

fall 2021

# wellness matters



**COWICHAN VALLEY**  
School District

Choices for healthy living • nutrition • fitness • well-being • health



## PAIRING FOR HEALTHY HABITS

**I**n a perfect world, healthy habits would come as second nature, but sometimes life gets in the way of our best intentions. “Most people don’t lack motivation, but they often struggle with follow through,” says Sharon Kelly, certified life coach at Successful Transitions in Nanaimo, B.C. So, given the limits of motivation, how can you form healthy habits that stick?

To strengthen positive behaviour, try “pairing,” an old concept that was recently popularized by Gretchen Rubin, a bestselling author who studies habits and happiness.

The pairing strategy is essentially to link habits you enjoy with ones that are aspirational, like practicing gratitude while you drink your morning

coffee, or exercising while you watch Netflix.

“The great thing about pairing is that you’re linking a new behaviour to one that already exists, and that helps with follow through,” Kelly tells *Wellness Matters*. “Pairing also cuts down on decision-making time, allowing us to get out of our heads and into action,” she adds.

To make pairing work for you, Kelly suggests exploring and challenging self-limiting beliefs, getting clear on how new habits will benefit you and making incremental changes to start. For that extra level of accountability, Kelly recommends enlisting the support of a friend or an ally, such as a life coach.

## 10 FAST FACTS

**1** Orange-coloured vegetables like yams and squash are an excellent source of beta-carotene, which is good for immune health and vision.

**2** Studies suggest that capsaicin, a component found in chili peppers, may reduce sinus symptoms.

**3** Surpassed only by injuries, mental disorders in youth are ranked as the second highest hospital care expenditure in Canada.

**4** White asparagus is not genetically modified. Its white colour is all-natural.

**5** There are 43 muscles in the face, which allows it to twist and contort into a variety of expressions.

**6** There are no pain receptors in the brain, so the brain can feel no pain.

**7** The human body has between two and four million sweat glands to help regulate temperature.

**8** You burn more calories sleeping than you do while watching television.

**9** The average lifespan of a human hair is between three and seven years.

**10** A cough travels nearly 100 kilometers per hour.

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ALL PHOTOS: ISTOCK



# HOW MANY EGGS ARE OK?

About a decade ago, the idea of eating more than about three eggs a week was thought to be a guaranteed ticket to high cholesterol and heart disease. Thankfully, numerous research studies have since proven this wrong. Total saturated fat, found in animal products like meat, eggs and dairy, along with low-quality, industrially produced trans fats, found in processed foods, are far worse for blood cholesterol than the dietary cholesterol that is naturally present in eggs. Still, like most things in nutrition, the answer to this question in some ways really is “it depends.”

“When I’m asked this question, I begin by saying, it depends,” says dietitian Patricia Chuey. “A boiled egg on whole-grain toast or two eggs scrambled with a cup or more of fresh vegetables is an entirely different thing than a three-

egg cheesy omelette served with greasy sausage and buttery low-fibre white bread, for example. As is six eggs a week for a healthy, active person eating a varied diet compared to someone inactive and not eating a wide variety of healthy foods. Regardless, for most people, one to two eggs a day served in a healthy, balanced way is not a problem.”

Eggs remain one of the best and most affordable protein sources going. About 60 calories each, a two-egg serving provides 12 grams of quality protein. They’re a great source of vitamin D and a total of 14 nutrients including iron, vitamin A, vitamin E, folic acid and both lutein and zeaxanthin, important for healthy vision.

Eggs are very versatile and make for quick and easy meals—and not just for breakfast. Try a quiche or frittata for a simple weeknight dinner offering protein and vegetables.



## fall recipe

### Coconut Cream Overnight Oats and Lentils

Servings: 4      Calories/serving: 440  
Per serving: 47 g carbohydrate, 5 g fibre, 26 g fat, 200 mg sodium, 12 g protein

Enjoy this novel way to eat lentils at breakfast. Fibre-rich and hearty to keep you fuelled through busy fall mornings.

#### INGREDIENTS

- 1 tsp coconut oil
- 2 large eggs
- 1 can (14oz/398 mL) coconut milk
- 1 cup + 1 tbsp (265 mL) water
- 1/3 cup maple syrup
- 1 tsp vanilla
- 3/4 cup steel-cut oats
- 1/2 cup split red lentils
- 1 tsp cinnamon
- 1/2 tsp ground ginger
- 1/4 tsp sea salt

#### INSTRUCTIONS

- Grease a 9-inch square baking dish with coconut oil.
- In a medium bowl, beat eggs, coconut milk, water, maple syrup, vanilla, oats, lentils, cinnamon, ginger and salt. Pour into prepared dish. Cover with plastic wrap and refrigerate overnight.
- Preheat oven to 350°F (180°C) the following morning. Remove plastic wrap. Stir oats and lentils. Cover with foil and bake for 30 minutes. Remove foil and bake another 10-12 minutes or until set in the middle.

To serve, drizzle oatmeal with a bit more maple syrup and serve with fresh fruit, toasted nuts and seeds.

“Age is something that doesn’t matter, unless you are a cheese.”

—Luis Bunuel, filmmaker

# Fermented FOODS



You may be surprised to learn that fermented foods are essential to your diet. So what are they? Yogurt, cheese, kefir and sauerkraut are examples of fermented foods. They have undergone a process called lacto-fermentation where natural bacteria feed on the sugar and starch in the food, converting it into organic acids. This preserves the food while also changing its flavour and texture.

It's like the first step of digestion. Nutrients are broken down, creating micro-flora (friendly bacteria), which help balance the environment in the digestive system. Properly balanced gut bacteria, with enough digestive enzymes, help absorb nutrients from the food. Pair fermented foods

with healthy food and nutrient absorption is higher.

The gut is the first line of defence for the immune system. It is difficult to be in optimum health with an imbalance. Fermented foods have positive effects on immunity, intestinal health, weight loss and general well-being by creating beneficial enzymes, vitamins and probiotics.

Adding lots of fermented food to the diet at once can upset the stomach, causing bloating, constipation and headaches, due to the bad bacteria dying off. Try introducing these foods in a small, incremental way within existing meals. Have a yogurt with breakfast, kombucha tea and a small serving of fermented vegetables with dinner, for example.

## THREE FERMENTED SUPERFOODS

- **Kefir** – this fermented milk drink has a tart and even sour taste. It is made either with kefir grains or a powdered kefir starter. Unlike wheat, these are not actual grains but are made of bacteria and yeast. Kefir also contains tryptophan, which can help you sleep.
- **Miso** – this is a fermented paste made from soybeans, rice or barley, salt, water and a mould called *aspergillus oryzae* (koji). In addition to several essential vitamins and minerals, miso has a high level of protein, dietary fibre, carbohydrates, and omega-6 and omega-3 fatty acids.
- **Sauerkraut** – sauerkraut is a sour white cabbage that contains fibre, and vitamins C and K. It also has high levels of glucosinolates, compounds that have been shown to have anti-cancer activity.

# Heighten Nutritional Intake with Hemp



**Food hemp**, also known as industrial hemp, has long been grown on the Canadian prairies. Although related to the cannabis plant, food hemp is its very distant cousin. A terrific way to boost

intake of healthy omega-3 fatty acids, fibre, vitamin E, magnesium, iron and other minerals, hemp does not have any psychoactive properties and won't produce a "high."

Hemp hearts, or seeds, are available in mainstream grocery stores. The seeds are oatmeal-coloured and slightly bigger than sesame seeds. They are gluten-free and are not genetically modified. A three-tablespoon serving provides 170 calories, 13 grams of healthy fats and 10 grams of plant protein – that's about half the protein of a meat serving. Their lightly crunchy texture and mild, earthy taste make them a great choice for everyone, especially kids and moms-to-be.

Add hemp to meals and snacks with these tasty ideas from Cara Rosenbloom, registered dietitian, blogger at *WordsToEatBy.ca* and co-author of *Nourish: Whole Food Recipes Featuring Seeds, Nuts and Beans*.

- Sprinkle on cooked vegetable dishes or macaroni and cheese.
- Use as a topping for yogurt.
- Add to hot or cold cereal.
- Toast to add crunch to salads.
- Stir into pancake or muffin batter.
- Blend into smoothies.
- Eat straight for an easy, protein-boosting snack.

**"I can resist everything except temptation."**

—Oscar Wilde, novelist



**B**ouldering is fast gaining popularity in Canada, at least among those who like to think through their thrills.

There are no ropes in bouldering, which involves climbing up, around, or over a giant rock without falling off.

The only essential piece of equipment is a crash pad, which is a mat placed on the ground beneath climbers that helps absorb the impact of a fall. Most people like to use a proper pair of climbing shoes too; other than that, it's just you and the boulder.

The sport is characterized by short, powerful moves and quick sequences that can take place as high as over a dozen metres off the ground. Because the only real safety measure is that safety mat, participants need to be comfortable with and adept at solving problems.

"Bouldering represents the true essence of climbing," says Luigi Montilla, director of Bouldering Canada, which is dedicated to competition climbing. "The minimalist approach to the sport allows the climber to concentrate on movement and problem-solving unencumbered by ropes or equipment."

The sport has become a prominent subculture of the climbing community. New indoor centres are opening up all the time, while enthusiasts are continually seeking new spots in the great outdoors.

"Bouldering's growth in popularity can be attributed to its accessibility compared to the other climbing disciplines," Montilla says. "It requires minimal equipment and is by far a more social activity than its counterparts. This is evident when you visit a local climbing gym, popular bouldering area, or any climbing competition; parents and their kids, siblings, or a group of friends can all be seen climbing on the same set of boulder problems, cheering each other on as they try to one-up each other."

## It's a **Wrap**

**It seems the world's best athletes** these days are wrapped up in hot pink or blue tape.

While it may seem like the trend du jour, kinesio taping has been around since the mid-1970s. The premise is that applying elastic tape to the body will assist the natural healing process and provide support to the muscles without affecting circulation or range of motion. The tape lifts the epidermis of the skin, allowing lymphatic fluid to flow more easily away from an injured area, which improves circulation and reduces swelling and pain.

"As a stand-alone therapy with respect to swelling, kinesio taping is one of the best modalities that I have versus my lasers and ultrasound machines worth thousands of dollars," says Dr. Roger Berton, chiropractor and a certified kinesio taping course instructor.

Kinesio taping uses the principles of Gate Control Theory, which involves temporarily closing the gate on pain information.

"The tape adds a sensory neurological bombardment to the skin, decreasing pain information to the brain. Think of a parent's touch after falling off a bike, but 24/7," he says. Berton adds that kinesio taping can also help prevent injuries by providing neurological support to weakened tissues without restricting movement.

Skeptics might conclude that the brightly coloured tape is a high-end athletic placebo, but Berton points to more than 50 studies on [kinesiotaping.com](http://kinesiotaping.com) as evidence that it works.

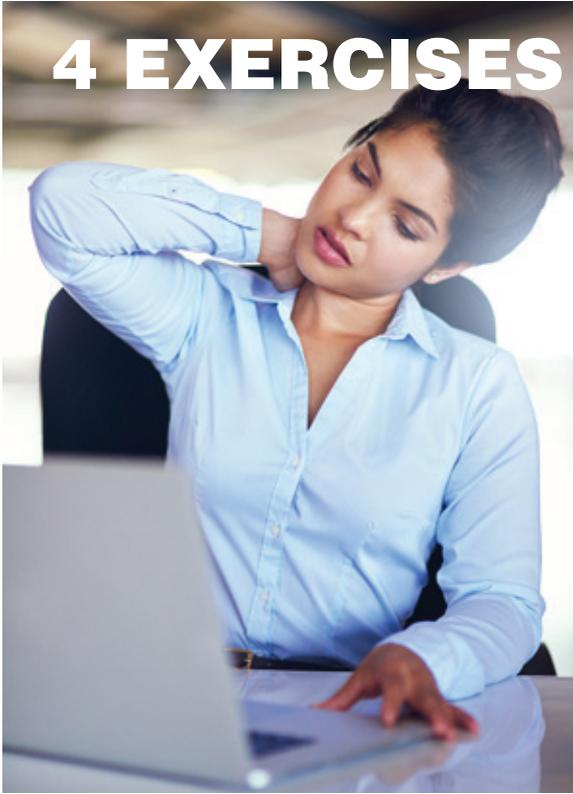
"The biggest group of users of kinesio taping are the pediatric therapists who are dealing with neurological problems; they are using this as their core modality."



**"Procrastination is the art of keeping up with yesterday."**

—Don Marquis, philosopher

## 4 EXERCISES to Make up for Your Desk Job



**Spend most of your day** sitting at a desk? You need these four exercises and stretches, recommended by Brandon Santo, a certified personal trainer and strength and conditioning specialist at Groundwork Athletics. Not only will these exercises promote better movement and posture, they'll keep you more alert at work, reduce stiffness and help keep injury at bay:

- 1. Half-kneeling stretch:** Take a half-kneel position, squeeze your back glute and pulse forward, eight times per side. This will stretch out your hip flexors and quads, which shorten and tighten from sitting at a desk.
- 2. Pectoral stretch:** Put your forearm on a doorway, lean in, squeeze shoulder blades, and turn away from your arm, 45 to 60 seconds per side. Your shoulders and chest can round over when sitting. This stretch creates the opposite movement.

**3. Horizontal pull/row:** This strength exercise, which can be done with a resistance band or as a seated cable row at the gym, will strengthen your shoulders and back muscles. Santo recommends three sets of 10 reps at moderate to heavy intensity, three times per week.

**4. Glute bridge:** Lie on your back and with your knees bent and heels placed near your glutes. While pushing down on the floor, contract your glutes, and hold at the top of the position for two seconds. The glutes are the most important muscle that is used in daily activities like walking and standing from a seated position. Santo recommends three sets of 12 to 15 reps, three times per week.

While exercises are important, Santo says the best solution to sitting at a desk is to move. "The best position to be in is your next one."

## The Domino Effect of Tight Hamstrings

From a sore back to tight hips, many office workers are acquainted with the aches and pains that come with a desk job.

According to an article published by BMC Musculoskeletal Disorders, a peer-reviewed, open-access journal, "low-back pain is common among office workers, and is the most common cause of work-related disability in people under 45 years of age."

For some, the root of aches and pains remain a mystery. But could hamstring tightness be one common cause?

According to Jeffrey Vagay, registered physiotherapist at

Total Therapy Rehabilitation & Wellness Centre in Vancouver, and member of the Physiotherapy Association of BC, "If your hamstrings are truly tight, the surrounding areas in your body tend to compensate – which could lead to hip, low back, knee and foot issues."

"Hamstring tightness can cause a number of problems, including poor posture and neck and back pain," says Dr. Jason Casey, chiropractor at Pitt Meadows Wellness Centre. "In my opinion, the two biggest causes of hamstring tightness are a lack of stretching and too much sitting," he tells *Wellness Matters*.



### TIPS

Hamstring exercises from the experts

- Stand on one leg with the other elevated on a low stool. Tilt your buttocks back until you feel slight tension in your hamstring.
- Lying on the floor, rest one leg vertically against a wall. Scoot your buttocks closer to the wall until you feel a stretch up the back of your leg.

To improve posture and flexibility, Dr. Casey suggests sitting less, exercising more and stretching for a minimum of two to three minutes, three to five times a day.

**"A feeble body weakens the mind."**

—Jean-Jacques Rousseau



## Trouble Talking with Your Boss?

**A**re you fearful when it comes to discussing issues with your employer? Do you feel sick to your stomach? Do your palms become sweaty?

A fear of speaking up when it comes to authority figures is extremely common, even with the most outgoing personality types. However, it could be hindering your work, knocking your confidence and preventing you from progressing up the career ladder.

Fears are a function of our self-preservation. However, unless you have a tyrannical boss, this fear is often unwarranted. That's not to say having those tough conversations—about a difference in opinion, a salary raise or a day off—are any easier.

Megan Sutherland, clinical social work/therapist at Vancouver-based Willow Tree Counselling tells *Wellness Matters* that while it depends on what the employer is asking for and also personality types, there are steps you can take to not let your nerves get the best of you when it comes to speaking with your boss.

### Step 1: Face Your Feelings

Take a moment to think what is causing this reticence. Is your boss always rushed? Then ask them for a specific time to meet. Do you feel your boss is intimidating? It could be time to ramp up casual conversation to humanize the boss a little. Are you asking for a raise? Be sure you come prepared with details of all you have done to contribute to the company.

### Step 2: Don't Be Afraid of Conflict (when necessary)

Most people will shy away from conflict. We want to be “nice,” but that can impact self-esteem, and also create relationships that are neither authentic nor constructive. This fear of conflict often has nothing to do with your boss and is more of an internal challenge. First learn to recognize what your triggers are. If there is conflict in the office, do you get a knot in your stomach? Why? Once you identify the cause and realize most of the time it's not personal, you can learn to approach the situation in a calm manner.

### Step 3: Rehearse

Learn to ask for what you need by identifying your need. This can either be by writing your thoughts in a journal or practising in front of friends and family, to be sure you are fully prepared.

### Step 4: Active Listening

It's an interesting exercise to hear feedback and be willing to listen. It shows you are a flexible person and willing to learn and grow. And you don't even have to agree with the boss, you can just respond with “that's an interesting point,” or “that's something to think about.” Don't feel the need to respond instantly. By letting them talk, and taking a moment to think, you can create a far more comfortable environment and open the gates to communication.



## Pain and your Brain

If you suffer from chronic pain, your physical and mental health may be at risk. Chronic pain, best described as pain that lasts much longer than would be expected from the original problem or injury, is linked with mental health issues such as depression.

“Anxiety is big,” says Dr. Elizabeth Saxton, senior clinical practice manager with OrionHealth, a group of rehabilitation and assessment centres in B.C. and Alberta. “Fear of movement, and the crippling anxiety when a person feels they can't do something without it causing more pain, is an issue.” Disrupted sleep, low energy, irritability, loss of appetite and disinterest in social activities are other ways chronic pain can impair quality of life.

Modern treatments address both the psychological and physical dimensions of pain. Acceptance and Commitment Therapy (ACT), for instance, teaches patients to accept their thoughts, feelings and physical sensations through mindfulness. Dr. Saxton says it's “very effective. It works on symptoms and goal-setting, and challenges where you are with where you want to be.”

If you're experiencing pain, Dr. Saxton suggests asking yourself if your work performance, concentration and patience seem affected. At home, watch for reliance on medications, increased alcohol consumption and social isolation as possible signs of chronic impact.

Dr. Saxton advises against taking stress leave from work, however. “Don't take away your sense of purpose,” she says. “Have a reason to get up every day.” She advocates taking advantage of benefits plans that offer massage, physiotherapy or other treatments.

“I always wanted to be somebody, but now I realize I should have been more specific.”

—Lily Tomlin, actress

# Unravelling Stress



**Knitting is expanding its fan base.** From harried working moms to actor Ryan Gosling, a new generation is taking it up as a way to bust stress.

For some, knitting is the new yoga: Stitchlinks, an organization in Bath, England, promotes knitting as therapy, suggesting that its repetitive motions lure people into a meditative state. For others, it's the new book club: Calgary social club The Chix With Stix Meetup Group has over 400 members, many recent converts to knitting.

Tapping into the trend are younger women like Montreal's Catherine Ste-Marie, who switched from a career in law to owning a yarn store, Tricothèque. Ste-Marie says, "I have to knit every day. It's how I recharge, focus, and meditate." Her 16-year old daughter also knits and some schools are offering knitting courses. "It's great to put the iPad aside and connect," says Ste-Marie.

In pop culture, Canadian actor Ryan Gosling (along with lots of other men) has become a devotee. The day he learned to knit on a set, Gosling told *Vanity Fair*, "was one of the most relaxing days of my life."

In today's society producing something tangible at the end of the day is a contributing factor to knitting's appeal. Vancouverite Tasha Ogryzlo says, "I knit to relax. The concreteness of the process is very relaxing to me."

## KNITTING KNOTS

**Knit-ins:** The annual Woodstock Fleece Festival in Woodstock, Ontario has become a favourite annual getaway of the yarn crowd.

**Cruises:** Knitting cruises are a new niche tourism. Craft Cruises offers knitting-themed boat and rail expeditions to Alaska.

# Home Clear

**Have you ever noticed** during times of mental upheaval that your home is reflective of your mind's state?

While a cluttered home doesn't necessarily translate into a messy mind, a study by UCLA's Center on Everyday Lives and Families (CELFL) found that clutter has a profound effect on our mood and self-esteem.

Megan Sutherland, professional counsellor at Vancouver-based Willow Tree Counselling, tells *Wellness Matters*: "When you have a clinical depression you often spend a lot of time at home,

sometimes in a small space that can be quite confining. Even simple decisions can be difficult, so sorting out your room, for example, can seem like a monumental task. In turn this can, in some cases, compound the problem."

Sutherland adds that during "low times," self-care is extremely important and clearing your space can help clear your mind, if energy permits.

In addition, she says that following a period of depression, getting rid of objects associated with those negative emotions can help you



back on the road to recovery. "People have a lot of emotional memories associated with depressive episodes. Letting

go of objects associated with those times can also help give you a boost. It can be very empowering."

**"Too much agreement kills a chat."**

—Eldridge Cleaver, writer

# Head First: How to Recognize and Treat a Brain Injury



**“Having a brain injury is like having your brain wiped like a chalkboard,”** says Derrick Forsythe, a brain injury survivor and narrator of *A Change of Mind*, a documentary that explores new approaches to helping survivors through science, changes in societal attitudes, and legal reform. “And now you have a blank slate. That’s where help comes in. You can’t fix your own brain, you need someone to tell you how.”

Years into his recovery, Forsythe is open about his struggles with social integration and past substance use. But not everyone knows when they’ve suffered a brain injury, and undiagnosed it can cause problems in many aspects of life.

Dr. Brian Hunt, a retired neurosurgeon and member of the BC Concussion Advisory Network, says “we’re still in the early stages of educating teachers, parents and even family physicians and emergency doctors in the art of identifying when someone is suffering from the effects of repetitive shaking and jarring

of the brain.” He argues that education is the most important step in addressing the societal impact of brain injury and taking steps to proactive treatment.

“It’s important to identify that concussion is a brain injury,” says Hunt. “If you acknowledge that, then you have to appreciate that [brain

injury] is a frequent event.” And you don’t have to be knocked out to get a concussion; sufficient

shaking and jarring of the head will do it. Symptoms of a brain injury may include a change in behaviour or cognitive ability, poor concentration, impulsivity, fatigue or short-term memory loss. According to Hunt, it can be difficult to distinguish symptoms from something like whiplash.

If you think you or someone you know has suffered a brain injury, Hunt recommends seeking a qualified program with a knowledgeable psychologist. Once diagnosed, survivors face a lifetime of recovery.

Forsythe likens his recovery to the stages of grief: “I felt confusion, then denial, and anger,” he says. “Eventually I

figured I must have a brain injury because my head scans said so, and that was acceptance.” And while there is stigma associated with brain injury survivors, Hunt believes the effect of coverage like *A Change of Mind* is educating for the general public. “It increases awareness and teaches us to be sympathetic,” says Hunt.

Though brain injury survivors are forever changed, the brain is still capable of recovery and learning. “Brain injury is not the end of the world,” says Forsythe. “The brain recovers like any other muscle.”



## The Numbers Behind Brain Injury:

**165,000** Canadians suffer a traumatic brain injury each year (excluding concussions);

**55%** of the homeless population in Canada and U.S. has suffered a brain injury;

The economic burden in Canada from brain injuries and treatment is

**\$12.6 billion;**

**60-80%** of people in prison have untreated brain injuries.

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