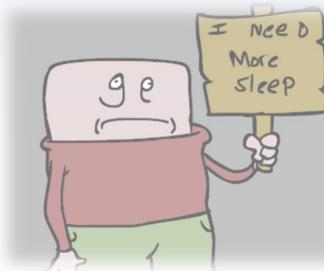
- ✓ School Meal Program
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- ✓ Nutrition Education
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Why Sleep Matters

Sleep impacts every aspect of well-being including: mental health, physical health, quality of health, and safety. Sleep is just as important as eating, drinking, and breathing. Getting sufficient sleep helps ensure that the body is functioning at its best. When asleep, the brain is able to get ready for the next day. During this time the brain makes connections and stores memory.

Sleep deprivation is the state the body and mind are in when a person has not had an adequate amount of sleep.

Sleep deficiency is when the quality of sleep isn't ideal. Deficiencies in sleep can occur because of interruptions or lack of sleep. Deficiencies can occur when sleep stages are missed, and it can also happen with sickness. Individuals who are deficient in sleep will not only be tired during the day, they can have difficulty thinking, reacting, and maintaining rationale behaviors (and often times there is a tendency to over-react to emotional situations).



The best way to improve both quality and quantity of sleep is to be consistent with a sleep schedule.

1. Sleep Deprivation and Deficiency. (n.d.). Retrieved from <https://www.nhlbi.nih.gov/health-topics/sleep-deprivation-and-deficiency>.

Probiotics and Prebiotics

Probiotics and prebiotics sound similar, and although they work together, they have very different roles when it comes to impacting human health. **Probiotics** are good bacteria that live inside our gut (digestive tract) and **prebiotics** are food for those good bacteria.



We often hear about bad bacteria when it comes to infections and sickness, but being healthy is not just about avoiding bad bacteria, it's also important to choose foods that provide us good bacteria.

Did you know that the bacteria in our gut do way more than just help with digestion of foods? They also provide a barrier, helping protect us from bad bacteria. A lack of good bacteria can impact physical and mental health.

Gut-Brain Connection

Probiotics are also a major part of the gut-brain connection. Research shows that the bacteria living in our gut largely influence anxiety disorders, depression, and stress.



So, which foods provide the best opportunities to add good bacteria to our bodies, and which foods actually feed those good bacteria?

Probiotics: fermented foods like sauerkraut, kimchee, pickled products, and yogurt

Prebiotics: vegetables (beans and peas specifically), fruits, and oats

1. Harvard Health Publishing. (n.d.). The gut-brain connection. Retrieved from <https://www.health.harvard.edu/diseases-and-conditions/the-gut-brain-connection>.

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