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## The Great Outdoors: *Unlocking the Secrets to a Healthier and Happier You*

Fresh air, sun, blue skies, and trees - nature has always held a special place in our hearts. There's something magical about the outdoors, and according to some studies, it can have a profound impact on our well-being. Being outdoors in nature can be healing and beneficial for the body and mind. In this article, we will explore five ways being outdoors can improve your health and well-being.

### **Lowers Blood Pressure and Reduces Stress**

Did you know that spending time outdoors and simply looking at trees can lower your blood pressure and reduce the stress-related hormones cortisol and adrenaline? A study conducted by the University of Michigan found that walking in nature for just 20 minutes can lower cortisol levels, a hormone that contributes to stress. Spending time in nature allows us to disconnect from the demands of everyday life and recharge our batteries.

### **Improves Mood**

It's no secret that nature simply makes us happy. Researchers have found that anxiety and depression notably decrease after spending time outdoors. A study published in Scientific Reports found that people who spent time in nature experienced a significant increase in their well-being. Being outdoors can help improve your mood, increase your happiness, and provide a sense of peace and tranquility.



### Improves Focus

Do you have difficulty focusing or controlling impulses? Spending time in nature can help. Studies show that both adults and children who have difficulties focusing are better able to concentrate after being in nature. The natural world allows our brains to take a break from all that drains us.

### Helps Us Heal Quicker

Illness can be painful, which can increase stress and slow healing. However, researchers have discovered that people who spend time outdoors recover quicker. A study conducted by the University of Pittsburgh found that patients who spent time outdoors after surgery required less pain medication and had shorter hospital stays.

### Helps Us Stay Active

Being outdoors can encourage us to move more. Whether going for a hike, playing sports, or simply taking a walk, being outdoors can help us be more active. Physical activity is crucial for our overall health and well-being, and being outdoors provides the perfect setting to get moving.

Nature is a powerful force that can boost our well-being and health in countless ways. Whether it's by lowering our blood pressure, lifting our mood, sharpening our focus, speeding up our recovery, or getting us moving, spending time outdoors has endless benefits. So, the next time you feel stressed or overwhelmed, step outside, take a deep breath, and enjoy the healing powers of nature. ■

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## Poem of the Month

April, a month brimming with potential; flowers in bloom, bees and birds busy making new homes for new lives and the soothing breeze making gentle music among the trees. In this month's poem, Robert Louis Stevenson celebrates the sensuousness of April with all its deliveries of smells, sounds and sights!

### Flower God, God of The Spring

FLOWER god, god of the spring,  
 beautiful, bountiful,  
 Cold-dyed shield in the sky, lover  
 of versicles,  
 Here I wander in April  
 Cold, grey-headed; and still to my  
 Heart, Spring comes with a  
 bound, Spring the deliverer,  
 Spring, song-leader in woods,  
 chorally resonant;  
 Spring, flower-planter in  
 meadows,  
 Child-conductor in willowy  
 Fields deep dotted with bloom,  
 daisies and crocuses:  
 Here that child from his heart  
 drinks of eternity:  
 O child, happy are children!  
 She still smiles on their  
 innocence,  
 She, dear mother in God,  
 fostering violets,  
 Fills earth full of her scents,  
 voices and violins:  
 Thus one cunning in music  
 Wakes old chords in the memory:  
 Thus fair earth in the Spring  
 leads her performances.  
 One more touch of the bow,  
 smell of the virginal  
 Green - one more, and my bosom  
 Feels new life with an ecstasy.

By Robert Louis Stevenson

# Sleep Your Way to Better Health: Tips and Techniques for a Good Night's Sleep

BY CLODAGH MCKEON

We've all experienced those mornings when we wake up feeling tired and groggy, regardless of how long we slept. But did you know that the quality of our sleep is just as important as the quantity? Sleep is crucial for our physical and mental well-being, and getting a good night's sleep can positively impact our productivity, mood and overall health.

Here are some tips and techniques to help you sleep your way to better health:

**Put down the phone** - We all love scrolling through our phones, but the blue light emitted by mobile phone screens can restrict the hormone melatonin, which regulates our sleep-wake cycle. Try to avoid using your phone before bed and opt for relaxing activities instead.

**Pay attention to what you eat and drink** - Our diet can have a significant impact on the quality of our sleep. Eating more plants, fibre, and foods rich in unsaturated fats can help improve sleep quality. Avoid going to bed hungry or too full and limit your caffeine intake.

**Exercise** - Regular physical exercise not only improves our physical health but can also improve our sleep quality. However, avoid exercising too close to bedtime, as it can keep you awake.



**Stick to a sleeping schedule** - Creating a sleeping routine that works for you can help you fall asleep and stay asleep. Try to get between seven to eight hours of sleep each night and set a specific time for lights off.

**Turn your bedroom into a tranquil space** - Creating a relaxing atmosphere in your bedroom can help you fall asleep faster and stay asleep longer. Keep your room cool, dark, and quiet, and invest in good blinds and curtains to block out any light.

**Try some calming activities** - Practicing calming activities like meditation, breathing exercises, or taking a bath can help you unwind and prepare for a good night's sleep.

A good night's sleep is essential for better health, and these tips and techniques can help you achieve the rest you need to function at your best. Incorporating these habits into your daily routine will improve your sleep quality and make a significant impact on your overall well-being. Make sure to prioritise your sleep and give yourself the gift of better health by implementing these tips and techniques into your daily routine. ■





# The Surprising Foods That Can Boost Your Mood and Well-being

BY SARA HEALY

Spring is the perfect time to focus on healthy eating, as we all want to be ready to enjoy the outdoors and feel more energetic. But did you know that the food we eat can also have a positive impact on our mood and well-being? Discover the mood-boosting properties of five surprising foods:

## **Red Bell Peppers**

These sweet and crunchy peppers contain more vitamin C than an orange, making them a great mood-boosting food. Vitamin C is known to reduce stress and anxiety levels, and red bell peppers are also low in calories and packed with other nutrients, making them the ultimate happy food.

## **Sweet Potatoes**

Sweet potatoes are not only delicious, but they also contain mood-boosting vitamins like B6 and C. These vitamins play a crucial role in the production of serotonin, the "feel-good" chemical in our brains. With so many different ways to cook them, including roasting, chips, and stews, sweet potatoes are an easy and tasty way to improve your mood.

### Fermented Foods

Fermented foods like kimchi, sauerkraut, and kombucha are packed with probiotics that support good gut health. But did you know that they can also improve your serotonin levels? Serotonin is produced in the gut, and studies have shown that a healthy gut can lead to a healthier mindset. So, opt for your favourite fermented food to boost your mood.

### Beans, Peas, and Lentils

Legumes like beans, peas, and lentils are versatile, cheap, and a great source of tryptophan. Tryptophan is an amino acid that the body uses to make serotonin. Incorporating legumes into your diet can help boost your mood and reduce cravings for less healthy carbs that could cause irritability. They are the perfect all-terrain food for a healthy diet.

### Red Meat

While we should all aim to reduce our meat intake for the benefit of our planet, a juicy, high-quality steak can be a great source of iron and vitamins that increase oxygen flow to the brain. This helps manage mood swings and irritability, making it a good option for non-vegetarians who want to maintain a balanced diet.

Incorporating these mood-boosting foods into your diet can have a significant impact on your mental well-being. So this spring, make sure to add some red bell peppers, sweet potatoes, fermented foods, legumes, and even the occasional high-quality steak to your plate. You'll not only be doing your body a favour, but your mind will thank you too. ■





# Moving Towards Mental Wellness:

## *How Exercise Can Improve Your Mental Health*

Staying active and getting regular exercise is something we all know we should do, but it can be tough to find the motivation to get moving, especially during the colder, darker months. However, the benefits of exercise are too important to ignore, particularly when it comes to our mental health. In fact, research shows that aerobic exercises like walking, biking, running, dancing, and swimming can be just as effective at relieving symptoms of depression as antidepressant medication.

Studies also show that the benefits of exercise go beyond just mental health. A 2019 study by the Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health showed that taking as little as a 15-minute walk or jogging three times a week can be effective in relieving depression symptoms. Another study showed that participants who moved more throughout the day scored higher on memory and thinking tests, and increased physical activity was associated with a 31% reduced risk of dementia.

The recommended amount of exercise is a minimum of 150 minutes per week, but the good news is that it's the cumulative effect of exercise over a week that benefits us, rather than exercising for long periods of time. That means that taking small steps, like getting off the bus a stop earlier or taking the stairs instead of the elevator, can add up and count towards our weekly exercise goals.

It's easy to make excuses and put off exercise, but the benefits for our mental and physical health are too great to ignore. By making small



changes and being consistent, we can improve our overall well-being and protect our brain health in the long term. So, next time you find yourself tempted to skip a workout, remember that every step counts towards a healthier you. ■

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# WIN A €5,000 Corporate Video Package!



ARC  
STUDIOS

## How to enter:

CORE Ireland, a mental health charity based in County Meath, is excited to announce its latest collaboration with Arc Studios, a multi-award-winning video production company. This partnership presents an exciting opportunity for businesses to win a €5,000 corporate video package!

The €5,000 corporate video package prize offers endless possibilities for businesses to showcase their products and services through creative and professional videos. Whether you're a small start-up or a large corporation, this is an opportunity you don't want to miss.

By participating in the raffle, you not only get a chance to win this amazing prize, but you also contribute to CORE Ireland's mission of making a positive impact on the lives of the most vulnerable members of our society, so don't miss out on this chance to elevate your business and make a difference in the community.

Enter now for a chance to win!

Simply scan the QR code below to buy your raffle ticket.

Here's how to scan a QR code with your phone's camera:

1. Open your phone camera app
2. Focus on the QR code
3. Wait for the prompt
4. Tap the screen
5. Follow the link or instructions

That's it!



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# coffee4CORE

On April 5th, CORE Ireland hosted their #coffee4core event, which brought together community members for a morning of coffee, conversation, and education. Attendees had the pleasure of hearing from Claire, a member of the HSE Health Promotion team in Meath, who provided valuable information about the Meath Stop Smoking Service. The event was a great success, and we want to thank everyone who came out to support us.

## Thank you to our sponsors!

The CORE Ireland monthly newsletter is an important resource for anyone interested in mental health and well-being. It provides valuable information and practical advice to help people maintain good mental health and improve overall well-being. Thanks to the support of our incredible sponsors, we are able to continue producing this valuable resource for the benefit of our readers.



### Connect with us

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