



Wellbeing

Insights

Living a Better, More Vibrant Life



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Forest Bathing

Shinrin-yoku, also known as forest bathing or taking in the forest atmosphere, has recently been receiving attention by city dwellers and nature lovers alike. Developed in Japan in the 1980s, forest bathing is rooted in scientific evidence supporting the many benefits of a walk in the forest. The idea behind it is simple; when a person visits a natural area (forest, park, hiking trail, etc.) and walks in a relaxed manor, there are calming and rejuvenating benefits provided by the environment. More than likely you have heard of similar practices or experienced the phenomenon of forest bathing yourself.

In Scandinavian countries babies get a daily nap outside, even if the temperature is below freezing. This practice has been going on since the 1920s and has helped decrease the infant mortality rate. However, the benefits of being outside in the forest have been known even prior to this Scandinavian routine. Yellow Stone National Park, which was the first national park recognized in America in 1903, was established to preserve the natural environment for people to experience. President Teddy Roosevelt and John Muir, a Scottish-born naturalist, worked together to establish many

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Forest Bathing

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other natural parks. After spending just three nights camping in the forest with Muir, Roosevelt knew immediately why he needed to protect nature.

The scientifically proven benefits of forest bathing include:

- Boosted immune system functioning, with an increase in the count of the body's Natural Killer (NK) cells
- Reduced blood pressure
- Reduced stress
- Improved mood
- Increased ability to focus, even in children with ADHD
- Accelerated recovery from surgery or illness
- Increased energy level
- Improved sleep

Just as impressive are the results that we experience if we make forest bathing a regular practice:

- Deeper and clearer intuition
- Increased energy flow
- Increased capacity to communicate with the land and its species
- Increased flow of eros/life force
- Deepening of friendships
- Overall increased sense of happiness

John Muir said it best when he stated, "In every walk with nature one receives far more than he seeks." Every town, city and state has public parks and forests for each person to experience. Consider a gentle walk in the forest or your local park today. For more information on parks, forests or other natural habitats in your area, please visit <https://www.nps.gov/findapark/index.htm>.

<http://www.shinrin-yoku.org>

<http://www.pbs.org/nationalparks>



What changes come to mind when you think about aging? We typically think of external physical changes to our appearance, muscle mass and perhaps energy levels. However, the undercover culprit of chronic disease is cellular inflammation, which accelerates the aging process of our organs, including our skin.

What we eat has a profound effect on the inflammation in our bodies, including how well we age. Though we cannot turn back the clock or change our DNA, we can slow the effects of aging, reduce inflammation and change the expression of our genes, all with one simple tool – our FORK!



Fat that is good. There are two kinds of beneficial fats – monounsaturated and polyunsaturated. While both are considered healthy, it's the polyunsaturated, anti-inflammatory Omega-3 fatty acids that are especially helpful in reducing the signs of aging. The best sources include fatty fish (e.g., mackerel, salmon, cod, sardines, herring, anchovies) as well as grass-fed meats and high-quality fish oil. While there are some vegetarian sources of Omega-3 fatty acids, they are inferior to the aforementioned sources. Omega-6 is inflammatory and, although we need it, Americans tend to get too much from grains and protein, and especially from cooking oils (e.g., sunflower, corn, soy oil, etc.).



Organic greens and purple things. Antioxidants, high levels of soluble fiber and phytonutrients create a myriad of positive effects, including cleansing the body and putting the breaks on the "rusting" of our cells. The darker the fruit or vegetable, the higher the antioxidants. Organic is important, as leafy vegetables are typically heavily sprayed.

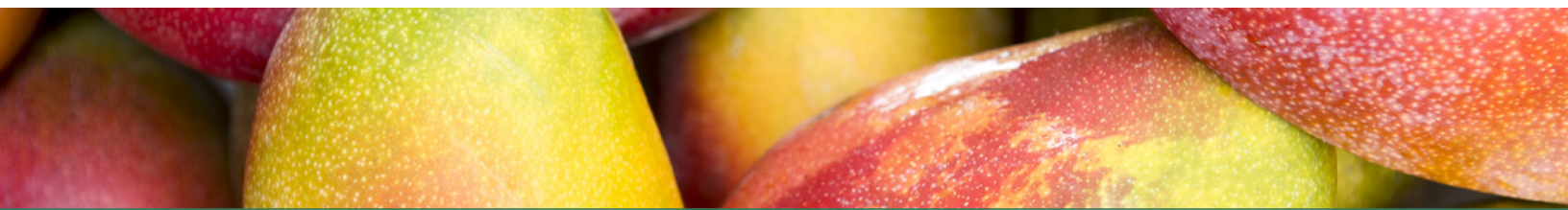


Real, whole grains, though not an essential part of a healthy diet, are good alternatives to refined, white grains. Specifically, they contain fiber that helps keep blood sugar from spiking with the consumption of sugars/starches. Moreover, they contain beneficial phytochemicals that aren't available in refined sources.



Keeping sugar and starch low in the diet is critical to good health and slowing the aging process. Diets that are overly abundant with grains (whole and refined) and sugar (real and artificial) are highly inflammatory, causing insulin levels to rise, which eventually keeps the hormone from getting the byproduct of glucose (blood sugar) to cells for energy. Moreover, if insulin is constantly spiking or never goes down, the result is inflammation and possibly even irreversible damage within the body.

Reducing inflammation in our bodies can have a profound effect on how well we age. While it takes daily, deliberate choices in the foods we eat, it is often well worth it in terms of how we look and feel. When in doubt, just look at your FORK for guidance.



On the Menu

Mango Madness

There is nothing quite like biting into a ripe, juicy mango – whether you’re on vacation in the tropics or in the comfort of your own home. The delicious fruit has a long history of curbing a sweet tooth all the way back to 4000 B.C. when Buddhist monks first cultivated it. Even now the fruit is considered sacred in some regions of Southeast Asia and India because it has been said that Buddha himself meditated under a mango tree.

Mangos made their way around the world beginning around 300 or 400 A.D. Today, mangos are grown in many parts of the world, including countries close to the equator like Ecuador, Peru and Mexico, which supply most of the mangos consumed in the U.S.

The benefits of mango are plentiful. Not only does it make a great choice for a sweet snack or dessert, it also contains many nutritional qualities that make it a great choice for healthy eating. Keep in mind, though, while mango may be far superior to processed sweets, an average-size mango contains about 46 grams of sugar, slightly more than a standard pack of Skittles. So while it’s great to satisfy your sweet tooth and take in some nutrients, moderation is important.

Here are 5 reasons to include mangos in your diet:

1. They contain high levels of antioxidants that have been shown to ward off breast, colon, leukemia and prostate cancers.
2. They promote good eyesight. Just one cup of sliced mango contains 25% of the daily recommended value of Vitamin A. They also contain the antioxidant zeaxanthin, which helps filter out harmful blue light rays and plays a protective role in eye health.
3. Just one cup of mango contains 3 grams of fiber, which promotes healthy digestion.

Nutrition Info

Per Serving (1/4 cup)

Calories	56
Total Fat	0.4g
Carbohydrates	14.2g
Sugar	12g
Fiber	1.7g
Protein	0.8g
Sodium	1mg

4. They have a good dose of Vitamin C, which provides structure for building healthy skin and hair.
5. The fruit also has modest amounts of tartaric, malic and citric acids, which help keep the body alkaline.

Mangos have a thin pit in the middle that is not as easily located or removed as, say, a peach pit. The easiest way to cut a mango is lengthwise about a quarter inch from center on each side of the stem. Then, score the mango in the peel in a grid pattern and use a spoon to scoop out the chunks.

Keep It Fresh

Keep unripe mango at room temperature for a couple of days to help it ripen. Once ripe, you can store the mango in the refrigerator for up to 5 days, even if sliced into chunks. Frozen mango will keep in the freezer up to 6 months.

Fresh Mango Salsa

Ingredients:

- 2 large mangos
- 1 lime, juiced
- 1/3 cup red onion, finely diced
- 1 jalapeno, finely diced
- 1 small handful cilantro, finely chopped

Directions:

Combine all ingredients, mix and serve! The salsa will keep up to 5 days in an airtight container in the fridge.



Live to Be 100

Throwback article from September 2015



1 Loma Linda, California 2 Nicoya, Costa Rica 3 Sardinia, Italy
4 Ikaria, Greece 5 Okinawa, Japan

Living an entire century doesn't appeal to everyone; most naysayers are convinced that the elderly experience a low quality of life, social isolation and more sick days than well days. On the flip side, others are inspired by the real stories of people who thrive in their later years. Can you envision yourself at 100 years old, gardening, picking apples, playing cards with friends, volunteering at your local community center and, of course, tweeting about it all?

We may be able to enjoy our 100th birthday and beyond if we adapt healthy habits similar to those who have already achieved the longevity. Scientific explorer Dan Buettner set out to identify communities around the world where people live measurably better, longer lives. Five locations in particular, referred to as 'Blue Zones,' produce centenarians at rates 10 times greater than the

U.S. average. Although the Blue Zones are scattered around the world, they share common lifestyle characteristics that help explain longevity and can be incorporated into our daily lives.

1. Natural Movement

You won't find the world's longest-lived people hitting the gym. Rather, they see regular movement as a privilege and an important part of their day-to-day life. Their environments are built to nudge them toward moving more, and most all intentional physical activity is purely for pleasure.

Apply It!

- **Try a new activity** you have always thought looked like fun or rediscover one you enjoyed in the past.
- **Add movement into your day.** Set a reminder to stand,

stretch or walk to the other side of the building every 30 minutes. Do 2-minute mini-workouts at home during commercial breaks. Choose to stand instead of sit while you eat, wait for an appointment or talk on the phone.

2. Eat Wisely

The Blue Zones differ slightly in their day-to-day staples, but a plant-based diet, one or two glasses of red wine in the evening and cultural norms that discourage overeating are commonalities they share. Some ways in which people prevent mindless overeating include preparing food away from the table, using small plates, eating slowly and reciting a mantra to remember to stop when the stomach is 80% full.

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Live to Be 100

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Apply It!

- **Rely on plants.** It's simple to chop up some veggies and hide them in your favorite foods, or use beans or lentils as your protein instead of meat for one meal a week.
- **Eat less.** Use the same strategies as the Blue Zones: use small plates, portion your food ahead of time, don't set the leftovers on the table, eat slowly (and enjoy a conversation) and stop before you are completely full.

3. The Right Outlook

People living in Blue Zones take time to downshift and report very little chronic stress. They do not define themselves by their job title or measure themselves by how far they climb the corporate ladder but rather by their purpose in life. In fact, one Blue Zone doesn't even have a translation for the word retirement; they simply live their purpose in life until the end.

Apply It!

- **Prioritize your downtime.** Take a few minutes each day to reflect on the positive things happening in your life and unplug from work for some true me time.
- **Find your purpose.** This is easier said than done, but discovering what truly matters to you and brings meaning to your life will help lead you to fulfillment.

4. Community

Centenarians put their families and community first. They deeply value their tribe and live with mutual respect, support and investment in the health of the tribe as a whole. This thinking sometimes contradicts our prevailing modern attitude of survival of the fittest, but this concept has been critical to human survival as far back as you care to look. What's good for the community is good for the individual.

Apply It!

- **Volunteer.** Look for opportunities to volunteer in your community. This could be as formal as taking on a role with a non-profit or as simple as helping a neighbor carry their groceries.
- **Connect.** Sustain meaningful relationships. Surround yourself with people with whom you can share a mutual investment in one another's wellbeing, basic respect and unconditional support. Pursue and build these types of relationships.

For more information on the Blue Zones projects, research and initiatives, visit bluezones.com.

Mindful Minute



Research shows that Americans' happiness is declining. We may feel sad, stressed or overwhelmed, or sense a gap that needs to be filled in order for our lives to feel full. While happiness comes and goes in each person's life, there are some **steps you can take on a regular basis to help you become happier**, overall.

- **Create a plan.** Amy Lopez, PhD from the Depression Center at the University of Colorado, Denver suggests determining what makes you happy and then prioritizing your daily and weekly activities accordingly. Make a list of experiences that bring you happiness. Then make a list of your daily/weekly schedule and determine what to add or remove to prioritize happiness in your life. Review your progress and make changes along the way.
- **Evaluate any negativity in your life.** Are there certain activities or relationships in your life that make you feel unhappy? Are you too focused on fitting into someone else's definition of happiness? Are negative thoughts and self-talk causing you to feel badly about yourself? Identifying and removing your barriers to happiness can help pave the way for a happier life.
- **Be positive and kind to yourself.** Think about your best qualities and what you like about yourself. Write these down and reflect on them when faced with negative thoughts. Go easy on yourself when things don't go as planned, keeping in mind that we are often our own worst critic. It's very difficult to be happy when someone is being mean to you all the time, even if that "someone" is you.
- **Inventory things for which you feel grateful** – the people, places, things, opportunities, accomplishments and experiences. Regularly acknowledge things for which you are thankful.

Navigating Sibling Rivalries

Contributed by Susan Trogu, Wellbeing Consultant and mother of three

As a mom of three boys, playing referee to sibling rivalries is part of daily life. At a recent school drop off, my two youngest broke into an actual fist fight going into the school. I had to turn the car off and go over to break it up with the help of a few teachers. So did I ace it? Heck no. But we are all in the same boat and must accept a certain level of background noise. Children are most definitely a work-in-progress, and understanding where rivalries stem from and having tools to teach them how to deal with each other respectfully on a daily basis are needed.

Why do they fight? Jealousy or competition, of course. But there are other factors:

- **Growing Pains.** Toddlers tend to be overly protective of what is theirs (think, “MINE!”). School-age children have a strong concept of fairness and equality and may not understand that, regardless of circumstance, a sibling might be treated differently. Teens are

developing their independence, and resentment builds when asked to help with chores or care for a sibling.

- **Individual Temperaments.** My kids’ personalities are like night and day – mood, disposition, resiliency – all of which play a huge role in how well they get along. One could be quiet and laid back, the other high strung and energetic.
- **Family Dynamics.** Divorce, marriage, family blending and death, among others, all have the potential to lead to behavior lash outs and can further complicate sibling relationships.
- **Special Needs.** Situations where one child’s needs require more time or a certain type of attention that the other sibling simply doesn’t require can cause complications.
- **Role Models.** How parents resolve problems and disagreements is a straight line to how kids will. “Do as I say, not as I do” isn’t the best mantra.

What can we do as parents to alleviate a rivalry outlash?

- **Limit interference.** Step in only when there’s danger of physical harm. Many times stepping in causes a whole slew of other problems (jealously over favoritism, lack of



autonomy to solve their own problems, etc.). Note, coaching is very different than interference; coaching your children to process their feelings and make good decisions isn’t the same as forcing them to just “leave their sister alone” or “drop it.”

- **Avoid placing blame.** If you must intervene, separate kids until the tempers calm. Don’t focus on who is to blame, rather, try to set up a win-win situation.
- **Don’t minimize their feelings.** Even if what they are fighting over seems minor to you, acknowledge that it’s a big deal to them.
- **Take steps to stop the insults.** Preferably, wait until they are not in front of each other to reprimand. Otherwise this leads to the feeling of favoritism. However, hurling insults is not acceptable.
- **Do your best to make time for your kids as individuals.** One-on-one interactions have remarkable results.
- **Go slow with stepsiblings.** Don’t force relationships. Everyone has their own pace.
- **Consider holding weekly family meetings** in which you reiterate rules and expectations and coach on respectful problem solving.
- **Try not to foster competition.** Comparisons lead to competition and in sibling rivalry that hurts.

babycenter.com; kidshealth.org

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Contributing Writers

Abby StevensonSenior Wellbeing Account Manager
Bridgette O’Connor..... Senior Wellbeing Consultant
Joe Oberoi Wellbeing Coordinator/Account Manager
Susan Trogu.....Wellbeing Consultant
Anna PanzarellaWellbeing Consultant

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