

Thoughts On General Health

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Health and wellness is being in balance with our mind, emotions, body, and the environment. Most health practitioners focus on eliminating symptoms in different parts of the body based on patient complaints and normalizing tests. This can be called disease care. A more wholistic approach focuses on finding root causes (see disease tree). Mental and emotional stress, environmental toxins and processed foods are all toxic to the body's cells, their biological terrain (the fluid that surrounds each cell, organs and tissues.) Any imbalances, loss of the body's self-regulation ability have their root cause in toxins, nutritional deficiencies or physical trauma. The result initially is usually nonspecific symptoms such as pain, fatigue, brain function, anxiety and sleep disorders. These will eventually lead to various organ dysfunction, hormone disorders, enzyme problems, autoimmune disease and inflammatory conditions whose name ends in "itis." (Arthritis, sinusitis, bronchitis, appendicitis.) The mechanisms by which toxins act include oxidative stress (thus the need for antioxidants via diet and supplements), endocrine (hormone disruptors), and the immune response causing chronic inflammation and autoimmunity.

Cavities, infected teeth and gums, as well as teeth clenching can not only cause pain, cosmetic problems and breath issues, but also have a relationship with chronic health problems such as: high blood pressure, diabetes, heart disease, arthritis, obesity and even skin problems. Most doctors are well trained in repairing damage from the disease, but not in prevention. It has been said that the same foods and life styles that prevent health problems can also be used to treat them. Our overall state of health is determined by the health of the body's cells. The cells which make up the tissues and organs need to be in an environment that provides necessary nutrients and oxygen, removes waste, and maintains normal temperature. This process is called homeostasis.

-All chronic diseases may be an aspect of a spectrum or range of disease labeled autoimmune. Antibodies are produced by our immune cells and are supposed to destroy what is recognized as a foreign invader (not self). This could be a splinter, bacteria, virus, toxin (poison), or even poorly digested proteins. The process is called inflammation and is part of the healing process. Any disease name that ends in "itis" is the result of inflammation that is out of control. When the immune system is functioning correctly only non self is destroyed unless there is collateral damage from excessive or prolonged use of our immune army and its weapons. Fortunately our body is designed to repair this damage provided the nutritional supplies are available and the foreigner is eliminated.

-Autoimmunity occurs when antibodies become confused and attack the self (our body). The confusion is the result of triggers which include:

1. The foods we eat and how well they are digested.
2. The toxins to which we are exposed.
3. The microbiome or population of bacteria in our digestive tract from mouth to anus and health of the cells lining it. The microbiome includes not only the bacteria, but also their biofilm (protective environment) and genetic information.

-Our genes and how they are expressed can be affected by those and other triggers or changes in the environment known as the epigenome. These changes in genetic expression play a role in which organs are susceptible to auto immune attack (disease).

Toxins can attach to molecules in different organ systems making them vulnerable to attacking antibodies. This is called cross reactivity. Poorly digested proteins can resemble the chemical structure of proteins in our body making them susceptible to attack. This is called molecular mimicry. Cross reactivity and molecular mimicry are responsible for a variety of symptoms and diseases of our organ systems. These symptoms can be eliminated or greatly reduced by lifestyle changes.

Elimination Diet

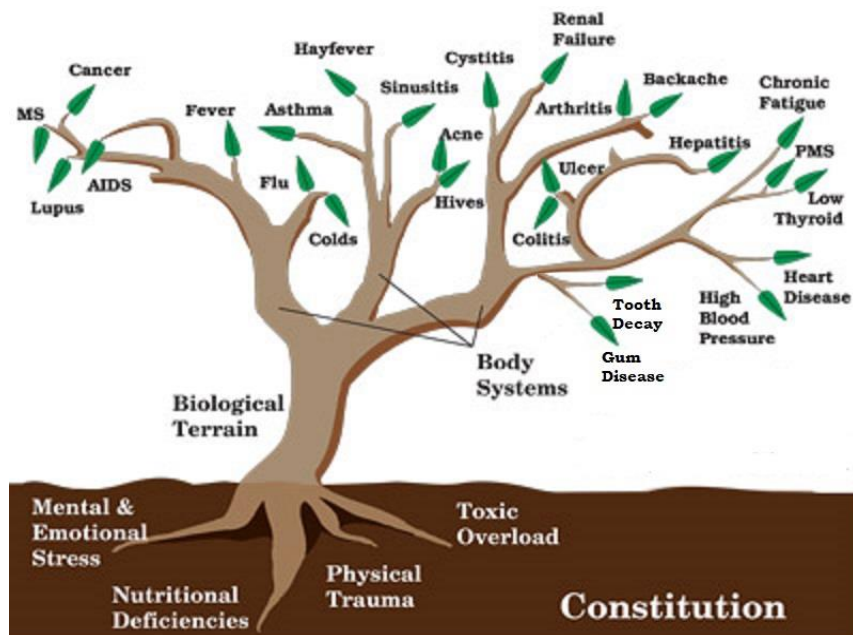
The goal is to eliminate the food or foods to which our body has produced antibodies and contribute to the process of autoimmunity and inflammation. Inflammatory foods must be avoided for healing to take place. The fire of inflammation cannot be put out if we keep throwing gasoline on it. The most common food component is a protein called gluten. It is present in many foods (read labels). It is probably best to avoid any foods containing wheat, rye or barley. The casein in dairy may be another to avoid (although raw grass fed dairy may be ok.) Corn, eggs and soy may also be a source of food intolerance. It would be good to start the elimination of these foods for 3-4 weeks. If improvement occurs then slowly reintroduce one at a time to find the offending food. If no improvement, there may be another food or toxin involved and you will need professional help.

Treating Chronic Inflammatory Disease

1. Heal the digestive tract: eliminate inflammatory foods and add anti-inflammatory foods, spices, and herbs.
2. Improve digestion by eating unprocessed, low heat cooked or raw foods with natural enzymes, and or supplementing with digestive aids.
3. Adequate intake of necessary vitamins, minerals, fats, water, and air.
4. Increase movement through exercise.
5. Adequate sleep.

Please use the attached dietary information to eliminate inflammatory foods and self-evaluation as guide for nutritional supplementation. Consider having Dr. Brent analyze a blood test which includes the panels listed on the attached Opti-Plus D form. Have the health care provider of your choice order the test.

The state of disease/health in one branch can affect the state of disease/health in the other branches. That is why it is important to have a holistic approach to our body's health.



Dentistry and the Disease Tree

Tooth decay and periodontal disease (gum disease) are two of the many chronic diseases that can plaque the human body. Whatever is used to prevent disease can also be used to treat it. Brushing and flossing treat disease at the local level, but unlike most drugs, there are few if any side effects. Finding and eliminating the root causes provides both prevention and treatment. Since individual humans have differences in personality and body type, the root causes can be manifested differently from person to person. Healing is aided first of all by getting to know the person seeking improved health, then follow these ABC's of healing.

- A. Activate the mind by having a positive emotional and mental attitude and the body by taking medicinal substances that increase or stimulate the body's healing ability.
- B. Build the mind by practicing techniques that promote positive and loving feelings and the body by giving it the proper amount of high quality air, water, and food.
- C. Cleanse the mind by practicing techniques for letting go of unpleasant thoughts, forgiveness and expressing gratitude, and the body by eliminating or reducing the toxins already in our body with deep nasal breathing, sweating while increasing water intake (1/2 ounce per pound body weight), and fasting.

Principles of Healthy Eating

Dr. Weston Price

- Prominent dentist, head of the American Dental Association of his time
- Traveled the world in the 1930s studying nutrition

Native People

- Had plaque on their teeth, but had virtually no tooth decay or gum disease
- Did not get impacted wisdom teeth because jaws were wider
- Had healthy bones and immune systems

Essential Principles of Healthy Eating

- Select natural foods over processed foods
- Select nutritionally dense foods
- Eat fresh foods that are in season and locally-grown
- Eating organic reduces chemical exposure
- Select food that is flavorful, looks and tastes good
- Eat in a relaxed state with an attitude of gratitude

Nutritional Density

- High nutrient value for calories consumed
- Most important part of good nutrition
- Processed foods are not nutritionally dense
- Wild foods are extremely nutritionally dense
- Native people had 10 times more fat-soluble vitamins and 4 times more water-soluble vitamins in their diets.
- Macro mineral content was also 3-4 times higher.

Specific Nutritive Values in Native Diets

- The isolated Swiss diet contained 10 times more fat-soluble vitamins and activators, 4 times more calcium, and 3.7 times more phosphorus
- The isolated Gaelic ate 10 times more fat-soluble vitamins, 2.1 times more calcium, and 2.3 times more phosphorus
- The diet of the Aborigines of Australia contained 4.6 times more calcium, 6.2 times more phosphorus and 10 times the amount of fat-soluble vitamins
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Dr. Price's Conclusions

- Good dental health is a sign of good general health
- Tooth decay is a sign of nutritional deficiency
- Disease and criminal behavior is linked to poor nutrition

Diet and Dental Health

- Weston Price found that the indigenous groups that had the highest immunity to tooth decay ate foods from at least two of the following food sources daily:
 - Dairy products from grass fed animals
 - Fish and shellfish (including organs)
 - Organs of land animals

Thoughts on Nutrition

1. Be grateful for your food
2. Chew your food well, you cannot overdue it
3. When possible choose organic, locally grown or raised
4. Foods to avoid:
 - Anything your grandmother would not recognize as food
 - Anything that has more than 5 ingredients
 - Anything that you cannot pronounce
 - Anything that has high fructose corn syrup
 - Foods that make health claims
 - Avoid eating when you're angry or upset
 - All flour
 - MSG or similar additives
 - Hydrogenated or Trans fats

5. Be aware many knowledgeable people believe the Western Diet is an important factor in chronic illness or disease refer to Doctor Weston Price's research (see www.westonprice.org)

6. Everyone according to genetic makeup and living environment needs a certain balance of carbohydrates, fats and proteins to supply energy and chemicals so that we function normally. Heating or other processing changes the chemical nature of food. This can be beneficial, making it easier to digest fully. It can also make food more difficult or impossible to digest; they become unrecognizable as food to our digestive tracts. Anything our body does not recognize triggers an immune response such as allergies and autoimmune disease (arthritis and colitis). Poorly digested foods can also contribute to ulcers and gastric reflux.

7. Food is more than the sum of its nutrients. The nutrients behave differently when artificially broken up by processing. Whole naturally occurring foods are better than supplements. These are nutrient dense. Try fresh fruit and vegetables of many colors. The darkest, deepest colors are better. Whole milk and dairy products are better than reduced fat. Note: most dairy products have been processed by pasteurization, which could be a problem for some. Lacto-fermented foods such as sauerkraut and yogurts are beneficial because digestion is already started, friendly bacteria are replaced and healthy enzymes are present Even whole grains should be minimized. Hydrogenated and Trans fats should be avoided, these oils are broken down into usable but unhealthy fatty acids. Fats are necessary for health. Our brains and cell membranes are mainly made of fat. Eggs from free range chickens, salmon, chia seeds, and flax seeds (which can be ground in a coffee grinder), and walnuts (soaked for 8 hours in water) are a good source of omega 3 fatty acids. Nut butters are also a good source of fat. Olive oil and coconut oil (which has been shown to have anti-microbial activity in the intestinal tract) are good and can be used for cooking since they are more heat tolerant. Coconut oil and coconut butter could be good for the immune system. Proteins should make about 25% of our diet and should be included with each meal. Vegetarian sources of protein include nuts, seeds (pumpkin and hemp are good) and beans. Proteins provide amino acids which are the body's building blocks and are directed by our genetic code for building our bodies. Food contains instructions that help our metabolism and affect our genes. That is why it is important to eat foods that are whole, real, and fresh.

8. As the cost of processing foods (to make them cheaper, more convenient, and tastier) have gone down, the cost for treating chronic illness has increased even more.

9. After eating a meal to about 2/3 fullness, we should feel great emotionally, we should feel energized (not tired), we should not have any cravings.

10. There is a lot of controversy on diet. These thoughts could help point the way to a healthier lifestyle, which is the path that leads to true healthcare. Be an informed consumer and do your own research.

Suggested reading:

Michael Polian "The Omnivores Dilemma"

Weston Price DDS "Nutrition and Physical Degeneration"

Francis M. Pottinger M.D. "Pottinger Cats: A Study in Nutrition"

Thoughts on Digestion

The digestive system requires more energy to do its job than any other body system. Disease in any part of the digestive system from mouth to colon can be either a symptom of disease or a contributing factor to disease in another part. Every part of the digestive system contributes the body's health and maintenance.

We must chew our nutrient rich food completely and mix it with saliva to start breaking it down. The saliva should be in adequate amounts and have a pH of 7.0-7.4 (which is alkaline). This healthy saliva provides an environment for friendly bacteria rather than disease causing bacteria. Healthy saliva aids in the replacement of lost minerals from the teeth during eating and drinking. The stomach acid (HCL) breaks down food more, kills unwanted bacteria, and prepares some minerals such as calcium for use. It is important to not dilute stomach acid by drinking liquids with meals. Drinking one half hour prior to eating is much healthier for the digestive process. The small intestine should be relatively sterile (may be a few friendly bacteria). It further breaks down food with enzymes and allows the needed nutrients to be ready for transportation to the body's cells, while preventing unwanted wastes from getting out into the body, a large part of the immune systems work. The large intestine (colon) aided by friendly bacteria recycles usable material and eliminates waste. The friendly bacteria produce some vitamins our body needs.

Stomach and intestinal problems such as: Indigestion, GERD, Irritable Bowel, Crohns, and Ulcerative Colitis can prevent normal digestion from occurring and increase the risk for many other diseases. This may include cavities and gum infection. Diets high in protein and refined carbohydrates are not only difficult to digest, but also can make our mouths more acidic, which creates a better environment for unhealthy bacteria which are not killed by the stomach acid. Food allergies, which may include gluten, wheat, dairy, eggs, and nuts, can irritate the digestive tract causing Leaky Gut. This is when waste products, bacteria, and toxins leak out of the gut and into the body instead of being eliminated from the large intestine. An over growth of bacteria in the small intestine and stress can also contribute to Leaky Gut and its associated Leaky Brain.

Symptoms of Leaky Gut may include the following: abdominal pain, excessive gas, bloating, nausea and vomiting. Diseases associated with Leaky Gut/Leaky Brain include: ADHD, arthritis, asthma, auto immune diseases, celiac, chronic fatigue, depression, dermatitis, eczema, fibromyalgia, memory problems, multiple chemical sensitivities, psoriasis, sinus problems, and yeast infections.

It is important to be aware that the health of the digestive tract from the mouth to the colon should not be viewed and treated as separate parts. Dysfunction in one part of the digestive system can contribute to disease throughout the body. A comprehensive approach to health of the teeth and gums should include personal hygiene, diet, and mental stress reduction techniques. Understanding this and making the necessary life style changes not only lead to a healthy smile, but also to a healthy rest of us.

Vitamins (organic substances made by plants and animals) and minerals (inorganic substances that come from soil and water) are the micronutrients necessary for the body's chemical reactions responsible for growth, repair, and healing. These are my recommendations for supplements:

1. Multivitamin with B complex (B1, B2, B12), and vitamins A,D,E,K. It may be necessary to increase vitamin A to 10,000 IAU and D3 to 4000 IAU per day.
2. CoEnzymeQ10 100mg/day
3. Essential fatty acids to balance (omega3, omega6, omega9) with two omega3 to one omega6. For omega 3 fatty acids, use high quality refrigerated form of flaxseed or fish oil. Flaxseeds can be soaked (6 hours) or ground fresh in coffee grinder. Omega 3 fats are needed for calcium utilization and are anti-inflammatory.
4. Minerals should include: calcium citrate 1500mg, magnesium citrate/malate 750mg, and potassium citrate 4000mg per day.
5. Zinc, copper, iron and manganese need to be in balance. You need professional guidance.
6. Hydrochloric acid (HCL) is necessary for protein digestion and preparation of minerals such as calcium and iron for use. HCL also kills harmful bacteria, viruses and yeasts present in food. The HCL challenge test can be used to determine the need for HCL. Take one 400-500mg Betaine HCL with pepsin capsule in the middle of a meal. Increase by one capsule until a mild burning is noticed. If one or two capsules causes burning you may have parasites (SIBO) causing acid reflux and professional guidance is needed.

The health of the intestines is necessary for proper use of all nutrition. Anyone with chronic health issues associated with inflammation or stress needs to improve gut health before taking supplements by seeking professional guidance.

Supplements helpful for clenching and stress management:

- Magnesium
- B-Vitamin complex- (Apple cider vinegar has B vitamins, Bragg Organic is good)
- L- Theanine 200-250mg per day found in green tea.
- Adaptogen herbs such as:

Asian ginseng, ashwagandha extract and licorice root extract can help break the inflammatory hormonal pathways that take place in the body's chronic stress reaction.

There are U.S. companies such as Metabolic Management, Nature's Sunshine, and Standard Process that combine vitamins, minerals and enzymes in forms that can be used to support specific body systems and their chemical pathways. These companies provide the safety, quality and convenience that justifies additional cost over other sources such as GNC, Amazon, Walgreens or Walmart.

Stress

Stress is a non-specific response by our body to any demand: physical, mental or chemical. It can be pleasant or unpleasant. Unfortunately, many of us allow our thoughts on life's unpleasant experiences to dominate. We can usually control our behavioral response to life's events. Our emotional response is more difficult to control. It can be easily detected by facial expression or tone of voice. In addition we all tend to be impatient and stubborn, so we have to find quick answers to everything. The quickest answer seems to be: segregate everything into things we like and don't like. What we don't like is blamed for a number of undesirable emotional experiences. Emotions trigger reactions in our nervous system and hormones to enable the flight or fight response. The prolonged reaction in chronic, unhealthy stress is a contributor to many symptoms and disease. Some of which include: grinding or clenching teeth, muscle tension, headaches, increased blood pressure and heart rate, fatigue, upset stomach and digestive problems, changes in appetite, memory loss, and learning difficulties. There some who believe chronic stress is responsible for all chronic disease. The term for pressures that lead to stress is stressor i.e. work, kids, traffic or politics. Whatever we do to reduce the body's chronic stress reaction to stressors will be beneficial.

1. Relaxing Breath: breathe out through the mouth for a count of 4 and breathe in through the nose for a count a count of 3. Rest your tongue in the roof of the mouth and let your jaw muscles relax while thinking the word relax. You can increase the exhale/inhale count as long as you exhale longer than you inhale. Repeat the exercise 2-3 times. Try to do this upon waking, at bed time and hourly during waking hours. Use a cue such as: opening a door or drawer, ending a phone call or text, or any regular activity to remind yourself.
2. "Notice and Ease Exercise" from Heartmath. Visit web site, heartmath.org
3. Research Mindfulness Based Stress Reduction (MSBR)

When we see wear patterns on the teeth, white lines on the cheeks or scalloped indentions on the tongue we suspect chronic, unhealthy stress may be occurring. Be aware of any teeth clenching activity. The only time your teeth should touch is when you swallow.

Inflammation

Inflammation like stress is a nonspecific reaction by the body. This means it happens the same way all the time. It starts as a call for help by the cells of our body when they are not happy. The signs of inflammation are: pain, swelling, redness and heat. Usually, it takes 8-10 days to resolve and helps prevent infection and while healing occurs. This is a normal process and is beneficial. Inflammation must be regulated, otherwise we can have too much or too little.

1. Too much inflammation can lead to: autoimmune disorders, fibromyalgia, chronic fatigue, atherosclerosis, ulcers, obesity, sinusitis and allergies.
2. Too little inflammation can lead to infection and cancer.
3. Additionally, inflammatory chemicals also cross the blood brain barrier inflaming brain cells. This can contribute to headaches, seizures, depression, dementia, increased sensitivity to pain, and many cases of autism.

Inflammation and stress are closely linked. All healing must return these responses to normal function. This is the goal of Functional Medicine's approach to treatment.

All infection causes inflammation. Red, bleeding gums are infected and inflamed.

Four healthy habits:

1. Healthy thinking by changing our perception about life's events to include: mindfulness (being present on purpose and without judgement), patience, compassion, and forgiveness.
2. Healthy breathing provides adequate oxygen, helps normalize stress, and maintain chemical balance in and around cells, tissues and organs.
3. Healthy drinking is ½ ounce water per pound of body weight.
4. Healthy diet includes: unprocessed, high quality, organic when possible, nutrient dense foods that contain naturally occurring vitamins, minerals, and possibly enzymes to help completely digest the food so that it can be used effectively in our body, without causing inflammation. Calories only provide energy. Enzymes also help in the: elimination of toxins, destruction of harmful bacteria, building and repair, and destruction of blood clots.

THOUGHTS ON TOXICITY

If you suffer from loss of energy, memory loss, depression, anxiety, nausea, sleep problems, skin problems, canker sores, bad breath, food intolerance, trouble losing weight, PMS, menstrual problems, body aches and pains, sinus problems frequent colds or frequent headaches you may be toxic. Consider a detoxification program to include:

1. Healthy breathing: see attachment
2. Increase water intake to ½ ounce per pound of body weight per day. You can add Celtic sea salt to each glass of water for a total of 1 teaspoon per day.
3. Increase antioxidants with fresh fruits and vegetables of many colors. A high quality green tea such as "gun powder" available on Amazon is also a good source.
4. Liver support: The liver is the main detoxifier of our blood. It needs minerals, B complex vitamins, vitamin C, and amino acids to do its work. Cruciferous vegetables, raw spinach (which has all the amino acids the body can make), uncooked garlic and onions also have beneficial amino acids. Milk Thistle supplement.
5. Improve elimination with fasting, enemas, sauna or hot Epsom salt baths (20 minute soak).
6. Eat fermented vegetables: the friendly bacteria take up heavy metals and help make B vitamins.
7. Stress reduction: see attachments.
8. Take a quality probiotic such as organic plain yogurt. You can add 2-3 tablespoons of fresh ground or pre-soaked (over- night) flaxseeds.
9. For amalgam removal take 2 tablespoons/8 ounce glass of water or juice.

Balancing pH

The pH of blood can range from 7.35-7.45, perhaps as high as 7.5. This is considered to be alkaline and is optimal for the health of our cells, bones and teeth. Also the body can eliminate toxins more effectively. A good indication that our blood pH is normal is the pH of our saliva and urine which should also be an alkaline pH (7.0-7.5) depending on the time of day. As the pH becomes acidic, minerals can be lost from teeth and bones. Toxins are not eliminated as well, resulting in unhealthy, chronic inflammation.

An acidic balance will decrease the body's ability to absorb vitamins, minerals and other nutrients, decrease the energy production in the cells, decrease the body's ability to repair damaged cells, decrease its ability to detoxify and increase tumor cell production.

Symptoms associated with low pH include: tooth decay, osteoporosis, muscle and joint pain, muscle weakness, gout, allergies, and infection.

Self help includes:

1. Deep diaphragmatic breathing. Internet search Cleveland Clinic diaphragmatic breathing.
2. Increase water intake to ½ ounce per pound body weight. Add fresh lemon juice for alkalizing minerals.
3. Meals should include an increase of fresh green leafy vegetables such as spinach as well as 10-12 servings of fresh fruits and vegetables per day.
4. Mental relaxation to decrease the chronic stress response. Refer to the information on stress.
5. Mineral supplementation with magnesium and potassium.
6. Decrease or eliminate intake of refined carbohydrates. Decrease intake of proteins. Both of which increase acidity.

pH testing kits can be purchased at www.MicroEssentialLab.com



Hydrion (O67) Urine & Saliva pH Paper 5.5-8.0

SKU# F01-SHTRG-055080-SRD



Hydrion 5.5-8.0 Plastic pH Strip

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Diaphragmatic Breathing

The diaphragm is the most efficient muscle of breathing. It is a large, dome-shaped muscle located at the base of the lungs. Your abdominal muscles help move the diaphragm and give you more power to empty your lungs. But [chronic obstructive pulmonary disease](#) (COPD) may prevent the diaphragm from working effectively.

When you have pulmonary disease, air often becomes trapped in the lungs, pushing down on the diaphragm. The neck and chest muscles must then assume an increased share of the work of breathing. This can leave the diaphragm weakened and flattened, causing it to work less efficiently.

Diaphragmatic breathing is intended to help you use the diaphragm correctly while breathing to:

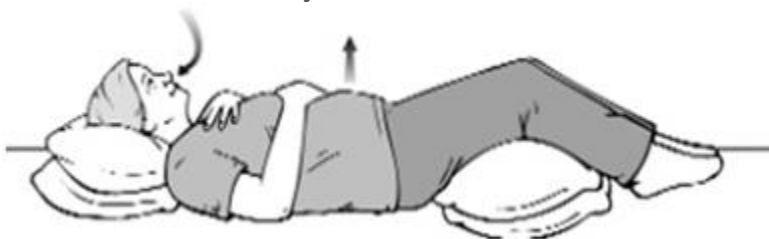
- Strengthen the diaphragm
- Decrease the work of breathing by slowing your breathing rate
- Decrease oxygen demand
- Use less effort and energy to breathe

Diaphragmatic breathing technique

1. Lie on your back on a flat surface or in bed, with your knees bent and your head supported. You can use a pillow under your knees to support your legs. Place one hand on your upper chest and the other just below your rib cage. This will allow you to feel your diaphragm move as you breathe.



2. Breathe in slowly through your nose so that your stomach moves out against your hand. The hand on your chest should remain as still as possible.



3. Tighten your stomach muscles, letting them fall inward as you exhale through pursed lips (see "[Pursed Lip Breathing Technique](#)"). The hand on your upper chest must remain

as still as possible.



When you first learn the diaphragmatic breathing technique, it may be easier for you to follow the instructions lying down, as shown on the first page. As you gain more practice, you can try the diaphragmatic breathing technique while sitting in a chair, as shown below.

To perform this exercise while sitting in a chair:



1. Sit comfortably, with your knees bent and your shoulders, head and neck relaxed.
2. Breathe in slowly through your nose so that your stomach moves out against your hand. The hand on your chest should remain as still as possible.
3. Place one hand on your upper chest and the other just below your rib cage. This will allow you to feel your diaphragm move as you breathe.
4. Tighten your stomach muscles, letting them fall inward as you exhale through pursed lips (see "*Pursed Lip Breathing Technique*"). The hand on your upper chest must remain as still as possible.

Note: You may notice an increased effort will be needed to use the diaphragm correctly. At first, you'll probably get tired while doing this exercise. But keep at it, because with continued practice, diaphragmatic breathing will become easy and automatic.

How often should I practice this exercise?

At first, practice this exercise 5-10 minutes about 3-4 times per day. Gradually increase the amount of time you spend doing this exercise, and perhaps even increase the effort of the exercise by placing a book on your abdomen.

Developing Healthy Habits

A habit is an automatic response and does not require conscious thought. It can be a thought, emotion, or action. Habits are learned behaviors that become a permanent part of the brain's memory. They allow the brain to multitask. The brain does not distinguish or judge habits. It attempts to make our life situation better by focusing on what will happen in the next ten minutes and not on

the long term consequences. The brain processes information from three sources that activate the body's response: the external environment, internal physiology (what causes the body to work), and what is socially acceptable. Habits are reinforced by responses that are considered rewarding.

Since habits can be overridden by conscious thought, new, healthier habits can be learned to replace unhealthy ones. Relapse is part of the process; therefore trying is the most important aspect. Success is secondary. The first step is placing value on health and having a desire to change. Secondly, become aware of the cues, emotional states and thoughts that trigger unhealthy habits. The key words to remember are: cue, habit, and reward. Use a cue that you think, say or do frequently during the day, then practice the habit every time you experience the cue and immediately reward yourself with small pieces of dark chocolate (high cocoa content, low processed sugar) or some other treat. Dark chocolate causes the brain to release oxytocin, a chemical that increases the brain's ability to rewire. You can effectively change an undesirable habit by keeping the same cue/reward and substituting a desirable habit. Always use the cue, habit, reward technique. Also try to surround yourself with opportunities to engage in activities that do not activate unhealthy habits. It is better to not focus on the unhealthy habit: instead increase enriching activities that develop healthy ones. Ways to increase success include: practicing observing others who not only demonstrate the healthy habit, but also encourage it in you, by reducing anxiety. Stress related anxiety overloads the conscious part of our brain and allows the unconscious habit in our memory to take control. There are many relaxation techniques that can reduce anxiety such as: relaxed breathing, mindfulness based stress reduction (MSBR), and Heartmath. Other helpful hints include: allowing healthy activities to be enjoyable, learning problem solving and coping skills so that challenges become opportunities, and improving social interactions that inspire healthy living. Try not to deprive yourself. Create positive associations with healthful behavior, connect with friends and support groups that will aid you in developing healthy habits, which are the key to happiness and good health.