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NEW START SPOTLIGHT #1: NUTRIENTS



The Nutritional Value of Fruits

<https://agriculture.institute/agriculture-fundamentals/nutritional-benefits-composition-fruits/>

Why fruits are important in the human diet

Fruits are far more than just a tasty snack. They are a critical component of a balanced diet, providing essential nutrients that our bodies need daily. The World Health Organization (WHO) recommends consuming more than 400 grams of fruits and vegetables per day to reduce the risk of non-communicable diseases (NCDs) such as heart disease, diabetes, and certain cancers.

The importance of fruits in the diet can be understood through several key factors. First, they are a major source of **essential vitamins and minerals** – particularly vitamins A, C, and E, along with potassium, magnesium, and folate. Second, fruits are naturally **low in fat, sodium, and calories**, making them an ideal food for maintaining a healthy body weight. Third, they are among the best natural sources of **dietary fibre**, which supports digestive health and helps regulate blood sugar levels. Finally, fruits contain a wide array of **bioactive compounds** – including flavonoids, carotenoids, and polyphenols – that work together to protect the body from oxidative damage.

To truly appreciate why fruits are so beneficial, it helps to understand what they are made of at a nutritional level. While the exact composition varies from fruit to fruit, most share a common nutritional framework.

Water content

Most fresh fruits are composed of 80-90% water. This high water content makes them excellent for hydration and gives them their refreshing, juicy texture. Fruits like watermelon, oranges, and grapes are particularly high in water.

Carbohydrates and natural sugars

Carbohydrates are the primary energy-providing component in fruits. These carbohydrates mainly exist in the form of natural sugars – fructose, glucose, and sucrose. Unlike refined sugars found in processed foods, the sugars in fruits come packaged with fibre, vitamins, and water, which slows their absorption and prevents sharp blood sugar spikes. As noted by nutrition experts, fructose is absorbed slowly into the bloodstream, providing sustained energy without triggering extreme insulin fluctuations.

Dietary fibre

Fruits are one of the richest natural sources of dietary fibre, which comes in two forms – **soluble fibre** and **insoluble fibre**. Soluble fibre, found abundantly in fruits like apples and guavas, helps lower cholesterol levels and regulate blood glucose. Insoluble fibre adds bulk to the diet and promotes regular bowel movements. A diet rich in fibre from fruits has been linked to a lower risk of cardiovascular disease and obesity.

Proteins and fats

Fruits generally contain very little protein and fat. However, there are notable exceptions. Avocados, for instance, are rich in healthy monounsaturated fats, while guavas provide a surprisingly decent amount of protein – about 2.6 grams per 100 grams. For the most part, though, fruits are valued for their micronutrient and fibre content rather than their macronutrient contributions.

Organic acids

Citric acid (in citrus fruits), malic acid (in apples), and tartaric acid (in grapes) give fruits their characteristic tangy flavour. These organic acids also play a role in enhancing mineral absorption and supporting metabolic processes in the body.

Key vitamins found in fruits and their roles

Fruits are among the best dietary sources of several critical vitamins. Let's look at the most important ones.

Vitamin A (beta-carotene)

Vitamin A is essential for maintaining healthy vision, supporting immune function, and promoting skin health. The body obtains vitamin A from fruits primarily in the form of **beta-carotene**, a provitamin A carotenoid that gets converted into active vitamin A during digestion.

Fruits rich in vitamin A include **mangoes, papayas, apricots, and cantaloupes**. Mangoes, in particular, are an outstanding source – they are loaded with beta-carotene and other carotenoids like cryptoxanthin, which also have antioxidant properties. Regular consumption of fruits rich in carotene has been associated with protection against lung and oral cavity cancers, according to nutritional research.

In India, where mangoes are widely grown and consumed, they serve as a vital and affordable source of vitamin A for millions of people, especially children who are at higher risk of vitamin A deficiency.

Vitamin C (ascorbic acid)

Vitamin C is one of the most well-known nutrients in fruits, and for good reason. It acts as a potent antioxidant, supports collagen synthesis (critical for healthy skin, blood vessels, and bones), enhances iron absorption from plant-based foods, and boosts overall immune function.

Among fruits, **guava** is a standout source of vitamin C. A 100-gram serving of fresh guava provides approximately **228 mg of vitamin C**, which is more than three times the daily recommended intake. This is significantly higher than oranges, which provide roughly 50 mg per 100 grams. Other excellent vitamin C sources include **amla (Indian gooseberry), kiwi, strawberries, oranges, and lemons**.

A meta-analysis of 69 prospective studies found that higher dietary intake of vitamin C was associated with a reduced risk of death from all causes, including cardiovascular disease and cancer. This finding reinforces the importance of getting vitamin C from whole fruits rather than supplements.

B-complex vitamins

Several fruits provide meaningful amounts of **B vitamins**, including folate (B9), thiamine (B1), riboflavin (B2), and pyridoxine (B6). Folate is particularly important for pregnant women as it supports neural tube development in the foetus. Oranges, bananas, and avocados are among the best fruit sources of B vitamins. Guava also contributes about 49 micrograms of folate per 100 grams, adding to its impressive nutritional profile.

Vitamin E and vitamin K

While not as abundant in fruits as vitamins A and C, **vitamin E** (an antioxidant that protects cell membranes) and **vitamin K** (essential for blood clotting and bone health) are present in moderate amounts in fruits like avocados, kiwis, and mangoes.

Essential minerals in fruits

Beyond vitamins, fruits provide several key minerals that are vital for bodily functions.

Potassium

Potassium is crucial for regulating blood pressure, maintaining proper heart rhythm, and supporting muscle and nerve function. Bananas are the most commonly cited source, but guavas actually contain more potassium per unit weight than bananas. Other good fruit sources include oranges, cantaloupes, and apricots. Adequate potassium intake has been linked to lower incidence of cardiovascular disease.

Magnesium

Magnesium is involved in over 300 enzymatic reactions in the body, including energy production, protein synthesis, and muscle function. Bananas, avocados, figs, and guavas (22 mg per 100 g) are good fruit sources of this mineral.

Iron and calcium

While fruits are not the primary dietary source of iron or calcium, dried fruits such as **dates**, **figs**, **raisins**, and **dried apricots** contribute meaningful amounts. Iron from plant sources is better absorbed when consumed alongside vitamin C-rich fruits – a natural synergy that makes eating a variety of fruits together especially beneficial.

Antioxidants and phytochemicals in fruits

One of the most exciting areas of fruit nutrition research involves **antioxidants and phytochemicals**. These are bioactive compounds that go beyond basic nutrition to actively protect the body against disease.

What are antioxidants?

Antioxidants are substances that neutralise **free radicals** – unstable molecules produced during normal metabolism and through exposure to environmental stressors like pollution, UV radiation, and cigarette smoke. When free radicals accumulate unchecked, they cause **oxidative stress**, which damages cells, proteins, and DNA. This damage is linked to chronic conditions including cancer, heart disease, diabetes, and neurodegenerative disorders. As the Better Health Channel explains, antioxidants from whole foods are more effective than those taken as supplements.

Key antioxidant compounds in fruits

Fruits contain a diverse range of antioxidant compounds, each with unique health-promoting properties:

Flavonoids are found in berries, citrus fruits, and apples. They help reduce inflammation and support heart health. **Carotenoids** – including beta-carotene, lycopene, lutein, and cryptoxanthin – are responsible for the yellow, orange, and red colours of many fruits. For example, pink guava contains approximately 5,204 micrograms of lycopene per 100 grams, which is nearly double the amount found in tomatoes. Lycopene has been studied for its potential role in protecting against prostate cancer and UV-induced skin damage. **Polyphenols**, present widely in fruits like grapes, pomegranates, and berries, have been associated with reduced risk of cardiovascular and metabolic diseases. **Anthocyanins**, the pigments that give berries their deep blue, purple, and red hues, are particularly powerful antioxidants linked to improved heart health.

Research published in PMC highlights that oxidative stress contributes to conditions such as cancer, obesity, coronary heart disease, type 2 diabetes, and hypertension – and that fruits and minimally processed plant foods offer the best dietary protection against these diseases.

Fruits and disease prevention

The link between regular fruit consumption and reduced disease risk is well established across decades of nutritional research.

Cardiovascular health

The fibre, potassium, and antioxidant content of fruits work together to protect the heart. Soluble fibre lowers LDL (bad) cholesterol, potassium helps manage blood pressure, and antioxidants reduce inflammation in blood vessels. Large-scale studies involving nearly two million participants have demonstrated that consuming about five servings of fruits and vegetables daily is associated with the lowest risk of death from cardiovascular disease, cancer, and respiratory disease.

Diabetes management

Despite their natural sugar content, most whole fruits have a low to moderate glycaemic index, meaning they do not cause rapid spikes in blood sugar. The fibre in fruits slows down sugar absorption, making them suitable even for individuals managing diabetes – when consumed in appropriate portions, such as one or two pieces per day. Fruits like guava, with its high fibre and low glycaemic index, are particularly well suited for people with blood sugar concerns.

Cancer prevention

Several phytochemicals in fruits – particularly carotenoids, flavonoids, and vitamin C – have been shown to protect cells from cancer. Lycopene-rich fruits like pink guava and watermelon, flavonoid-rich berries, and vitamin C-packed citrus fruits all contribute to the body's defence against cellular damage that can lead to cancer. However, if a person has cancer, fruits should be temporarily eliminated because the sugar in the fruit, (or any of the food), feeds cancer cells

Digestive health

The dietary fibre in fruits promotes healthy digestion by adding bulk to stool, feeding beneficial gut bacteria, and reducing the risk of constipation and colorectal diseases.

Nutritional spotlight: mango and guava

Two fruits deserve special attention for their exceptional nutritional profiles, especially in the Indian context – **mango** and **guava**.

Mango

Often called the “king of fruits,” mango is one of the richest fruit sources of **vitamin A (beta-carotene)**. It also provides good amounts of vitamin C, dietary fibre, and polyphenolic

antioxidants. Mangoes support eye health, skin health, and immune function. They are widely cultivated across India, making them an accessible and affordable nutritional resource for large populations.

Guava

Guava is arguably one of the most nutrient-dense tropical fruits available. With **228 mg of vitamin C per 100 grams**, 5.4 grams of dietary fibre, 417 mg of potassium, and significant amounts of vitamin A, folate, and lycopene, guava delivers an extraordinary range of nutrients in a small, affordable package. It supports immunity, heart health, digestive health, and skin health. The fact that it provides more potassium than bananas and more lycopene than tomatoes, makes it a true nutritional powerhouse.

How to maximise the nutritional benefits of fruits

Knowing which fruits are nutritious is only half the equation. How you select, store, and consume them also matters.

Eat a variety of colours. Different coloured fruits contain different phytochemicals. Yellow and orange fruits are rich in carotenoids, while blue and purple fruits are high in anthocyanins. Eating a rainbow of fruits ensures a broad spectrum of protective compounds.

Choose fresh and ripe fruits. Fruits harvested at peak ripeness tend to have the highest nutrient levels. Whenever possible, consume fruits fresh rather than processed, as processing can reduce vitamin C and other heat-sensitive nutrients.

Eat the skin when possible. Much of the fibre and many phytochemicals in fruits like apples and guavas are concentrated in or just beneath the skin. Washing thoroughly and eating the peel increases your nutrient intake.

Prefer whole fruits over juices. Juicing removes most of the fibre and concentrates the sugars, resulting in a high sugar-load in one drink. Whole fruits provide more fibre, and give a slower release of sugar into the bloodstream.

Eat fruit daily, but in moderation. One or two pieces of fruit each day is a good policy. Eating too much fruit in one day can give a spike in blood sugar levels.

Activities

1. Make a table showing vitamins and minerals in fruits. Give a brief statement as to why these are important.

Vitamins in Fruits	Why important	Example of fruits
Vitamin A	Vision, skin and immune health	mangoes, papayas, apricots, cantaloupes.

2. Now do the same for minerals in fruits.
3. Make a heading “Fruits and Disease Prevention”. Make a list of the diseases mentioned in this article, and after each, write ONE sentence about how fruits can help to prevent this disease.
4. Why should people with diabetes eat fruit in only moderate amounts?
5. Why is it better to drink water than fruit juice?
6. What would the best fruits be for a person with diabetes?
7. Make a list of the 5 suggestions for maximizing the nutritional value of fruits.
8. What do you think? Given the remarkable nutritional profiles of fruits like guava and mango,
 - a) how can we encourage more people, especially in rural communities, to include a diverse range of fruits in their daily diet?
 - b) how can we encourage school students to include more fresh fruit in their diet?

Biblical Insight

Fruits in Bible times

The Hebrew Bible frequently mentions fruits such as dates, apples, pomegranates, figs, grapes, and olives, which were central to diet, trade, and daily life

Fruits were often used literally for sustenance, as seen in the Promised Land where spies brought back grapes, pomegranates, and figs to demonstrate the land’s fertility (Numbers 13:23),

They also appeared in names of people and towns, such as Tamar (“date”), Tappuah (“apple”), and Anab (“grape”).

Figs and dates were particularly important because they could be dried and kept for a long time, which was useful for taking on journeys.

In Mark 11:12-25 Jesus came across a fig tree, and cursed it because it was not bearing fruit. It only had leaves, because it was not the season for bearing fruit. The tree withered and died. The Bible speaks much about fruit being a symbol for the actions of a Christian, showing their character. We see this in Galatians 5, the ‘Fruit of the Spirit’.

The Bible teaches that believers are expected to bear fruit in season and out of season.

In Season: This could be a time when you feel God’s blessing in your life.

Out of Season: This could be when circumstances seem unfavourable. This includes times of waiting, rejection, or hardship. The Apostle Paul mentions that the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, and other qualities that should be evident in every believer's life, reflecting the transformative power of God's presence within us.

In John 15, Jesus tells us to stay connected to the Vine – to Jesus Himself, so we can go and produce fruit.

John 15:8 This is to my Father's glory, that you bear much fruit, showing yourselves to be my disciples.

Jesus cursed the fig tree because it was not bearing fruit, even though it was not the season for bearing fruit. Jesus wants us to bear fruit both in season and out of season.

NEW START SPOTLIGHT #2: EXERCISE



Regular exercise improves cardiovascular health, strengthens muscles and bones, helps maintain a healthy weight, and reduces the risk of chronic diseases.

Cardiovascular and Heart Health

Engaging in regular physical activity strengthens the heart, improves blood circulation, and helps maintain healthy blood pressure and cholesterol levels. This reduces the risk of heart disease, stroke, and other cardiovascular conditions. Aerobic exercise like cycling, or swimming are particularly effective for improving heart and lung function.

Muscle Strength and Bone Health

Exercise, especially resistance or strength training, builds and maintains muscle mass, enhances endurance, and strengthens bones. This can prevent injuries, improve balance, and reduce the risk of osteoporosis as you age. Weightlifting, squats, lunges, and push-ups are beneficial for maintaining musculoskeletal health.

Weight Management

Physical activity increases energy expenditure, helping to maintain or achieve a healthy weight. Combined with proper nutrition, exercise prevents excess weight gain and supports long-term weight management. Even moderate-intensity activities like brisk walking or gardening contribute to calorie burning.

Metabolic and Disease Prevention

Regular exercise lowers the risk of type 2 diabetes, metabolic syndrome, and certain cancers. It also improves insulin sensitivity and helps regulate blood sugar levels. Maintaining an active lifestyle is a key factor in preventing chronic diseases and promoting long-term health.

Flexibility, Balance, and Mobility

Stretching and balance exercises, such as yoga or tai chi, enhance flexibility, preserve posture, and improve mobility. These benefits are especially important for older adults to prevent falls and maintain independence.

Sleep and Energy

Exercise promotes better sleep quality, helps you fall asleep faster, and increases overall energy levels. Improved cardiovascular and muscular function also allows you to perform daily activities more efficiently.

Longevity and Overall Health

Consistent physical activity is linked to a longer life and reduced risk of premature death. It enhances VO2 max, reflecting the body's ability to use oxygen efficiently, which supports overall health and resilience against age-related decline.

Additional Benefits

Exercise can enhance overall physical performance. It also supports mental health by reducing anxiety and depression, indirectly contributing to physical well-being.

In summary, regular exercise provides comprehensive physical benefits, from heart and muscle health to disease prevention, weight management, and improved longevity.

Incorporating a mix of aerobic, strength, flexibility, and balance exercises ensures optimal physical health across all age groups.

Activities

1. Make a list of the benefits of exercise.
2. Design a weekly exercise program for yourself. Present this in table form, showing days of the week and exercise you will undertake on each day.

Biblical Insight

The Bible does not have much to say directly about exercise, but it does have a lot to say about work. In Bible times, almost all work included exercise, so there was probably no need to take on specific exercise programs.

The main occupations for men were:

- Agriculture: A primary occupation, with many individuals engaged in farming and related activities.
- Animal Husbandry: Significant occupations, with roles such as shepherds and keepers of sheep. Sheep were not kept in pens, but walked from place to place with the shepherd, looking for green pasture and water.
- Craftsmanship and construction: Building of homes and public structures; carpentry
- Fishing: Common occupation, particularly in regions near bodies of water like the Sea of Galilee. Fishing involved hauling in large catches and delivering them to places for sale.
- Commerce: Engaged in trade and commerce, contributing to the economy and community.
- For Jesus and the disciples, their main exercise was walking. There were no cars in those days, and only the rich could afford horses for riding, so people walked for long distances.

The main occupations for women were:

- House cleaning, washing, cooking and home maintenance, all without the aid of technology.
- Threshing grain to make flour
- Looking after children

All of these occupations involved physical exercise, unlike today.

The Bible has a lot to say about people who are lazy, or try to avoid work. In Proverbs a person who refuses to work, often called a " sluggard," is depicted as someone who loves sleep, makes excuses, and avoids responsibility. For example, Proverbs 6:9 asks, "How long will you lie there, O sluggard? When will you get up from your sleep?" and Proverbs 26:14 states, "As a door turns on its hinges, so the sluggard turns on his bed"

Such inactivity leads to poverty and deterioration, as illustrated in Proverbs 10:4: "Idle hands make one poor, but diligent hands bring wealth"

Proverbs 19:15 adds, "Laziness brings on deep sleep, and the shiftless go hungry"

In today's world things are different. Not many of us get our daily requirements for exercise through physical work. This is why we need to make an effort to undertake regular exercise.

Paul uses physical exercise as an analogy, comparing the running of a race to striving to reach our eternal reward.

1 Cor 9:24 Do you not know that in a race all the runners run, but only one gets the prize? Run in such a way as to get the prize.

Hebrews 12: 1 Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses, let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles. And let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us.

2 Tim 4:7 I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. 8 Now there is in store for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will award to me on that day—and not only to me, but also to all who have longed for his appearing

NEW START SPOTLIGHT #3 WATER



Drinking water is essential for overall health, supporting hydration, organ function, digestion, skin health, and disease prevention.

Hydration and Body Function

Water is crucial for maintaining proper hydration, which is necessary for nearly every bodily function. It helps regulate body temperature, lubricate joints, and cushion sensitive tissues like the spinal cord. Blood, which is over 90% water, carries oxygen and nutrients to cells, supporting energy production and overall organ function. Adequate hydration also prevents dehydration, which can cause fatigue, dizziness, poor concentration, and mood changes.

Digestive and Excretory Health

Water aids digestion by forming saliva and mucus, which help break down food and protect the mouth, nose, and eyes. It also facilitates the excretion of waste through urine, sweat, and bowel movements, helping prevent constipation and kidney stones. Drinking sufficient water can reduce the risk of urinary tract infections and support kidney health.

Skin and Physical Health

Proper hydration improves skin barrier function, keeping the skin healthy and less prone to disorders. Water also helps maintain electrolyte balance, supports cardiovascular and immune system function, and cushions joints, which can reduce discomfort from conditions like arthritis.

Weight Management and Metabolic Benefits

Replacing sugary drinks with water can reduce caloric intake, aiding in weight management. Studies suggest that drinking six to eight cups of water daily may promote weight loss and help prevent kidney stones. Water also supports metabolism and can help control blood sugar and blood pressure [y](#).

Cognitive and Mood Benefits

Adequate water intake is linked to improved focus, memory, and mood regulation. Dehydration can impair cognitive performance and increase the risk of headaches and tension.

Practical Tips

To maximize these benefits, drink water consistently throughout the day, include water-rich foods like fruits and vegetables, and choose water over sugary beverages. Carrying a reusable water bottle and adding natural flavours like lemon or lime can make hydration easier and more enjoyable

In summary, **drinking enough water daily is vital for physical, cognitive, and metabolic health**, supporting everything from organ function and digestion to skin health and disease prevention

Biblical Insight

God created water on Day 1 of the Creation week. This shows how important it is in supporting all life.

Jesus introduces the concept of living water in John 4:10-14 during His encounter with the Samaritan woman at Jacob's well.

He tells her, "If you knew the gift of God and who it is that asks you for a drink, you would have asked Him, and He would have given you living water" (John 4:10).

He explains that this water will satisfy spiritual thirst permanently, becoming "a spring of water welling up to eternal life" (John 4:14)

What Jesus meant was, just like actual water being essential to life, faith in Him provides us with spiritual sustenance.

In John 7:37-39, Jesus proclaims at the festival, "Let anyone who is thirsty come to me and drink. Whoever believes in me... rivers of living water will flow from within them."

This passage clarifies that the living water represents the Holy Spirit, which believers would receive after Jesus' returned to heaven. The Holy Spirit renews and empowers the life of a true believer.

NEW START SPOTLIGHT #4 SUNLIGHT



Moderate sunlight exposure supports vitamin D production, boosts mood, improves sleep, strengthens bones, and promotes overall physical and mental health.

Vitamin D Production

Sunlight is the primary source of vitamin D, often called the “sunshine vitamin.” When UV rays hit the skin, they convert a cholesterol compound into vitamin D₃, which is then transformed into the active hormone calcitriol used by the body. Adequate vitamin D is essential for **calcium absorption**, supporting strong bones and reducing the risk of osteoporosis, rickets, and fractures. Even **10 to 30 minutes of sun exposure** on bare skin can significantly boost vitamin D levels, though darker skin tones may require longer exposure. Sunlight is the primary source of vitamin D, often called the “sunshine vitamin.” When UV rays hit the skin, they convert a cholesterol compound into vitamin D₃, which is then transformed into the active hormone calcitriol used by the body. Adequate vitamin D is essential for **calcium absorption**, supporting strong bones and reducing the risk of osteoporosis, rickets, and fractures. Even **10 to 30 minutes of sun exposure** on bare skin can significantly boost vitamin D levels, though darker skin tones may require longer exposure.

Mood and Mental Health

Sunlight increases **serotonin levels** in the brain, a neurotransmitter associated with mood regulation, focus, and calmness. Higher serotonin levels can alleviate symptoms of **depression and anxiety**. Morning sunlight, in particular, helps regulate circadian rhythms, improving alertness and emotional well-being.

Sleep Regulation

Exposure to sunlight helps synchronize the body’s **circadian rhythm** by regulating melatonin production. Morning light signals the brain to reduce melatonin, promoting wakefulness during the day and better sleep at night. Regular sunlight exposure can improve sleep quality and consistency.

Bone and Cardiovascular Health

Vitamin D from sunlight enhances calcium absorption, which strengthens bones and reduces fracture risk. Sunlight also triggers the release of **nitric oxide**, which can lower blood

pressure and reduce the risk of metabolic syndrome. These effects contribute to **heart health and overall longevity**.

Skin and Immune Benefits

Moderate sunlight exposure can have **therapeutic effects on skin conditions** such as psoriasis, eczema, and acne by modulating immune responses. It may also help prevent certain cancers and support immune system function when exposure is balanced with sun safety practices.

Energy and Cognitive Function

Sunlight stimulates brain activity, increasing **energy levels and alertness**. Regular exposure can enhance cognitive performance, particularly in environments with limited natural light, and reduce feelings of fatigue.

Safety Considerations

While sunlight has many benefits, **overexposure increases the risk of skin cancer**. It is recommended to limit direct sun exposure, especially in the middle of the day. Some skin types are more prone to burning and long-term skin cancer than others. Use sunscreen with SPF 30 or higher for longer periods outdoors, and wear a hat.

In summary, **moderate sunlight exposure is vital for physical and mental health**, supporting vitamin D synthesis, mood, sleep, bone strength, cardiovascular health, and immune function, while careful sun protection helps minimize risks.

Activities

1. Make a list of the benefits of sun exposure.
2. Write a statement warning of too much sun exposure and why.
3. Which skin types do you think might be more prone to damage through excess sun exposure?
4. How can people protect their skin from sun damage?
5. How is vitamin D produced in the body after sunlight exposure?
6. What are the benefits of vitamin D?
7. What role does vitamin D play in the immune system?
8. Which chemical in the brain is stimulated by sunlight, to help mood and sleep?
9. What is the circadian rhythm?
10. Which chemical in the brain helps us to sleep?

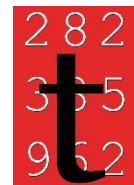
Biblical Insight

God created the sun on Day 4 of the Creation week. Sunlight is another essential requirement for life. It is interesting to note that the plants were created on Day 3, 24 hours before receiving the light and warmth of the sun. It could be that God created the seeds on Day 3, and these seeds began their germination process 24 hours later, once the sun was in place. We must also remember that God Himself is light. One day, in the new Heaven, there will be no sun, but God will be the light.

Some people worry about whether the sun will burn out, which would mean the end of the earth as we know it. However, we must remember that God is in control of His Creation, and will make sure that everything stays in motion until the day He has appointed for His return, the Last Judgement and the creation of the new Heaven and Earth.

One example that shows that God is in control of the sun can be seen in the Old Testament event, "The day the sun stood still". Read this account from Joshua 10:12-14.

NEW START SPOTLIGHT #5 TOXIN REDUCTION



While we can't avoid toxins altogether, to maintain good health we should do our best to minimise exposure to toxins.

Where do we find them?

1. Food

Commercial food production now largely depends on industrial poisons and fertilizers. In the Garden of Eden, there was no need for such chemicals, because everything was perfect, and there were no pests. The soil contained all the necessary nutrients for food production. However, the problem of pest control has been increasing ever since the Fall.

A small minority of farmers today engage in organic food production, using no chemical fertilisers or pesticides. They achieve this by using compost for fertiliser and in some cases, bio-control for pest eradication. This involves the introduction of a particular species of insect to eat the pest. For example, lady beetles are introduced to citrus orchards to eat the parasite called cottony cushion scale. A certain type of wasp can be introduced into apple orchards to eat aphids.

However, governments do not see it as financially viable to support such industries, making organic produce quite expensive. As consumers, we can only do our best, by making sure we

wash fruit and vegetables well before consuming, to wash off external sprays. Growing your own produce is a good idea if you can do that.

Apart from fruit and vegetables, there are many processed foods that contain toxins which are easy to avoid. You avoid them by simply not eating them. Examples of toxins in processed food and drink are:

- Artificial colourings and flavourings in sweets and snacks
- Artificial sweeteners such as aspartame in diet products such as 'Diet Coke'.
- Margarine and cheap vegetable oils in plastic bottles. The oil in these have been heated to such a high degree that they are 'carcinogenic', (meaning have the potential to cause cancer.)

2. The Home

There is a wealth of cleaning products to choose from, most of which contain toxic chemicals. People with asthma can suffer from such chemicals when they breathe them in. A better and cheaper option is to just use ordinary vinegar and bi-carb soda.

3. Products we use on our skin

The skin is a carrier, not just a barrier. Although it offers protection against outside elements, it also absorbs what we put on it, such as make up and moisturisers. Then the skin carries chemicals to the blood stream. Most liquid soap products are made from cheap industrial chemicals and perfumed with artificial fragrances. The Pure Fiji company is one such company that tries to avoid harmful chemicals and is a great assess for Fiji, popular with tourists who are looking for a better option.

4. Pharmaceutical drugs

Although these sometimes cannot be avoided, it is wise to follow the 8 principles for good health, to keep your body in the best health possible, so that in later life you can avoid medical conditions that have to be treated with pharmaceutical drugs.

Activities

1. Why does agriculture today suffer from the problem of pests?
2. What can be done to improve soil, without the addition of chemical fertilisers?
3. What is bio-control?
4. Give two ways of reducing toxins in the fruit or vegetables you buy.
5. Give 3 examples of toxins in processed foods.
6. Where might we find toxins in the home?

7. How can you minimise toxins on the skin?

8. How can you try to avoid health conditions in the future, that require pharmaceutical drugs?

Biblical Insight

The Hebrews, in Old Testament times, were given many health laws to follow. They were prohibited from eating certain types of meat, called 'unclean animals'. For example, they could not eat animals like eagles or dogs, because they had eaten other animals. They could not eat reptiles. They could not eat crawling insects like spiders, but were allowed to eat hopping insects like grasshoppers. They were not permitted to eat shellfish. This made perfect sense at the time because God needed to keep the Hebrews as a special group of people, into which Jesus would one day be born. Animals that eat other animals would be more inclined to carry parasites. Shellfish, unless very fresh, goes rancid very quickly causing illness; crawling insects like spiders and centipedes might be poisonous.

In New Testament times there was no longer an obligation to follow these health laws. The responsibility of what to eat from then on, would rest with the individual, who had to make wise choices. In Acts 10:9-16, we read that Peter had a vision of a sheet being lowered, containing unclean animals. The voice of the Lord told him to kill and eat them. Peter was shocked and said he could not do this. But the Lord said, "Do not call anything impure that God has made clean."

The main significance of this passage is that Peter is being told that he can fellowship with Christians who are not Jews, (gentiles), and who do not follow ceremonial laws. These people have been made clean through Christ, just as Peter had been made clean. However, we can take a secondary meaning from the passage. That is, Christians and Jews are free to make our own choices about what to eat and we are no longer bound to follow ceremonial food laws.

1 Corinthians 10:23 says "I have the right to do anything," but not everything is beneficial. "I have the right to do anything "but not everything is constructive.

So while we are free to choose whatever food or drink, we like, we must remember that not everything is beneficial. If we want to keep our bodies fit to serve the Lord, we must make wise choices.

NEW START SPOTLIGHT #6 AIR



Spending time in fresh air improves physical health, boosts immunity, enhances mood, reduces stress, and promotes better sleep.

Physical Health Benefits

Breathing fresh air helps cleanse the lungs, improve oxygen circulation, and reduce exposure to indoor pollutants, which are often two to five times higher than outdoor levels. It supports cardiovascular health, enhances lung function, and can give us the opportunity to exercise outdoors. Taking a walk in a forest or by the sea is an excellent opportunity to fill our lungs with high quality air.

Exposure to sunlight while outdoors also stimulates vitamin D production, which is essential for bone health and immune function. Inside our homes and school buildings, opening windows is important in keeping the air fresh. It is a good idea to have windows open on opposite sides of the room to get a cross breeze.

Activities

1. Make a comparison between air quality in large cities and air quality in rural areas.
2. Research the impact of trees and plants in general on, air quality. How do they contribute to better air quality?
3. Find out the link between asthma and air pollution.

Biblical Insight

According to Genesis 1, on the second day of Creation, God said, "Let there be a firmament in the midst of the waters, and let it divide the waters from the waters" (Genesis 1:6). This firmament, also called the sky, separated the waters above from the waters below, effectively creating the atmosphere or air that surrounds the earth (Genesis 1:7-8)

So air, like water, was created before any life form, because air, like water, is essential to life. The Bible frequently associates air with life itself. In Genesis 2:7, God "breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and the man became a living being," emphasizing that human life originates from God's breath.

Similarly, Job 33:4 states, "The Spirit of God has made me; the breath of the Almighty gives me life," reinforcing that every breath is a divine gift.

Psalms 150:6 encourages all living beings to praise God, acknowledging that "everything that has breath" is sustained by Him.



NEW START SPOTLIGHT #7 REST

Sleep is essential for physical repair, mental clarity, emotional regulation, and overall long-term health. Getting sufficient sleep supports tissue repair, immune function, and cardiovascular health. Adequate sleep helps regulate hormones that control appetite and metabolism, reducing the risk of obesity, type 2 diabetes, high blood pressure, and heart disease. Sleep also conserves energy by lowering heart rate and blood pressure during rest.

It is well-documented that sleep can reduce the risk of various chronic diseases, boost cognitive function, enhance memory and lower stress levels.

Circadian Rhythm

More commonly referred to as your 'body clock', the circadian rhythm keeps your physical, mental and behavioural changes in check throughout the day. It reacts to environmental changes of light and dark, and our brains, hormone production, important cell regeneration and other factors are interconnected with these cycles of light.

The disruption of sleep has been associated with depression, insomnia, Type 2 diabetes, fatigue or feeling lethargic, depressed immune system, and weight gain.

Circadian Rhythm Interferences

A big cause for disruption of circadian rhythm is the light associated with those little devices often glued to our palms or that you cannot peel your eyes from – mobile phones, tablets and computer screens. The light omitted from these devices are not that beneficial before resting your head as they can pump up your attention and mood, often having a negative impact on sleep due to the impact on melatonin. By continuing your screen activity late at night (with light waves seeping through to your brain), you are in fact prohibiting the correct production of melatonin, which in turn interferes with your sleep.

Activities

1. Make a list of the benefits of getting adequate sleep. (Use dot points)
2. What is 'circadian rhythm'?
3. Find the meaning of 'lethargic'.
4. What are the possible physical problems arising from not getting enough quality sleep?
5. What is a 'depressed immune system' and what can it result in?

Biblical Insight

God rested on the seventh day of creation, as an example for us to follow. The 4th commandment given to Moses, (in the Ten Commandments) says:

Remember the Sabbath day by keeping it holy. 9Six days you shall labour and do all your work, 10but the seventh day is a Sabbath to the LORD your God, on which you must not do any work—neither you, nor your son or daughter, nor your manservant or maidservant or livestock, nor the foreigner within your gates. 11For in six days the LORD made the heavens and the earth and the sea and all that is in them, but on the seventh day He rested. Therefore the LORD blessed the Sabbath day and set it apart as holy. *Exodus 20:8-10*

Apart from getting adequate nightly sleep, we also need to take time to rest on the weekend. This gives our bodies and minds a rest, ready to start the new week.

NEW START SPOTLIGHT #8



THINK HAPPY THOUGHTS AND TRUST IN GOD

Laughter releases hormones called endorphins. These hormones can relieve pain, reduce stress and give us feelings of pleasure. Mental health affects physical health.

Research shows that people who have a faith experience better health. The Bible gives us answers to life, and it gives us guidance on the journey through life. We also know where we are going at the end of life. We have confidence that God is with us, no matter what. We can always put our trust in Him.

Activity

Make a list of ideas that you could put into practice, to cheer someone up, or make them feel happier.

Biblical Insight

Proverbs 17:22 - “A cheerful heart is good medicine, but a crushed spirit dries up the bones.”

Nehemiah 8:10 – “The joy of the Lord is your strength.” This verse emphasizes that joy rooted in God empowers and sustains believers.

Philippians 4:4 – “Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, rejoice.”

Proverbs 3:5-6 - Trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways submit to him, and he will make your paths straight.