



# 21 Ways To Improve Your Physical, Mental And Emotional Health

Health can take many forms and can be measured in many different ways. Here at the UCA, we believe true health should be viewed holistically rather than by any one specific measurement. Health is the combination of factors that cover your physical, mental and emotional self, whilst observing how our lifestyle impacts these key areas.

This means that we view health as more than the sum of its parts. While each part is equally important, they come together to tell us something more about how you wish to live. True health therefore cannot be achieved unless all aspects of your physical, mental and emotional health are aligned, and help you live the way you want to live.

In this guide, we will take you through 21 ways in which you can better care for all aspects of your health. By following these tips, you can improve your overall health, well-being and quality of life.





# Daily Gratitude

When you wake up each morning, what is the first thought that goes through your head? When you're brushing your teeth in front of the mirror, what are you thinking over? Many of us find ourselves already debating the lengthy to-do list of the day, wondering about what might go wrong, about what we don't have, or what might be better.

This is increasingly common, especially if we spend any of our first moments of the day scrolling through social media - the biggest source of comparison that we each carry in our pockets!

By seeing all the best parts of other people's lives online, it's hard to resist the urge to compare and contrast our lives with others. But what happens if you constantly focus on the negative aspects of your life?

This kind of negativity and comparison can foster feelings of anxiety or help stimulate a low mood. Not the best way to start your day!

Flip the switch and focus on what you do have. You will begin to see the importance of gratitude and why it can make such a big impact in your life.

Gratitude takes so many forms, both outward and inward-looking. When it comes to displaying outward gratitude for others, you might start by sending a personalised thank you note to somebody who helped you out, or simply saying thank you when somebody holds a door open for you. You might start offering compliments to others when you see something in them that you admire. Not only will you make the other person feel appreciated and valued, you will also feel good for thanking them. Win-win!

One of our favourite ways to develop an inward-looking kind of gratitude is to keep track of the top three to five things you are grateful for each day. You might integrate this into your morning practice, or even your wind-down before falling asleep. You can do this by keeping a journal, either with a note taking app on your phone or simply with pen and paper. You could even record your items with a voice note on your phone. Find a buddy who you can share your practice with and send each other your notes - this can help keep you consistent and accountable, developing your gratitude practice together.

You could list anything from your health, your home, your family, having access to clean water, having a job or even just thanks for your morning coffee. Keep it simple and notice the small things that really make a difference to your day.

Taking note of these each day, you will begin to see there are things everywhere in your life to be grateful for. Anxiety and negativity can be replaced with positive thoughts and feelings. After a while, this practice becomes second nature. Even when something bad happens, your brain will be trained to find the silver lining.



# Sitting Posture

In our modern lives, it has become increasingly common for us to remain seated for hours on end. Whether it's at the office, at home on the sofa or in the car, we place a lot of burden on our spine. The effects of bad posture are more obvious than ever!

The human body was not designed to sit down for long periods of time. Most of us do not have the luxury of a standing desk, therefore we can easily forget to take breaks, stand or walk around.

This can lead to issues not only with your spine and posture, it can also slow down your metabolism due to the decreased activity from your muscles, not to mention the increased risk of high blood pressure, heart disease and stroke.

Luckily, there are things you can do to mitigate some of these health risks. The most obvious one being to remember to take plenty of breaks from your chair. Set yourself reminders throughout the day to get up on your feet - even if it's just to make a cup of tea. Giving your eyes a rest from your screen is also helpful.

While breaks are vital, there are plenty of things you could be doing from your desk to make sure your seated hours are not causing undue damage.

Why not try:

- Sitting with both feet on the ground, legs uncrossed.
- Sitting square to your desk, with your computer at eye-level.
- Keeping your hips higher than your knees, and your shoulders stacked over your hips.
- Making sure your head is resting over your shoulders and not hunched forwards.

With the right desk setup and regular breaks, you can go a long way to preventing future problems not only for your spine but also for your overall health.



# Drinking Water

Are you drinking enough water?

You've probably been asked this question a million times by parents, teachers and health professionals - and for good reason! Water is vital for the good functioning of our entire body. If you're not getting enough of it, your body will struggle to perform even the most basic tasks.

Here are just some of the things water does for your body:

- Aids digestion
- Helps to transport vitamins and minerals around the body
- Boosts exercise performance
- Regulates body temperature
- Flushes out your body's systems
- Helps prevent kidney stones
- Promotes weight loss
- Promotes healthy skin and reduces wrinkles

The list goes on, but these give you some idea of why it's so important to get the right amount of water each day.

But how much is the right amount?

This can vary depending on who you ask, but the general consensus is that you should consume around 2 litres of water per 70kg of body weight. However, you should increase this amount if you are in hot environments or you have been exercising.

So what happens if you don't get enough water? Well, the first signs present themselves as headaches, irritability and fatigue, but if you ignore these symptoms for too long things can go from bad to worse very quickly.

When serious dehydration occurs, your organs will start to shut down after just a couple of days. Whilst this is extreme, and not a situation you likely will find yourself in, it shows how dependent our bodies are on water.

Create reminders for yourself, or carry a one litre water bottle, and aim to finish it twice each day. With a physical reminder to keep hydrated, you can ensure better hydration throughout your day. Don't forget to drink a big glass of water first thing - we tend to be most dehydrated in the morning!



# Mindful Eating

How often do you really think about what you are eating?

In today's busy world, a meal can often be for quick fuel, rather than enjoyment! This is a real shame, especially when it comes to digestion.

When the word digestion is mentioned, most people immediately think of their stomach or intestines. In reality, digestion starts in your mouth. Enzymes in your saliva start to break down the food, which is aided by the teeth chewing the food up into smaller pieces.

One common trait seen among people today is they don't chew their food enough. Either they are in a hurry, they are distracted by the television or they just aren't aware of how much they are supposed to chew their food before it is swallowed.

Try this little challenge at your next meal:

1. Set yourself a timer of 20 minutes and try to make your meal last the full session. This is your chance to really take your time, chew your food thoroughly and savour each bite.
2. Chew each mouthful thoroughly, taking note of what you are tasting.
3. Avoid eating on the go, while watching TV or reading a book. The goal here is to be mindful of every bite - so avoid distractions.
4. Stop eating when you are full! It can be tempting to finish your plate entirely, but listening to your body and avoiding those last few mouthfuls will help you keep off those extra pounds.

With these tips you can take the time to really enjoy your food, aid your digestion and practice mindfulness for a happier stomach & mind.



# Standing Posture

We all think standing is obvious - but is it?

Many of us have poor posture whilst standing, often without even realising it. The effects of this can cause a whole host of problems, including:

- Pain in your shoulders, back and neck
- Alignment problems in your spine
- Impaired digestion
- Reduced lung capacity
- Fatigue
- Headaches

Luckily there are a few things, that if done repeatedly can help improve you standing posture.

Here's how you can get started:

- Stand with your feet shoulder width apart. Most of your weight should be over your heels
- Try to keep your knees ever so slightly bent. Locking out your knees will cause extra wear and tear on your joints
- Keep your shoulders back and down, away from your ears
- Keep your pelvis tucked in slightly and stomach firm - don't let your body weight hang forward
- Let your arms hang naturally by your side

Correcting standing posture requires you to mindfully correct your posture again and again, until it becomes second nature. With time, you won't even need to think about it!



# Mindful Walking

After a long busy day, the desire to sink into the couch at night is very tempting. However, getting outside, even for just 10 minutes is worth every second! Walking is one of the most accessible and simple exercises you can do to keep healthy, and you can start at any fitness level.

There are so many benefits to walking, from weight loss, heart health, joint health, lowering your risk of Alzheimer's and lifting your mood.

Taking a walk through nature is also a good opportunity to practice being more mindful. If you have never tried mindful walking before, it can be a very meditative and calming experience that is excellent for unwinding at the end of a stressful day.

Try following these tips next time you go for a walk:

1. Take a moment to clear your mind before you go out. Put aside your to do list, silence your emails. The goal is to allow yourself to “be” in the present moment.
2. Get into the zone as you walk - notice your breathing, what you see around you, how the sky looks overhead, what you can smell and hear. Work through each of your senses to stay in the present moment.
3. Be aware of the muscles moving in your body. Notice how each foot feels when you take a step and how the ground feels beneath your foot.
4. Don't be afraid to pause if you feel like it and embrace stillness for a moment.
5. Keep your phone off or silent as you walk, and try not to listen to any music or podcasts if you can help it. Spend a little time immersed in the present.

With these 5 simple tips, your walk can become a more mindful and nourishing moment for your mind and body. Practice mindful walking more often and reap the benefits.



# Making Time for Rest

Taking time out for yourself to rest is an essential part of any healthy lifestyle. However, it's not always easy to do with so many demands and distractions in our modern life. Between a busy working day and family life, we can feel as if we are constantly on the go, without the opportunity to simply pause and enjoy some time for ourselves.

For this tip, we ask you to actively set aside time to rest. Take the opportunity to unplug, turn off your phone, and place value on the time you have with yourself without distraction - even if it is just for half an hour.

Here are some suggestions for your 'me' time:

1. Read a book. Getting lost in a good novel allows your mind to escape from the busyness of daily life and let your imagination take over. Curl up under a blanket or light some candles and read a few pages in the bath.
2. Listen to your favourite playlist. Lots of people listen to music while they are working out, driving in the car or cleaning the house, but when was the last time you just sat down and really listened? Take time to listen to your favourite songs - try noticing the different instruments working in harmony, listening to each word and how this song makes you feel.
3. Get outside. There is nothing like nature to blow the cobwebs away and clear your head. Getting out for even just a quick walk or a spot of gardening will get your heart pumping and help you reconnect with the world around you.
4. Watch a movie. Sit down with a friend or loved one, make some popcorn and relax! Just like a good book, a movie is a great way to get lost in a fictional world where you can forget about everything else for a couple of hours.
5. Try meditation. The earliest evidence of meditation dates back around 5000 BCE, so it's nothing new, but it's only in the last few decades that its benefits have really captured the masses. There are many different ways to meditate, and meditation apps are now plentiful. YouTube is a good place to start if you want to follow along with some guided sessions, perfect for a beginner.

Setting aside some quality "you" time for is an important display of love and care for yourself. By setting time aside to recharge your batteries each week, you offer yourself the emotional recharge you need to live a full life.





# Make Time For Play

Playtime isn't just for kids. In fact, adults need time for fun and games just as much as kids do! Have you ever noticed how time passes more quickly when you're having fun? Here are some of the most important reasons to make time for play - even as an adult:

1. It's a great stress reliever. With fun and excitement comes the release of endorphins. These "happy chemicals" are responsible for positive feelings and euphoria, as well as being the body's way of combating feelings associated with stress. Exercise is one of the easiest ways to get that feel good release of endorphins, so try a new activity like dancing, yoga, tennis or anything else that gets you up out of your seat.
2. It improves social skills. Whatever the activity, doing it with a friend or loved one will mean double the fun! If you don't have a buddy yet to join you, rest assured there are plenty of others like you ready to connect with other like-minded individuals. Give your social skills a workout as you make new connections.
3. It boosts your creativity. We need a little bit of levity and silliness to think outside the box. Try your hand at painting or drawing, crochet or gardening, woodwork or DIY - it really can be anything that gets you making and thinking in a new way. You don't have to be good at it in order to have fun, and like all things, the more you practice, the better you will be!
4. It improves your brain function. There are plenty of games out there that will require you to put on your thinking cap. Games like chess or draughts are good with a friend and will give your brain a workout too. You might also set aside one night a week for your family to have a quiz or board-game night. If you're playing alone then games like sudoku and crosswords are perfect for a quick escape.

Take a moment to reflect on when you last had fun - was it a particular activity, were you with someone else, or did you go somewhere in particular? Examine your own interests, listing out the moments where you felt free to play and explore. If you aren't sure, start with something completely new like picking up a paintbrush, pen or a craft. Many people find exploring, singing and cooking ways of sparking their creativity, whatever it may be, find something that makes you smile!

Invest the time in finding activities that make you happy and excite you, and don't forget the words of playwright Bernard Shaw:

"We don't stop playing because we grow old; we grow old because we stop playing."



# Deep Breathing

We often say that certain things are 'as easy as breathing', however breathing effectively and well takes time to master. In fact, many of us breathe the wrong way. Your breath can be drawn from the chest or the belly - to figure out which you use more, place a hand on your chest and the other on your belly. Pay attention to which rises as you breathe.

While chest breathing is quite common, especially in smokers and ex-smokers, this kind of breathing actually limits how much oxygen can enter your body. Less oxygen coming in can trick your brain into thinking you are stressed, and it can actually lead to an anxiety response.

There are several other good reasons to breathe from the belly, including:

- It increases oxygen not only to your brain, but to your bones and cells as well
- It increases energy and supports muscle growth
- It increases blood supply and the amount of nutrients delivered around your body
- It decreases muscular tension and relaxes muscle spasms

You can easily practice belly breathing if this doesn't come naturally to you - and it will soon become second nature.

1. Start by sitting or lying flat in a comfortable position. Place one hand on your belly and the other on your chest.
2. Take a deep breath in through your nose, and let your belly push your hand out. Your chest should remain still.
3. Breathe out through your pursed lips (as you would if whistling). Feel the hand on your belly go in, and use it to push all the air out.
4. Do this 3 to 10 times. Take your time with each breath - there's no hurry.

Notice how you feel at the end of this exercise. It can really help you relieve tension, reduce stress and relax. The way our body responds to stress (such as increased heart rate, fast breathing, and high blood pressure), all decrease as you breathe deeply in this way. Practice daily for long term benefits.



# Square Breathing

Square breathing (also known as box breathing or 4-part breathing) is a particular breathwork technique that can really shift your energy, connecting you more deeply with your body. It can help to calm down your nervous system and decrease stress in the body.

Sometimes this kind of breathing can feel more deliberate and meditative for some, rather than simply breathing deeply.

Here's how you can give it a try:

1. Sit in a chair with your back supported and both feet flat on the floor.
2. Start by slowly exhaling all your air out.
3. Gently inhale through your nose to the slow count of 4.
4. Hold your breath at the top for a count of 4.
5. Gently exhale through your mouth to the count of 4.
6. When all the air is released, pause and hold for the count of 4.

This can be repeated several times. If you would like to make the practice even more meditative, you can set an intention or invite a positive image to guide you as you breathe.

Some people like to imagine drawing a square in the mind while doing this, and draw one side of the square for every 4 second hold.

This is a great way to calm yourself down in the face of stress, or to simply pause ahead of a busy day. You might use it as part of your evening routine, to reset your energy throughout your workday, before making a big decision, or while you set your intentions in the morning.

It's an easy practice you can integrate at any time, anywhere.



# Your Sleeping Space

The arrangement of your sleeping space is paramount to the quality of your rest. 'Sleep hygiene' is the term often used for the careful and deliberate practices around your sleep routine that will help you get a good night's sleep. If you're feeling tired each morning, or restless through the night, having trouble getting to sleep or staying asleep, here are a few ways you can get on top of your sleeping space for a better night of rest:

1. No screens in the bedroom. This should be a rule! No phone or TV or laptop screens right before bed - the bright lights from your screens play havoc with the body's circadian rhythm by limiting the production of melatonin, the chemical that tells your brain it's bedtime. If you must use your phone, try turning on a blue light filter in your screen settings. This works to reduce the amount of blue light emitted, helping to reduce the negative impact to your melatonin production.
2. Ensure the room is dark. Utilise heavy curtains or shades to block out windows and any light from outside, or try out a sleep mask.
3. Keep your room cool. Your body naturally lowers its temperature when you are asleep, and you can help this process by keeping your room cool. Ideally your room should be around 18 degrees, so avoid sleeping with your heating on and crack open a window if you need to.
4. Keep it quiet and consistent. You don't necessarily need perfect silence to get a good night's sleep. In fact, many people find sleeping with some ambient noise in the background to be beneficial. This might include things like a fan, an AC unit blowing, ocean sounds or rain sounds.
5. Install a sleep tracking app or wear a sleep tracker to bed. This will let you know how much deep sleep you are actually getting a night and help you notice any common trends.

Don't underestimate the power of sleep! Life can be pretty busy at times, there will be moments where you miss out but try to keep these times to a minimum to give your brain and body the time to recover.



# Your Sleep Routine

A dedicated sleep routine really helps to ensure that your body is primed for the best possible recuperation through the night. We've talked about the importance of your environment, now let's cover your wind down routine.

Follow this each night to help teach your body when it is time for bed. It should help you to experience a longer and deeper rest. Experimentation is key - certain things work better for some of us than others! But give these a go as a starting point, adjusting as required:

1. Get in sync with your natural sleep-wake cycle, or circadian rhythms. A regular bedtime and waking time each day, really helps your body's internal clock to learn when you should feel tired, and when it's time to wake up. This means it's not a good idea to sleep in too much on the weekend, even though it's tempting. Try not to have long naps either, as these can disrupt your schedule. If you find yourself nodding off as soon as you've finished dinner, get up off the couch and do something very mildly stimulating - like washing the dishes, calling a friend, or writing down your to do list for the next day. If you sleep too early, you might wake in the night and have trouble settling again!
2. Be smart about light exposure. Spend some time by a sunny window in the morning, spend some time outside during the day, and let as much natural light as you can into your working space. Equally, avoid bright screens late at night, within an hour of bedtime, and keep lights low if you do have to get up during the night.
3. Time your exercise well. Regular exercise is very helpful for good sleep, but it's important to do this during the day and not too close to bedtime. Even light walking can be good for your sleep. Avoid any vigorous workouts within 3 hours of sleep time.
4. Control what you eat and drink. Limit caffeine stimulation to the brain as it can affect your sleep patterns. Avoid eating heavy meals at night and too many liquids before bed to prevent disrupting your sleep with trips to the bathroom!
5. Try a cold shower, this can help lower your body temperature preparing your body for rest, mimicking the lowering of your body temperature that naturally occurs whilst you sleep.

Sleep is essential to the body's recuperation and healing process. Spend time experimenting with these tips and tricks to ensure your body is getting the rest it really needs.



# Stop Something For 30 Days

Is there something in your life you know you want to cut down on or quit completely?

Maybe it's ditching fizzy drinks or cutting down on the sugars in your tea. Whatever the case may be, the idea of quitting forever can be quite daunting - we can become paralysed about the idea of quitting something forever, before we've even started.

Not to worry. There is a way of making this challenge a little easier!

Start a 30-day challenge. As the name suggests, you're making a change or cutting something out for just 30 days. This is an opportunity to take back control of your life and prove to yourself that you can make a change if you really want to. Here's how you can make your 30-Day Challenge a success:

1. Choose just one thing you want to change. Don't try to attack everything at once - this is a sure way to set yourself up for failure. Just pick one thing to change.
2. Know your 'why'. Once you've written down your goal, be sure about why you've chosen this item. Note down how you'd like to feel at the end of the month - the more specific the better!
3. Have a calendar (or app) where you can physically cross off each successful day. We recommend going analog if you can, as nothing compares to the satisfaction of a big tick or cross through another great day!

After you have built up a bit of a streak, you will find each day gets a little easier as you build momentum and get closer to your goal. Don't worry if you slip up. This can be an opportunity to learn and identify any potential triggers that caused you to fail. Take note of how many days you lasted and try again!

You might be surprised how much your life can change in just 30 days, not just from your one goal but also from the positive knock on effect this will have in other areas of your life.

By completing a 30-Day Challenge, you are training your willpower, becoming more disciplined and growing your confidence. You will be more ready than ever before to move from strength to strength making even more impactful changes in your life.



# Filtering Negative Input

Have you ever noticed your heart racing during an intense TV show? Or feeling sad from a melancholy movie? Or scared after watching a horror film? If so, this is due to the way our brain processes these inputs - sometimes, our brains have difficulty distinguishing between reality and imagination, we can overly empathise with a character on screen, and be easily influenced by external input. Due to this external influence, we can often feel these experiences are real and as if they were our own.

There are several inputs we can reduce to curb a negative spiral. They include:

- **The News.** During such turbulent times the news can be full of doom and gloom. The business model of many news sites is about sensationalism and that often means creating a reaction or feeling of outrage. However, too much of this response can trigger the brain to release more cortisol into the body. This 'stress chemical' can cause feelings of panic, lowers immune performance, increases susceptibility to illness, inhibits production of growth hormones and increases feelings of fear or anxiety. Many of the news articles we read or scroll through do not apply to our daily lives so be mindful of how much information you expose yourself to.
- **Social Media.** These sites are designed to be addictive, to foster feelings of comparison and the Fear of Missing Out (FOMO)! Several studies have shown that prolonged use of social media may be related to experiencing the signs and symptoms of depression. Initiatives like #ScrollFreeSeptember have emerged in response to this, encouraging more of us to take a break from the endless scrolling of the online world.

Here are a few ways you can stop the negative spiral, even once it's already started:

1. Practice gratitude. Find three things you are grateful for right now.
2. Question your negative thoughts. If you find a negative thought is taking over, ask yourself: is this a thought to take seriously? Or are you just tired, hungry or something else?
3. Replace the sources of negativity. Ask yourself: What are the top three sources of negativity in my life right now? It might be people, websites, magazines, podcasts, music, etc. Now, what more could you do to spend less time with these three sources this week? Have a social media detox, turn off your phone at a specific hour each evening, or remove all your notifications from your phone.
4. Go for a walk or a workout. Spend some time noticing the world around you, feeling your body and getting some fresh air.

Take time to reflect on the impact of these inputs and remember you are in control!





# Read a Novel

Reading is such a positive activity for many reasons. Not only can you expand your imagination and learn more about the world around you, but studies have shown that reading literary fiction improves our ability to empathise with others. That's very powerful! Other amazing benefits of reading books include:

- Expanding your vocabulary and building language skills
- Improved brain connectivity, slowing the rate of cognitive decline as you age
- Growing your creativity and imagination
- Getting you ready for a good night of sleep
- Reducing stress levels, lowering blood pressure and heart rate
- Lowers blood pressure and heart rate
- Fighting the symptoms of depression

Reading is a lot of fun and is enjoyed by all ages. It is highly recommended that parents read with their children as they grow - it is a lovely way to bond over a shared story, helping your child develop their vocabulary, improving self-esteem and building good communication skills.

There are no wrong choices when it comes to what to read - whatever you most enjoy is great to get into! There are plenty of online book clubs you can join if you want to make the experience more social and talk with people about the book you are reading. You can also find reading lists online in case you are ever unsure what to read next.

The rise of audiobooks also means you can now listen to your favourite books while driving to work, doing the housework or while exercising. Give reading a go and see how it can help you unwind!





# Assess Your Bathroom

Have you ever thought about the effects your bathroom cosmetic products are having on you and the environment?

Many cosmetic products available at the supermarket contain toxic chemicals that are washed away into the environment. Chemicals found in sunscreen are particularly damaging to coral reefs and the wildlife that depend on them, as well as being bad for you and your skin. Many exfoliating face and body scrubs also contain thousands of micro plastics that end up in the ocean. Not to mention that the packaging these products come in can take 100's of years to break down.

What can you do to choose kinder products for your skin and the environment?

1. Know your skin type. Whether you have oily, dry or sensitive skin, it helps to start from where you're at. Investigate ingredients - oily skin benefits from alpha hydroxy acids (glycolic acid or salicylic acid), benzoyl peroxide, and hyaluronic acid, all of which control oil production. For dry skin, go for shea butter and lactic acid. For sensitive skin, look for products with aloe vera, oatmeal, and shea butter.
2. Choose reusable and durable products over disposable ones. Take a look at the packaging and investigate if the brand has refills you can buy, rather than completely disposing of the product every time you use it.
3. If you can't find a reusable product, go for recyclable packaging. Try choosing products with compostable packaging like paper, cardboard, wood, cotton, etc. Look for an eco-friendly symbol on the label.
4. Consider where the product was manufactured. The distance it has been shipped is part of its ecological footprint!

With a few basic changes, you can reduce your ecological footprint and maintain a quality skin care routine that reduces the number of toxins you expose to your body.



# Get Out and Walk

There are so many kinds of exercise, and everyone has their favourite. For some people it's hitting the weights at the gym, for others it might be tennis, kayaking or rock climbing. There is one form of exercise, however, that is accessible to everybody at any fitness level. You don't need any special equipment and you don't need access to any special facilities. It is, of course, walking!

You might think that compared to some other forms of exercise, walking does not provide many physical benefits, but taking just one 30 minute walk a day can provide a myriad of health benefits.

Here are just a few of these benefits:

1. Walking can help maintain a healthy weight. A brisk 30-minute walk burns 200 calories, though this can vary with height, weight, pace, etc.
2. It is great for the heart, improving circulation and improving overall heart health. An easy way to lengthen your life expectancy.
3. It increases bone density, reducing the loss of bone mass and therefore the risk of developing osteoporosis.
4. It will boost your mood. Walking releases natural endorphins in the body to help you feel good.
5. It will aid digestion. Walking utilises the core abdominal muscles and will help with bowel movements to keep everything running smoothly.
6. It supports your joints. Most joint cartilage has no direct blood supply, therefore they get nutrition from joint fluid that circulates as we move. Walking brings oxygen and nutrients into your joints.
7. It slows mental decline. Studies have shown that those who walk regularly were less susceptible to memory decline, improving quality of life for longer.

Try not to focus on the distance you walk when you are first getting started. Once you start getting into the swing of things, a good average distance to aim for is around 1 mile in 20 minutes.

It's important that we do at least one thing every day to increase our heart rate and walking is the easiest option for many people.

All you have to do is put on a pair of shoes and head outside!



# Start With a Glass of Water

What's the first thing you do when you wake up in the morning?

Before you start getting into your morning routine or checking your emails, take a pause. Start instead with a big glass of water. Your body has just been 8 hours without a drink and will definitely require a top up. You might not feel it, but you are dehydrated!

Here are some of the benefits of starting your day with a glass of water:

1. It increases your energy levels. A glass of cool water first thing is a good way to wake yourself up and wash away any groggy feelings. This is because water increases our red blood cell counts, and increases the oxygen we receive to the brain. This creates more alertness and energises the body, allowing you to feel refreshed and ready to tackle the day!
2. It boosts your metabolism. Drinking just half a litre of water in the morning has been shown to increase your resting metabolism by 10-30% for the next hour. This effect is increased even more if you drink cold water as your body will heat the water up to match your core temperature. As you haven't eaten anything since the night before, your stomach will be empty and any water you drink will help you feel fuller.
3. It soothes aches and pains. Good hydration is essential for lubricated joints. Drinking plenty of water throughout the day helps remove acid wastes from building in the body. By starting your day hydrated it can help reduce the symptoms of back pain, joint pain, headaches and even arthritis.
4. It clears your complexion. Drinking water helps to retain the elasticity of your skin and prevents wrinkles. It also hydrates your skin, leaving it looking brighter, softer and more radiant throughout the day.
5. It helps fight any toxins. Drinking water can help cleanse your system and flush out any nasty toxins. Water helps to cleanse the colon, making it easier to absorb nutrients from your meals in the day. It also helps the kidneys to produce hormones, absorb minerals and filter the blood.

When you go to sleep tonight, take a nice big glass of water with you and leave it next to your bed, so you don't forget. Your body will be thanking you when you drink it first thing in the morning, and you can still go and grab your coffee after! If you're not keen on the taste of plain water, try your water with a slice of lemon instead.



# Re-framing Anxiety

Sometimes our brains can trick us into thinking we are feeling something that we're actually not. For example, many people often think they are hungry and raid the cupboard for a packet of biscuits when in fact they are actually thirsty! Studies have shown that 37% of people can mistake this thirst for hunger because of signals from the brain being misinterpreted. So, if this can happen with food and drink, what else can our brain trick us into thinking?

Anxiety is an often misinterpreted feeling. We can sometimes mistake excitement or other similar feelings for anxiety.

Using this technique of 're-framing' you can better examine your feelings when you think you are feeling anxious. Here are the steps that you can complete anytime:

1. Write down what you are feeling anxious about. Maybe it's a job interview, a first date, your first visit to the gym or a public speech you have to give. Take note of your present situation and how your body is physically responding (e.g. with an upset stomach, shaking, chills, etc).
2. Note down any specific thoughts you are having. Do you think things will go wrong somehow? Be specific. For example, you might think "My work presentation will go badly".
3. Consider your evidence. Has this situation happened before? Did things go wrong then? Make a list of all the evidence that proves that thought, and a list of evidence that doesn't. For instance, you might have had a bad presentation in the past - but this time, you've spent more time preparing.
4. Ask yourself: What's really the worst that could happen? And if this did happen, what will you do? Chances are, it is not a life or death situation. You might worry about saying the wrong thing in your presentation - but if so, you can simply correct your self.
5. Practice compassion. Speaking kindly to yourself sounds simple, but making a genuine effort to build yourself up, providing your heart and mind with internal love and support is an important place to start. For our previous example, you might remind yourself, "I know my subject matter. I like talking about this subject."

Try combining this with the square breathing technique when you feel your anxiety levels rising and re-frame that feeling into one that will benefit you. Be gentle with your thoughts, and be mindful that the anxiety that you are experiencing can be reversed.



# Journaling

People have been keeping journals for thousands of years, and there is a good reason for this. Journals can be used in many different ways, and are easy to keep in a way that is unique to your lifestyle. Here are five good reasons to start journaling:

- It's a great way to keep track of your precious memories and gratitude practice
- You can see and track your own progress in life
- You feel more organised and clear about your decision-making
- You can explore your own thoughts and feelings more deeply
- You develop a practice of reflection and self-awareness, while also finding meaning in your everyday life

If that sounds promising, it might be time to get a notebook and pen! Here are just a few ideas to get your journal started:

1. Write out all of your thoughts right now. Having a million things rattling around in your brain can interfere with your sleep - here's your chance to get it all out on the page. The simple process of getting these thoughts and ideas down on to paper frees up all that brain space you were using!
2. Write down what you hope to achieve in your day, first thing in the morning. Keeping track of any goals you are working towards each day will keep them fresh in your mind. This way you will be more likely to achieve them.
3. Review how your day went. What did you do well? What could you have done better? What did you learn? What moment stood out from the rest? Practice your observational skills.
4. Write down the three things you're most grateful for right now. This practice builds contentment and joy in your present life.

There are so many benefits to keeping a daily journal, from reduced stress to improved memory and thinking skills, as well as boosting your creativity.

Starting is easy. Get yourself a nice notepad and pen or try using a notetaking app like Notion or Evernote so you can journal on the go. Set yourself a reminder to fill out your journal regularly - even with five minutes, you can make the most of this meditative practice.



# Limit Screen Time

Screen time for most people has skyrocketed over the last few years, largely due to the rise of the smartphone. How many of us are guilty of looking at our phones first thing in the morning and last thing at night?

But too much screen time can have several impacts on our health, from developing “text neck” (pain or tension in our necks from the bad posture of looking down at our phones!) to interfering with our sleep each night.

Try following some of these tips to reduce your screen time:

1. Set your phone to the airplane or do not disturb mode at a certain time each evening. Set a reminder if needed that it's time to disconnect.
2. Buy a separate alarm clock. This ensures you are not reliant on your phone to wake you up, allowing you to leave your phone in another room overnight. This should help prevent you from scrolling through your social media feed or checking your email first thing in the morning, or late into the night.
3. Make meals a screen free time. You'll not only get a screen break, but you'll also be able to pay more attention to what you're eating, and who you're eating with. Enjoy your food mindfully!
4. Eliminate all screens from the bedroom - laptops, phones and TV screens are all disruptive.
5. Check your screen time with apps. Many phones come with screen time software that helps you track how much you are actually using your phone. Pay attention to this and check your progress at reducing this time.
6. Practice observing your environment, or keep a book with you. Instead of always picking up your phone in between tasks, look for other things you might do when you have a few moments spare.

By following these tips, you will find you are using your phone less often and you might find yourself getting back in touch with the world around you.



We hope this guide has given you a better understanding of how your overall health is made up of many different aspects, all of which can help you move towards the lifestyle you want to be living.

If you are just starting out on your health journey, take a moment to reflect on which aspect of your life needs attention the most. Evaluate your health from a holistic perspective. Chances are that you will be able to identify the areas of your health that you would like to work on to achieve true all round health.

Try any one of these 21 ideas to take a step in the right direction. Keep in mind that health changes are most powerful when you start bringing different aspects together.

Health can mean a lot of different things to people and everybody will have a different path. The secret is to keep taking a step forward everyday and enjoy the journey towards a healthier and happier you!