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A Special Supplement to the

WESTMOUNT INDEPENDENT

with articles by Metro Creative Graphics, Inc. (MCG)

# FALL: Fashion, Beauty & Health





# What sufficient sleep does for the human body

Sleep is an often unsung hero of overall health. Diet and exercise get their fair share of glory, but without a good night's rest, even the most physically active, nutrition-conscious individuals are vulnerable to a host of ailments and illnesses.

According to the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, most adults need seven or more hours of sleep on a regular schedule each night. Athletes may even benefit from additional sleep. In fact, a 2011 study published in the journal *Sleep* examined the effects of sleep extension on the athletic performance of collegiate basketball players.

That study found that athletes asked to extend their normal sleep times exhibited faster sprint times and increased free-throw accuracy, and a reduction in fatigue at the end of the sleep extension period.

Improved athletic performance is not the only way that sufficient sleep benefits the human body.

### Sufficient sleep and the immune system

The Mayo Clinic notes that the immune system releases proteins called cytokines during sleep. The release of



certain cytokines needs to increase when individuals are experiencing infections or inflammation, which is one reason why doctors often recommend extra sleep to sick patients. Without adequate sleep, the immune system may not produce enough cytokines, and that can increase the frequency with which individuals get sick.

### Sufficient sleep and weight gain

The Harvard T.H. Chan School of

Public Health reports there is mounting evidence to suggest a link between insufficient sleep and weight gain and obesity. Studies exploring this potential link have been conducted for decades and have examined how sleep affects people of all ages and genders. At the 2006 American Thoracic Society International Conference, researchers who had tracked women's sleep habits for 16 years found that those who slept just six hours per night were 12 percent

more likely to experience major weight gain than women who slept seven hours per night.

Experts aren't entirely sure why this relationship exists, but the results of various studies support the idea that insufficient sleep is a potential catalyst for gaining weight.

### Sufficient sleep and chronic disease

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention notes that insufficient sleep has been linked to the development and management of various chronic diseases. For example, the CDC indicates that insufficient sleep has been linked to an increased risk for type 2 diabetes. In addition, the CDC reports that instances of hypertension, stroke, coronary heart disease, and irregular heartbeat are more common among individuals with disordered sleep than they are among people without such sleep abnormalities.

Sleep is not often mentioned alongside diet and exercise as a vital component of overall health. But a good night's rest is no less vital to long-term health than a healthy diet and physical activity. – MCG.

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MARIE JO





# The pros and cons of running

Few physical activities inspire the devotion that avid runners have for running. Millions of individuals across the globe lace up their sneakers and run for miles on end each day, and the fitness experts at Fitbit note that running is the most popular activity in the world.

The global popularity of running suggests it's an activity that's all gravy and no grief. However, running can take a toll on a body, and individuals who can't wait to lace up their sneakers and hit the road should consider the pros and cons of running before doing so.

## Pros

• **Running and heart health:** Running generally has a positive effect on heart health. The heart is a muscle, and much like weight training can help strengthen muscles like biceps and triceps, running can strengthen the heart and make it more efficient. Cardiologists with the Copenhagen City Heart Study noted that jogging increases oxygen uptake, which makes it easier for the heart to pump a larger amount of blood and do its job more easily. In addition, various studies have found that running can reduce individuals' risk for heart disease by a significant percentage.

• **Running and mental health:** "Runner's high" is a well-documented yet not entirely understood phenomenon. Though it's often associated with the release of mood-enhancing hormones known as endorphins and characterized as a routine and euphoric byproduct of running, experts at Johns Hopkins Medicine note that research indicates very few runners actually experience runner's high. Instead, runners may feel good after running because physical activity increases levels of endocannabinoids in the bloodstream. Higher levels of endocannabinoids may promote short-term responses like reduced anxiety and a greater feeling of calm. This is an important distinction, as runners who don't feel runner's high after a long run should know that they're likely still gaining some mental benefit from running, even if a long run makes them feel more nauseous than euphoric.

• **Running and brain power:** Running also has been found to benefit brain power. Researchers at the University of Ulm in Germany found that individuals who jogged for 30 minutes per day three times a week benefitted from a substantial improvement in concentration and visual memory.

## Cons

• **Running and joint health:** Though many medical professionals now dispute that there's a link between running and osteoarthritis, running can lead to wear and tear on the joints over time. It's important to note that such degeneration can occur even in non-runners, especially those who live sedentary lifestyles. Being physically active is an important part of maintaining long-term joint health, but individuals who like to run should be sure to devise a balanced workout regimen that includes strength training to make the muscles and tissues around joints stronger. Running without strength training could contribute to unhealthy joints.

• **Running and injury risk:** All physical activities involve some measure of injury risk, but it's still worth noting that runners are not immune to such risks. The Cleveland Clinic notes as many as



60 percent of runners will experience injuries that sideline them for several weeks or months. Plantar fasciitis, runner's knee, shin splits, and Achilles tendinitis are some injuries commonly suffered by runners. Common running injuries can make it hard to perform any cardiovascular exercise, which can have a significant and adverse effect on runners' overall health.

Though medical experts generally suggest the rewards of running outweigh the risks for healthy individuals, it's still important that men and women weigh the pros and cons before lacing up their running shoes. – MCG.



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# Simple strategies to combat stress

Just about everyone experiences stressful situations. Sometimes a measure of stress can provide motivation to do one's best or strive for an especially lofty goal. However, when stress becomes a chronic condition, it can adversely affect individuals' quality of life and even their overall health.

Harvard Medical School says stress can manifest itself in myriad ways. Stress can cause tension headaches, indigestion, aches and pains, or even heart palpitations, and it may affect the mind by making it hard to concentrate or make decisions. Many people experience stress through emotional or psychological symptoms, such as irritability or feeling down. Learning how to effectively manage stress is essential for individuals' overall well-being.

### Exercise regularly

Exercise serves many functions, including acting as a potent stress relief strategy. The

Cleveland Clinic says aerobic exercise releases endorphins, which are natural substances that help a person feel better and maintain a positive attitude. Movement activities like yoga or tai chi also can relax the mind and body and promote physical health.

### Take media breaks

Overwhelming oneself with a barrage of negative news stories or constant information can increase stress levels.

Individuals can strive to remain informed and still build breaks into their schedules.

Shut off news programs, turn over the newspaper or tune out of social media from time to time. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention recommends that individuals who are stressed out by world events reduce the number of times they read the news or check the headlines each day.

### Meditate or perform breathing exercises

Breathing and meditation can help alleviate stress, according to the American Heart Association. A quick meditation can provide some perspective. If a situation is stressful, go for a walk or take a few slow, deep breaths until the body relaxes. Harvard Medical School also says meditation can induce a relaxation response, which is an antidote to stress.

### Change negatives to positives

Negative self-talk may increase stress, but positive self-talk can help a person calm down. Individuals should practice positive self-talk every day. Instead of saying, "I hate when this happens," say, "I know how to deal with this, I've done it before."

A small amount of periodic stress can be a good thing. However, chronic stress poses a significant threat to individuals' long-term health. – MCG.



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# Long-term solutions to protect joints

Periodic aches and pains can affect anyone. Individuals who are physically active and even those who live largely sedentary lifestyles may experience pain from time to time. In fact, many professional and amateur athletes experience relatively minor, short-term injuries at one point or another, and rest is often the best remedy to overcome such obstacles.

Though minor tweaks may be somewhat normal, long-term issues like persistent joint pain should not be written off as par for the course. It can be tempting to write joint pain off as a concern only serious athletes need to worry about. Terms like “tennis elbow” and “runner’s knee” can give less physically active individuals a false impression of joint pain and what causes it. But the Mayo Clinic notes that lack of exercise can contribute to pain and stiffness in the joints. That’s because exercise strengthens the muscles and tissues that surround the joints. That added strength puts less stress on the joints.

In recognition of the threat posed by chronic joint pain, the Arthritis Foundation (AF) recommends individuals take various steps to protect their joints over the long haul.

**Focus less on fashion in regard to footwear.** High heels may be the epitome of glamorous footwear, but women who routinely wear high heels will pay a steep price. The AF notes that heels put added stress on the knees and increase risk for osteoporosis, and experts indicate that three-inch heels are seven times more stressful on feet than one-inch heels. But women aren’t the only ones whose footwear fashion sense could be hurting their joints. Men also must pay attention to what they’re putting

on their feet. For example, sandals without a back strap force toes to overgrip the edge of the sandal, putting needless strain on each foot and potentially causing issues with the toes.

**Alternate between sitting and standing throughout the day.** Joint stiffness and strain can develop when individuals spend lengthy periods of time sitting or standing. The AF recommends taking a break to stand up or sit down every 30 minutes. Professionals who sit at a desk all day may want to switch to height-adjustable desks that make it easy for them to transition from sitting to standing and still get their work done.

**Maintain a healthy weight.** Being overweight causes a ripple effect that impacts the entire body, including the joints. The AF notes that researchers have determined that losing 11 pounds can reduce risk for osteoarthritis of the knee by 50 percent. On the flip side, each extra pound an individual carries puts four times the stress on his or her knees. Exercising to lose weight can provide the added benefit of preventing joint stiffness.

**Opt for low-impact activities.** Low-impact activities like cycling and swimming are easier on the joints than fitness classes that involve high-intensity dancing and kickboxing. In addition, when choosing between a treadmill and elliptical machine, the Mayo Clinic notes that ellipticals are generally considered low-impact machines that are less stressful on the knees, hips and back than running on a treadmill or even outdoors.

Various strategies can help individuals maintain healthy, pain-free joints over the long haul. – MCG.

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# Alleviate everyday aches and pains

Pain occurs for a variety of reasons. Pain may be a byproduct of overuse of a particular part of the body, or it could signal an underlying illness or condition. Sometimes injury is at the heart of aches and pains.

Daily aches and pains may be seen as a normal byproduct of aging, but that does not mean aging individuals should simply accept pain. In fact, daily discomfort can be remedied with some relatively easy techniques.

**Get moving.** Lower back pain is common among adults, and most often appears when individuals are in their mid-30s and 40s. Strength training and cardio exercises can remedy this pain because these activities increase blood flow and help build core muscles, which support the spine. Support can alleviate pressure on the discs in the back. Exercising also will build strength in other areas of the body and support joints.

**Practise good posture.** Sitting and standing with optimal posture can help the body feel better. The body is designed to stand in a “neutral” position that stacks the pelvis, head and torso, according to DMC Healthcare. When posture is out of whack, this puts undue



Lower back pain is common. Various strategies can reduce aches and pains.

stress on muscles, leading to pain. Dropping your head or shoulders also can create unnecessary tension that leads to headaches. Good posture can alleviate this.

**Exercise more often.** Certain pains arise when exercising for the first time or

performing a new activity. Allan H. Goldfarb, Ph.D., a professor and exercise physiologist at the University of North Carolina, Greensboro, says when you do the same activity again and again, your muscles will start to get used to it and soreness will be reduced. Don't give up

on exercise too soon, but include off days in your routine to give your body time to become more acclimated to increased physical activity.

**Get tested.** Speak with your doctor if you have chronic pain in one or more areas. Such pain may be a sign of osteoarthritis, an inflammatory condition that is associated with aging. Rheumatoid arthritis and other autoimmune conditions can cause aches and pains as well, leaving the joints and tendons inflamed and a body with low energy. A doctor can rule out these conditions or help you get the therapy and medications you need.

**Increase stretching and movement exercises.** Incorporate stretching and movement exercises like yoga or tai chi into your daily regimen. These activities slowly stretch areas of the body and can improve range of motion and flexibility over time.

These are just a few ways to address common aches and pains. Medical interventions, physical therapy, occupational therapy and ergonomics assessments, and massage therapy also may help to alleviate aches and pains.

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# The nutritional value of popular types of fish

Fish is an important component of a healthy diet. Compared to many other sources of protein, including beef, pork and chicken, certain varieties of fish are lower in calories per serving size. Plus, fish is an important source of omega-3 fatty acids, which have been linked to heart and brain health.

The American Heart Association recommends that people eat at least two servings of fish each week.

Knowing how various types of fish stack up when compared to one another can help people decide which fish to include in their diets. The following is some nutritional information on some popular types of fish, courtesy of the United States Department of Agriculture. Nutritional information for raw fish is based on a standard three-ounce serving size.

**Cod:** (Pacific): 70 calories, 0.54 grams fat, 15.22 grams protein

**Flounder:** 78 calories, 1.02 grams fat, 16.02 grams protein

**Haddock:** 74 calories, 0.61 grams fat, 16.36 grams protein

**Halibut:** (Atlantic and Pacific):

94 calories, 1.95 grams fat, 17.69 grams protein

**Mahi mahi:** 72 calories, 0.60 grams fat, 15.72 grams protein

**Ocean perch:** 81 calories, 1.38 grams fat, 15.84 grams protein

**Salmon (farmed):** 156 calories, 9.22 grams fat, 16.92 grams protein

**Tilapia:** 81 calories, 1.44 grams fat, 17.07 grams protein

**Tuna:** 93 calories, 0.81 grams fat, 19.89 grams protein

The way fish is prepared can alter its nutritional profile. Baking, grilling or broiling without adding fat are the most healthy ways to prepare fish. Enhance the flavour of fish with fresh herbs and citrus marinades. – MCG.



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