Research has found that exercise is important for mental wellbeing.

Exercise can improve your mood and reduce the risk of mental health conditions like depression and anxiety. Exercise is also important for physical health. Getting the recommended amount of physical activity each week reduces the risk of becoming overweight, obesity and a number of diseases.

It’s not entirely known why but people who remain active into old age also have a lower risk of developing diseases like Alzheimer’s and vascular dementia. Following on from this it’s thought that exercise may help to support and preserve normal brain function.

Researchers in the US looked at the effect of exercise on brain health in 30 inactive adults aged between 61 – 88 years. Nearly half of the participants were showing some signs of mild cognitive impairment at the beginning of the study.

The group was given an exercise program to follow that involved moderate intensity walking on a treadmill four times a week for 12 weeks. Participants’ fitness levels were measured and scans were taken of their brain before and after the program.

Predictably, at the end of the 12 weeks, fitness levels had increased with improvements in heart and lung health. Brain scans showed an increase in the thickness of the cortex compared to before the program commenced.

The cortex is the outer layer of the brain that typically shrinks in people with Alzheimer’s disease. The greatest increase in cortical size was seen in those with the greatest improvements in physical fitness. The thickening of the cortex was seen in healthy people and in people with mild cognitive impairment.

This was a small study and can’t prove that exercise leads to improvements in brain health. The thickening of the cortex was seen in healthy people and in people with mild cognitive impairment.

THE IMPORTANCE OF HEALTHY FATS

Saturated fat is the ‘bad’ kind of fat and often comes from processed foods like biscuits, pastries, hamburgers, pizza and hot chips.

The current recommendation for saturated fat intake in Australia for reasonable heart health is 7% of the total daily energy intake. Currently it’s estimated that Australians consume about 12% of their total energy as saturated fat. Too much saturated fat in the diet can increase blood pressure, increase the amount of bad cholesterol in the blood (LDL cholesterol) and increase the risk of heart disease.

Many people rightly try to avoid saturated fat in their diet to avoid bad health outcomes and while this is a good measure to take, some of us go a step too far to exclude all dietary fats. That’s usually because the different types of fats are not well understood. Avoiding all dietary fats can be detrimental to your health, as good fat actually contains properties that are important for good health.

Polyunsaturated fats, for instance, are healthy fats. A recently published analysis of international trends in health and dietary fat intake looked at the implications of not consuming enough polyunsaturated fats in the diet. The data showed that reducing saturated fat intake was associated with a 4% reduction in the rate of deaths from heart disease but they also showed that not eating enough polyunsaturated fat increased the risk of heart disease by 8%. This research highlights the importance of getting enough healthy fat in your diet. Healthy fat should not be excluded from the diet or cast in the same mould as saturated fat. Polyunsaturated fat can be found in a variety of tasty and nourishing foods including nuts, seeds, fish and leafy greens and plays an important role in balancing your diet. It may also help to reduce risk of heart disease.

The research also corroborates what is already known about saturated fat – it’s important to keep saturated fat intake to a minimum by avoiding foods like processed meat, take-aways like pizza and hamburgers and sweet treats like ice-cream and biscuits. If you’re unsure about the different types of fats and foods that contain them, visit the Victorian Government’s Better Health website for a good explanation: https://www.betterhealth.vic.gov.au/health/healthyliving/fats-and-oils

Good Health on the Menu

BLUEBERRY AND BANANA MUFFINS

A delicious snack packed with flavonoid filled blueberries.

Ingredients:
- 2 cups self raising flour
- 1 teaspoon ground cinnamon
- 1 cup rolled oats
- 2 eggs, lightly beaten
- 150g Greek natural yoghurt
- 80g (lite) margarine, melted
- 2 ripe bananas, mashed
- ½ cup honey
- 1 cup fresh blueberries

Method
1. Preheat oven to 180 degrees Celsius
2. Line 12 non-stick muffin spaces with paper muffin cases
3. Sift flour and cinnamon in a bowl, stir in rolled oats and make a whole in the centre of the mixture
4. Add eggs, yoghurt, margarine, banana and honey and combine well
5. Fold in blueberries and stir lightly
6. Spoon mixture into a muffin pan
7. Bake for 20 minutes or until golden brown
8. Remove muffins and allow to cool before serving


Trim Down with Flavonoids

Different foods are known to be positively or negatively associated with weight change.

Foods high in saturated fat are known to increase the risk of weight gain and some chronic diseases (see the story on the importance of healthy fats for information on what type of fat you should be getting in your diet).

On the other hand, foods like blueberries, apples, pears and celery are thought to positively influence body weight. All of these ‘positive’ foods have something in common – they are rich sources of flavonoids.

Flavonoids are naturally occurring compounds found in a number of fruits and vegetables. The exact mechanism responsible for the weight loss effects of flavonoid rich food is not entirely known.

Researchers looked into this further, investigating the relationship between flavonoids and weight change in more than 100,000 people over nearly a quarter of a century. The people involved were free of chronic diseases, including obesity, at the beginning of the study. Their personal data were collected over 24 years. This included their weight and lifestyle habits recorded every two years and their food intake reported every four years.

Consumption of most of the flavonoids was associated with small but significant weight loss benefits. This was strongest for anthocyanins (found in foods such as blueberries and strawberries) and flavonols (also found in berries and other foods like onions). The research reiterates the importance of fruits and vegetables being part of a healthy diet.

For people who struggle to lose weight, choosing specific types of fruits and vegetables might aid weight loss efforts. It’s important to try to get the recommended two serves of fruit and five serves of vegetables in your diet each day and perhaps try for an extra hit of flavonoid rich food if you’re having trouble shifting those extra kilograms.

For reference: Bertoia, M et al. Dietary flavonoid intake and weight maintenance: three prospective cohorts of 124,086 US men and women followed for up to 24 years. BMJ 2016; 352: i17 http://dx.doi.org/10.1136/bmj.i17
Hunger Feeds A Bad Mood

Eating is a pleasurable experience bringing about feelings of happiness and comfort and creating an occasion to socialise with friends and family.

The gratification that repeatedly arises from enjoying food can create reward pathways in the brain that link eating food to feelings of happiness and pleasure. The neural pathway circuits in the brain that link food with good times are reinforced with every meal. Another potential explanation for the enjoyment associated with food is that eating may create an occasion to socialise with friends and family.

Researchers in the US have been following the activities of small subsets of nerves (neurons) in the brains of mice that produce agouti-related protein (AGRP). AGRP is a neuropeptide produced by the brain and is one of the most potent appetite stimulators. These neurons fire when we’re hungry. Being hungry triggers the AGRP neurons in our brain. The results of this study suggest that this trigger may elicit negative emotions. This may explain why people can get moody and irritable when they are hungry and why eating can alleviate this and promote feelings of happiness and satisfaction. This research also illustrates why it may be hard for some people to restrict how much they eat.

Portion control is key to weight maintenance. It’s important to be aware of your mood and how food intake may be affecting this and develop strategies to manage the negative feelings that arise from being hungry. Eating foods that promote satiety (the feeling of fullness) is a good way to avoid the irritably that accompanies an empty stomach.

It’s also important to remember that most people in developed countries have not actually experienced true hunger and are probably rather used to consistent periods of overeating and eating a lot of energy dense food so are feeling withdrawals from these states.

Foods high in fibre promote feelings of fullness for longer as do foods with a low glycemic index.

and many have lost teeth. Gum disease is associated with increased inflammation in the body, which can damage the heart. Unsightly teeth are a turn off and reduce people’s employment chances. Poor oral health means poorer nutrition and that can mean shorter lives. • No smoking (deadly for gums and oral health).
• In childhood, if there is tooth decay, talk to a dentist about fissure sealing and fluoride applications to prevent further damage. • In adulthood keep up the basics of dental hygiene and visit your dentist regularly.

**MYTH VS FACT: MORE NUTS = LESS CALORIES**

Nuts are a nutritious snack and a valuable addition to a healthy diet.

Nuts are low in saturated fat and high in a number of good nutrients including ‘healthy’ fats like monosaturated and polyunsaturated fats, phytochemicals like flavonoids, dietary fibre, plant protein, vitamin E and minerals like magnesium, zinc, iron, calcium and potassium. Some nuts are also associated with reducing the risk of chronic diseases like coronary heart disease due to their positive effect on lowering LDL cholesterol and maintaining healthy blood vessels.

Despite their healthy properties many people think nuts are a fattening food due to the perception that they have a high available energy content. Research has shown, however, that the available energy from some nuts is actually much lower than people might predict. Almonds, for example, have been measured as having 20% less available energy than what people perceive.

Researchers have now tested this theory in walnuts. Eighteen healthy adults followed a diet plan on two different occasions for three weeks at a time. One of the plans included the addition of 42 grams of walnuts each day. The energy content of the foods consumed was measured and urine and faecal samples were analysed in order to see how much of the potential energy from the food was lost from the body.

The results showed that there was 21% less available energy in walnuts than predicted. The reason given by the researchers for this is that fat is trapped inside the plant cell wall in the nut limiting the potential of it being digested. They also flagged that this result might be more pronounced if the nuts are not chewed completely.

More research is needed in this area however these results suggest that some nuts are likely to have less available energy than people perceive and therefore potentially assist with weight control. These results apply to nuts consumed in the whole form so unfortunately it does not extend to highly homogenised spreads like peanut butter, which can be high in salt and saturated fat.

For reference: Baer, DJ et al. Walnuts consumed as a part of a healthy diet plan on two different occasions for three weeks at a time. The results showed that there was 21% less available energy in walnuts than predicted. The reason given by the researchers for this is that fat is trapped inside the plant cell wall in the nut limiting the potential of it being digested. They also flagged that this result might be more pronounced if the nuts are not chewed completely.

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**TOP TEETH TIPS**

- When you’re pregnant make sure your teeth are in good shape and you brush regularly with a fluoridated toothpaste – it makes a difference.
- Avoid sugar – it fuels the decay causing germs in your mouth.
- Floss and make sure no food debris is left in your mouth after meals and overnight.
- Don’t clean a baby’s dummy by sucking on it as you’ll transmit your decay germs to the baby.
- No sugar or fruit drinks for babies.
- Never leave a baby to suck on a bottle no matter what’s in it.
- Start brushing teeth as soon as teeth are showing with a tiny smear of toothpaste.

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**GET YOUR TEETH INTO HEALTH**

For some reason, in this age of holistic health, we tend to ignore the fact that our teeth are part of the rest of our body.

Most dentists have little to do with the rest of the healthcare system, so dental care can be expensive and hard to access if you’re not privately insured. But the health of our teeth and gums is tightly linked to our health in general.

As we age, we develop more and more dental decay. Three out of four Australian toddlers have no decay but by the time we’re over 65, the vast majority of people have fillings and many have lost teeth. Gum disease is associated with increased inflammation in the body, which can damage the heart. Unsightly teeth are a turn off and reduce people’s employment chances. Poor oral health means poorer nutrition and that can mean shorter lives.

**PRACTICE UPDATE**

**MEDICARE REFUNDS**

From the 1st July 2016 all patients must be registered with Dept of Human Services with their preferred bank account details. Medicare will no longer be issuing cheques to patients who are not registered.

Alice Street Medical Centre does have the relevant forms at the front desk but you will still have to go to their main office to lodge your details.

**FULL CONSULTATION FEE**

Alice Street Medical Centre takes great pride in the fact that it provides a high quality medical service and we believe we charge a fair and reasonable fee. General Practices operate as private businesses and the cost of operating expenses such as wages, electricity, insurance and electronic support have increased.

The freeze to Medicare rebate increases until 2018 means that we will need to make some changes to our billing practices. For Pension card Concession card holders Alice Street Medical Centre will charge the Full Consultation Fee instead of Direct Billing or discounting the consultation fee EACH YEAR.

**MY HEALTH RECORD SYSTEM**

The Australian Government is going to send people in our region a letter that states “You are getting a My Health Record!” This was previously known as a PCEHR – personally Controlled Electronic Health Record. Alice Street Medical Centre would like to help you understand what this will mean. With prior arrangement by you, another Doctor or health professional in other parts of Australia can gain access to certain or all parts of your health records.

You will arrange an appointment with your GP at ASMC to authorise and discuss what you would like to make available such as Pathology Results, Specialist Letters, General practitioner notes etc. Then when you are with another doctor (away from ASMC) you can authorise and access with them the My Health Record System to view the information available.

**WEBSITE COMING**

Always one to keep up with technology and advancement, Alice Street Medical Centre is in the process of setting up a Website. This will provide up to date comprehensive information about the services the practice provides such as Solar Scans, After Hours Information, Privacy & Personal Information etc and will also have downloadable forms such as the Patient Travel Subsidy forms. We will keep you informed about the website and when it will be fully up and running and look forward to all patients browsing through the website.

**EMAIL CORRESPONDENCE**

Alice Street Medical Centre would like to collect your email address as in the future we will be sending scheduled recalls and reminders via electronic means. We ask that you stop by the front desk and complete the consent form and we will add this to your chart. Please be advised that results from investigations or sensitive medical information will not be sent via email.

**ONLINE BOOKINGS**

To ensure your appointment, book online using the new online booking system. Enter the details and preferred that you phone the surgery.

Go to: https://openappointments.com.au/alicestmc