

Physical Wellness

Wellness is a conscious, deliberate process that requires being aware of and making choices for a more satisfying lifestyle.



For physical wellness, a wellness lifestyle includes a balance of health habits such as adequate sleep and rest, physical activity, eating well, stress management, and relaxation, while avoiding tobacco, drugs, and excessive alcohol consumption. *Physical wellness* also involves taking personal responsibility to prevent and care for injuries and illnesses and to get professional medical attention when it is needed.

Prevention

As the old saying goes, a stitch in time saves nine (stitches, that is). Better to prevent illness than treat it and better to avoid injury than deal with healing and recovery. People may worry about risks that are unlikely¹ (like getting a tropical disease if you live in the northern US) and ignore everyday dangers, like texting while driving, biking without a helmet, skipping the sunscreen, smoking, or drinking too much alcohol. In addition, regular medical and dental care and the good health tips above will go a long way to getting and staying well.

Eating Well

We make many food-related choices each day.² We choose what to eat, but also where, how, when, and with whom. Choosing fresh fruits, vegetables, and whole grains. It is best avoid sugar and processed foods. One simple recipe for good nutrition includes “Eat real foods, not too much, mostly plants.”³

Sleep and rest

If you are a regular reader, you will remember that the March issue⁴ included information on sleep. For most people, an adequate amount of sleep is 7 to 9 hours each night. Certain habits can interfere with sleep, like screen use (TV, phones, tablets) before bedtime, caffeine late in the day, and substance use. Some habits that can help you get a good night’s sleep include following a relaxing evening routine, keeping to a set sleep schedule every day, and keeping the bedroom uncluttered.

Physical Activity

Staying active is important for health. A variety of exercises or physical activities can help build your fitness by increasing endurance, strength, flexibility, and balance. Many different types of activities are beneficial.

For most people, walking is easy, popular, and free. Yoga offers many physical and mental benefits. Dancing, gardening, and recreational sports also contribute to more than physical wellness. These activities can contribute to social wellness, emotional wellness, and intellectual wellness, too.

Find something you enjoy and do it!

Relaxation

We may not be able to control the world around us, but we can, to a large extent, control how we react. Learning to stay calm, making time to fully relax every day, and reminding ourselves of what’s right in the world can all help us manage stressful events, situations, and people. When life gets tough, we need a little self-kindness and self-compassion with a touch of hope. Learn what works for you and build in your daily habits and routines.

Rate Your Physical Wellness

Use this scale:

- 4 If the item is **Always True** for you
- 3 If the item is **Sometimes True** for you
- 2 If the item is **Rarely True** for you
- 1 If the item is **Never True** for you

- I do physical activity (dancing, walking, yoga, gardening, etc.) for 20 to 30 minutes at least three times per week.
- I eat fresh fruits, vegetables, or whole grains daily.
- I avoid tobacco and nicotine products, including cigarettes, cigars, e-cigarettes, chewing tobacco.
- I do not use illegal substances, such as drugs that were not prescribed for me.
- I do not drink alcohol.
- I wear a seat belt while riding in or driving a car.
- I choose water rather than drinking sugary beverages (juices, powder mix, soda, etc.).
- I get an adequate amount of sleep (usually 7-9 hours/night).
- I keep up with my annual physical.
- I maintain a reasonable weight for my age and height.
- I brush my teeth daily.
- I do things / activities that help me to feel calm and relaxed.
- I limit the amount of processed food that I eat.
- I am active daily in ways that improve my strength, flexibility, or balance.

Your Total Score (out of a possible 56): _____

Wellness Self-Assessment

Take a closer look at your own wellness, using the *Wellness Inventory*⁵ and other tools available for free from www.cspnj.org (double click on the Resources tab).



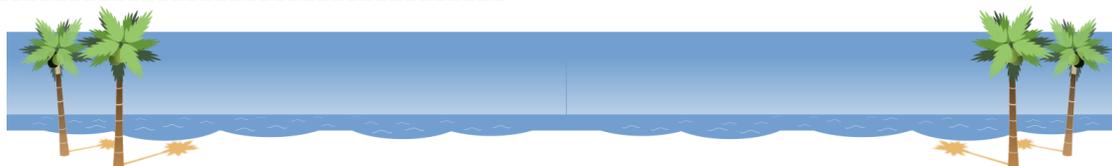
Try the *Physical Wellness Self-Assessment* in the box on the left.

Self-Assessment Scoring Key:

- If you scored from 40 to 56 points, that's excellent! Your habits and routines are contributing to your wellness.
- If you scored from 16 to 39 points, you're doing great. You can look over the items again and see where there are 2-3 areas you want to improve.
- If you scored from 0 to 15 points, to see if there is one area you may want to improve. Read over some of the tips in this issue of Words of Wellness. Consider one things you may want to do. Build on what you are already doing well.

Check out our complete *Wellness Inventory*.

Double-click on the "resources" tab at www.cspnj.org



Gut health

Hippocrates once said, “All disease begins in your gut.” Of course, not all diseases are *really* from our gut but having a healthy gut can aid overall wellness. Some experts⁶ believe that there is a link between gastrointestinal issues, depression, and anxiety. This idea is supported by evidence of the enteric nervous system, which is sometimes described as the digestive system having a brain of its own that can control your mood, health, and overall mental clarity. There are hormonal links, too. Those hormones control your emotions, your mood, and your immune function.⁷

These systems work in both directions—your gut health affects your brain and your brain affects your gut.⁸ What you eat can affect your mood and how clearly you think. As you probably know, your digestion can be affected by stress and other emotions. Stress can cause the hormones in your body to go out of whack and the first thing that gets affected is our gut. Stress may even change the bacteria in your gut.⁹

There are many bacteria in your body¹⁰ and the balance of the right bacteria helps you feel well. Certain foods increase the level of healthy bacteria in your intestines, avoid feeding the undesirable bacteria, and improve the flow through your digestive tract so you get the most nutrition from what you eat.

Here are some general tips for general health, for gut health, and for brain health:

- While sugary drinks may be tempting, it is better to choose healthier options. You can satisfy your need for sugary drinks by adding lemon juice or any natural fruit juice to your water or, if you like the bubbly taste of soda, try seltzer with lemon.
- Eat healthy fresh foods with lots of fiber, including fruits, vegetables, legumes, and nuts. Include fish, lean meats and healthy fats, such as olive oil.

- Are you adventurous? Try feeding your gut bacteria with Kombucha, which is a fermented, lightly sweetened tea. There is a small amount of research on its benefits, and some people believe it can aid in your digestion and help improve your mood. Don't overdo it, though—kombucha does have added sugar or added caffeine and may contain some alcohol.¹¹

So, treat your tummy well and it will pay you back!

Summer Heat!

Summer days often bring high temperatures. This means we have to take some extra precautions to stay healthy.

Some medications make it harder for your body to manage in the hot weather. Some can even get in the way of knowing whether you are too hot.¹² If your body temperature rises too high, you are at risk of nausea, headaches, seizures, brain damage, and death.

Use of alcohol, certain other medications, and illegal drugs also may pose extra harmful health risks in hot weather.

Skin protection is important, because some medications also make your skin more sensitive to the sun. Hats, sunglasses, long sleeves, and sunscreen can help reduce the risk of sunburn. Another common problem is dehydration. We sweat more in hot weather, so it's important to drink plenty of fluids, especially when you are active.



If you take medications for major mental disorders, or care for someone who does, you will find this brochure useful. It's free to print and share:

http://www.state.nj.us/humanservices/dmhas/publications/miscel/Summer_Heat_Risks_ENG.pdf

A Message from the Editors

Thank you so much for all the kind words about our new edition of the *Words of Wellness* newsletter! We are having fun and learning a lot as we put it together, and hope you continue to find it useful. We have lots of ideas for future issues, but we also would like to hear your thoughts. Read any good books lately? Have a wellness tip? Wonder about something you'd like us to cover? Please let us know!

We have combined the July and August issues, expecting that a lot of our readers will be out and about in the summer. Our regular monthly issues will resume in September. And, speaking of September:

NATIONAL WELLNESS WEEK | SEPT. 2018

Connecting All Aspects of Behavioral Health

September 16-22, 2018

National Wellness Week—celebrated annually during the third week of September as part of SAMHSA's National Recovery Month—was launched to inspire individuals and communities to incorporate the Eight Dimensions of Wellness into their lives. More than 3,500 national and community organizations have committed to promote wellness for people who have behavioral health conditions by taking action to improve the quality of life. Join others in co-creating a future in which individuals with behavioral health conditions pursue optimal health, happiness, recovery, and full and satisfying lives in the community.¹³

You can download this logo and lots of other free materials for National Wellness Week!
Go to <https://www.samhsa.gov/wellness-initiative/national-wellness-week-resources>

References and Resources

The small numbers throughout this issue refer to the following references and resources. Thanks to *William Latin* for developing the *Gut Health* article! Images in this issue come from www.openclipart.org

¹ Shapiro, N., & Loberg, K. (2018). *Hype: A doctor's guide to medical myths, exaggerated claims, and bad advice*.

² Wansink, B., & Sobal, J. (2007). Mindless eating: The 200 daily food decisions we overlook. *Environment and Behavior*, 39, 106-123.

³ Pollan, M. (2009). *Food rules: An eater's manual*. New York, NY: Penguin.

⁴ You can find all of our back issues of WoW at <https://www.cspnj.org/wordsofwellness>

⁵ Swarbrick, M (2017) Wellness Inventory. Freehold, NJ: Collaborative Support Programs of New Jersey. Available as a free download from <https://www.cspnj.org/resources-1>

⁶ One such expert is Dr. Jay Pasricha, Director of the Johns Hopkins Center for Neurogastroenterology. See https://www.hopkinsmedicine.org/health/healthy_aging/healthy_body/the-brain-gut-connection

⁷ Agusti, A., Garcia-Pardo, M. P., Lopenz-Almela, I., Campillo, I., Maes, M., Romani-Perez, M., & Sanz, Y. (2018, March 16). Interplay between the gut-brain axis, obesity, and cognitive function. *Frontiers in Neuroscience*, 12, 155.

⁸ For more on this, see Mayer, E. (2016). *The mind-gut connection*. New York, NY: Harper Wave.

⁹ Liu, L., & Zhu, G. (2018, May 29). Gut-brain axis and mood disorder. *Frontiers in Psychiatry*, 9, 223.

¹⁰ See Yong, E. (2016). *I contain multitudes*. New York, NY: Ecco.

¹¹ In rare cases, kombucha can cause health problems. Gedela, M., Potu, K. C., Gali, V. L., Alyamany, K., & Jha, L. K. (2016) A case of hepatotoxicity related to kombucha tea consumption. *South Dakota Medical Journal*, 69(1), 26-28. AND Holburn, A., & Hurdman, J. (2017, December 2). Kombucha: Is a cup of tea good for you? *BMJ Case Reports*.

¹² <https://blog.samhsa.gov/2012/06/29/excessive-heat-exposure-can-pose-higher-risks-for-those-on-psychotropic-medication-or-other-substances/#.WzKALqdKg2w>

¹³ This text is from <https://store.samhsa.gov/shin/content/SMA16-4952/SMA16-4952.pdf>

