

5 ways to live a healthy lifestyle

With the new year here, you may have the goal to live a healthy lifestyle. Dietitian, Meagan Atcheson, shares five ways to holistically achieve this.

Holistic living is a daily practice and lifestyle that puts focus on the human being as a whole. It's imperative to focus on a way of living that nourishes you completely. This means that you don't want to focus on just one aspect, for example: diet or only exercise. You must learn to see that a variety of factors (sleep, stress, mindfulness, diet, exercise, etc.) are all interconnected and each one affects the other and ultimately your general well-being and health.



1 Eating plan

A healthy lifestyle and eating plan should be balanced with all food groups included.

A sustainable healthy eating plan shouldn't be overly restrictive. Moderation is key; 80% of your diet should focus on nutrient-dense foods (fruit, vegetables, fish, lean proteins, dairy, nuts, seeds and legumes) and 20% for other foods that you enjoy (chocolate, a piece of birthday cake, etc.).

The more you tell yourself you aren't allowed to eat a certain food, the more you'll find yourself thinking about it and it may lead to a possible binge later on.

Eating should be a satisfying, pleasurable experience, and something you can see yourself still doing in five, 10 or even 20 years down the line. A healthy lifestyle should fit into any social occasion. It should allow attendances at parties, eating at restaurants, and participation in normal daily activities.



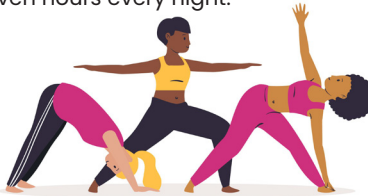
Meet the expert

Meagan Atcheson is a registered dietitian who focuses specifically in oncology. She is a plant-centric foodie who promotes a nourishing approach to health and wellness using evidence-based research and guidelines only.



2 Sleep

One of the reasons many are unhappy in this modern life is that they are constantly sleep deprived. Sleep makes you feel better physically and mentally. It helps to reduce stress, inflammation, lowers your risk for depression and keeps your immune system functioning optimally. Aim for seven hours every night.



3 Exercise

Research suggests that 30 minutes of exercise can boost your mood and overall health. Set aside a location and time and get your body moving in ways that you love. Try a free online yoga, Zumba, Tai chi or Pilates class; dance to your favourite upbeat playlist or get yourself a hula hoop. Take a moment to notice how much better you feel after exercise.



4 Meditation

Meditation is the practice of intentionally turning your attention away from distracting thoughts towards a single point of reference (breath, a kind thought, bodily sensation). Research shows that it can have a number of positive benefits. Set 10 minutes aside each day in a quiet spot where you will not be disturbed and use a guided meditation (there are various apps you can use or search on YouTube). Set a reminder on your phone for the same time each day as this helps to form the daily habit.

5 Practise gratitude and acts of kindness

Gratitude is a positive emotional state in which you recognise and appreciate what you have in life. Research shows that practising and taking more time to experience gratitude can make you happier and even healthier.

Every night write down five things that you are grateful for. It can be little or big things. Focus on each one individually and be mindful of the things you are writing down. Keep your gratitude journal next to your bed so you're reminded to do it each night before bed.

Research also shows that happy people are motivated to do kind things for other people. Every day try to do one random act of kindness for another person. It doesn't have to be over the top or time-intensive, but it should be something that really helps or impacts another person. Some ideas include making a sandwich for your security guard at your complex or the car guard who watches your car at the shops.

