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How Vitamin B-12 nurtures *wellness across the lifespan*



Eric Michael Grief, M.D., is a 20-year family physician based in Thornhill, Ontario, Canada. His book, "Get Diagnosed Fast!," is available at Publish-America.com.

By Eric Grief, M.D.

B-12 is required by all types of people, at all stages of their lives. Here, we'll look at the significant periods when B-12 helps our bodies and minds to attain (and retain) optimal vitality and health.

Before and after birth

In the earliest stages of development before birth, the neural (nerve) network for the brain and spinal cord uses Vitamin B-12 to form the protective covering of the nerves. Vitamin B-12 can ensure the optimal formation of a baby's spinal cord, brain and nervous system.¹

Once a child is born, the brain develops rapidly: each nerve cell and its protective covering depends on optimal levels of Vitamin B-12 for its physical integrity.² Tissue formation in these early years relies on the presence of adequate Vitamin B-12 levels: Hair, skin, brain, spinal cord, heart, gut, bones and gonads all rely on B-12 for their optimal formation.³

Teen moods: not always hormonal

Adolescence can be a time of mood changes and other behavioural issues. During this pre-adult stage of hormonal fluctuation and rapid growth, the blame usually falls on hormones... but B-12 can be involved, too. Since B-12 helps in forming neurotransmitters that stabilize mood, low levels of this crucial vitamin during the teen years can show up as mood changes.

Added importance in ageing

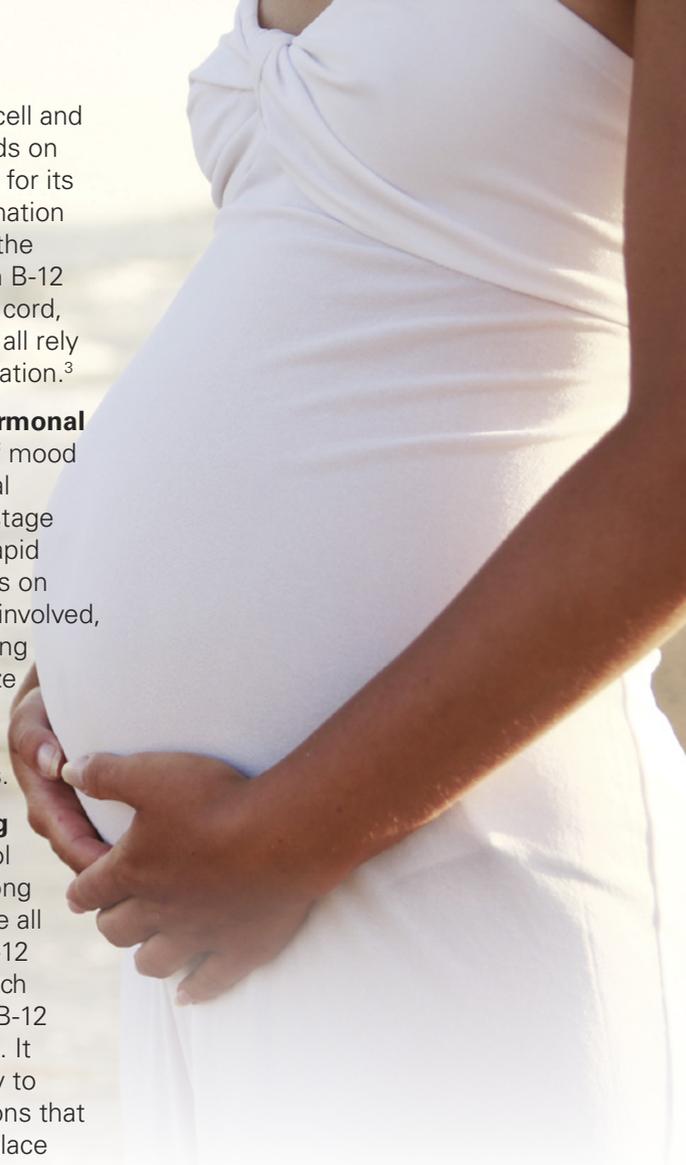
Osteoporosis, high cholesterol and Alzheimer's disease, among other disease processes, have all been causally linked to low B-12 levels.⁴ As we age, our stomach and intestines do not absorb B-12 as efficiently as they once did. It therefore becomes necessary to optimise diet, avoid medications that block B-12 absorption and replace B-12 in the most efficient manner. Sublingual (under the tongue) and injectable B-12 can both bypass the gut and restore B-12 levels.

Ask your healthcare professional about dietary changes, which medications to avoid and how best to restore Vitamin B-12 levels. No matter what your age, there will be a health benefit.

This article is intended for educational purposes only.

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- 1 Dominguez-Salas P et al. *Proc Nutr Soc*, 2012; 71:154.
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Try this proven key to healthy ageing

How can we face a future of good health, free of chronic disease, and mental or physical impairment? Though we certainly have no guarantees in life, mounting research shows that, lacking a fountain of youth, exercise may be the next best thing when it comes to helping us age well.

Activity = healthy ageing at any age

If you've never made exercise a priority, there's good news: you haven't missed the healthy ageing boat. According to research, exercise doesn't play favourites: even those who start exercising later in life can reap some healthy ageing benefits. One long-term study found that when men took up exercise after age 50, they reduced their risk of death compared to their sedentary peers; after about 10 years, their risk levels matched those of lifelong exercisers.

In a recent University College London study, habitually active adults increased

their chances of healthy ageing sevenfold compared to their inactive counterparts; those who started exercising later in life (defined in this study as moderate or vigorous activity at least once a week) were still three to four times more likely to age well than the non-exercisers.

Additional benefits

If the idea of "healthy ageing" sounds nebulous to you, consider these more concrete benefits of activity. According to the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), regular physical activity can help:

- Control your weight
- Reduce your risk of cardiovascular disease
- Reduce your risk for Type 2 diabetes
- Reduce your risk of some cancers
- Strengthen your bones and muscles
- Improve your mental health and mood
- Improve your ability to do daily activities and prevent falls, if you're an older adult
- Increase your chances of living longer

So how much exercise do you need for these benefits? In the London study, researchers found that even everyday activities such as gardening and walking were of benefit. However, for best results and benefits, the CDC (and the World Health Organization) recommends at least 150 minutes of moderate-intensity aerobic activity per week. As always, consult with your healthcare provider before starting any exercise program.

Break a sweat, boost your brain power

Aerobic exercise may give your brain a quick boost, according to a study in *Frontiers in Ageing Neuroscience*. Older adults who rode a stationary bike or walked on the treadmill for one hour three times a week saw improvements in memory, brain function and physical fitness after just six weeks compared to a group of adults who didn't exercise.

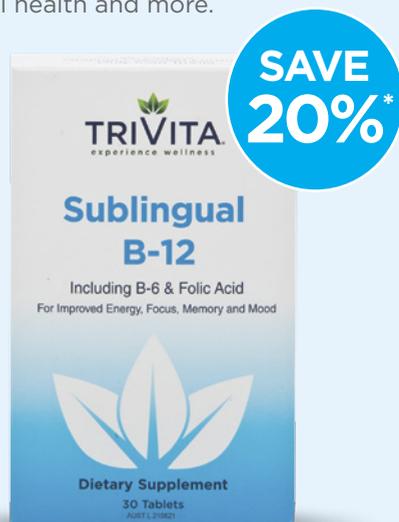
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<http://www.cdc.gov/physicalactivity/everyone/health/>

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Mediterranean diet may improve mental function – Barcelona, Spain

The Mediterranean diet may improve cognitive (mental) function. Spanish researchers found that supplementing the Mediterranean diet with extra olive oil or mixed nuts improved cognitive function in older adults, although they caution that more research is needed.

In the trial, volunteers were assigned to eat: a low-fat diet; a Mediterranean diet with an additional litre of olive oil per week; or a Mediterranean diet with an additional 30 grams of mixed nuts every day. Over four years, the low-fat diet group showed decreases in cognitive function; the nut group saw increases in memory; and those in the olive oil group showed improvement in attention and executive function (planning and organizing abilities).

Reference: www.sciencedaily.com/releases/2015/05/150511124849.htm

New insights into how brains change with age – Toronto, Canada

Older brains work differently than younger brains when performing the same mental task, according to a study in *Neurobiology of Learning and Memory*. Although both groups performed equally well on the task, their respective brains showed very different brain wave patterns while doing so.

“We know that our brains change over time, but fully understanding how we make and recall memories as we age has been a mystery,” said lead author Renante Rondina. “Our findings are really novel as they show distinct differences in brain activity from one generation to the next. By mapping these key differences, we may be able to identify new ways to predict, diagnose and screen for cognitive decline.”

Reference: <http://www.baycrest.org/research-news/older-and-younger-adults-surf-different-brain-waves/>

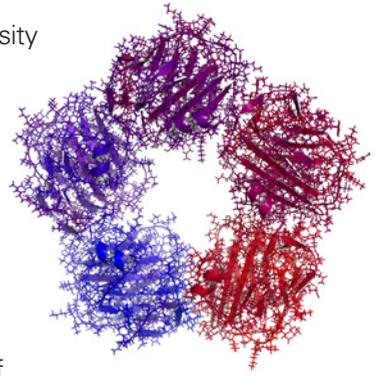
Feeling down? It could be inflammation – Houston, TX, USA

Although commonly associated with physical health conditions, long-term inflammation is now linked to mental health issues such as a depression, according to a new study.

Researchers from Rice University and Ohio State University reviewed 200 papers on depression and inflammation and found that inflammation can “fan the flames” of depression. Among patients with clinical depression, they found that concentrations of two inflammatory markers, C-reactive protein and IL-6, were elevated up to 50%.

“We still have a lot to learn about how inflammation impacts depression, but we are making progress,” said study co-author Christopher Fagundes. “We hope one day this work will lead to new treatments that are part of standard psychiatric care.”

Reference: <http://news.rice.edu/2015/12/17/inflammation-can-fan-the-flames-of-depression/>



C-reactive protein

Sore muscles get help from an unexpected source – Provo, UT, USA

Ever wonder why you get less sore the more you exercise? Past research has suggested that the immune system plays a role in muscle repair but a new study in the journal *Frontiers in Physiology* showed evidence of specific immune cells in the muscles (T-cells).

“You think of T-cells as responding to infections, not repairing muscles—but we found a significant accumulation of T-cells infiltrating damaged muscle fibres,” said researcher Robert Hyldahl. “Our study is the first to show T-cells present in human muscle in response to exercise-induced damage.”

The presence of T-cells suggests that muscles “remember” the damage incurred from an initial round of exercise and recruit the immune cells for subsequent rounds.

Reference: <http://news.byu.edu/news/why-your-muscles-get-less-sore-you-stick-your-gym-routine>

Low Vitamin D levels linked to accelerated mental decline – Sacramento, CA, USA

Vitamin D deficiency or insufficiency in older adults is associated with faster cognitive (mental) decline—as much as three times faster—than in those with adequate levels, say researchers at the UC Davis Alzheimer’s Disease Center.

In a long-term study of 400 men and women, scientists found that Vitamin D deficient individuals experienced faster declines in episodic memory and executive function than those with adequate D levels. “This work, and that of others, suggests that there is enough evidence to recommend that people in their 60s and older discuss taking a daily Vitamin D supplement with their physicians,” said researcher Joshua Miller.

Reference: http://www.ucdmc.ucdavis.edu/alzheimers/news/news_vitamin_D.html3



How to improve brain “fitness”

By Sandra Bond Chapman, Ph.D.

Scientific research shows that cognitive ageing is a natural process that affects everyone. But here is the good news: each of us has the ability to strengthen our brain function and to prevent, slow or even reverse cognitive decline. That is, if we take the right steps, eliminate toxic routines and adopt healthy habits.



Dr. Chapman is founder/ chief director of the Center for BrainHealth at the University of Texas at Dallas. An acclaimed cognitive neuroscientist, she is the author of Make Your Brain Smarter.

9 WAYS TO STAY SHARP

Whatever your stage in life, use these brain-healthy habits to strengthen brain systems and enhance brain “fitness”:

Get a good night’s sleep

Eight hours is optimal. It allows us to reset an exhausted brain engine, to consolidate learning of new information at higher levels of understanding and connect ideas in newer, more innovative ways.





Slow down to succeed

Working constantly hinders productivity and performance along with increasing stress. While it seems counterintuitive to increase mental energy by slowing the pace, try it; it works.



Block out

Consciously filter extraneous information to focus on the task at hand. This technique has not only been shown to impact cognitive health, but is also a sign of higher intellectual function.



Think at a deeper level

Give information new meaning by absorbing it and relating it to your own experiences. Achieving a new perspective will inspire your brain to generate new ideas and solutions.



Enjoy aerobic physical activity

Exercise is one of the most important ways to increase blood flow to the areas of the brain crucial to memory and attention.



Eat right

Fill your plate with vegetables, fruit, nuts, fish, legumes and olive oil. Go easy with red meat, dairy products and sweets. Deficiencies of the nutrients from a healthy diet can impair brain function and long-term brain health.



Manage medications effectively

Some medications can lead to mental foginess. Regularly discuss and review medications that may affect brain function with your healthcare provider.



Reduce cardiovascular disease risk factors

Your heart and your brain are uniquely intertwined. Be sure to control high blood pressure and diabetes and stop smoking.



Connect socially

Social networks are positively related to higher cognitive performance.

This article is intended for educational purposes only.

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<http://www.aarp.org/about-aarp/press-center/info-01-2015/staying-sharp-brain-health-survey.html>
<http://journal.frontiersin.org/article/10.3389/fnagi.2013.00075/abstract>



Maintain inflammation naturally

Inflammation has been called the “secret killer” for its stealthy role in disease; fortunately, there are simple steps you can take to help protect yourself against inflammation, including a balanced diet, physical activity and other healthy lifestyle habits.^{1,3-5,6}

ANTI-INFLAMMATORY FOODS

Studies demonstrate that a Mediterranean-style diet—fruits and vegetables, whole grains, healthy fats, fish, minimal red meat—can help lower inflammation markers, especially when combined with exercise and other healthy habits.^{2,4-5,6}

Other foods with anti-inflammatory properties include:

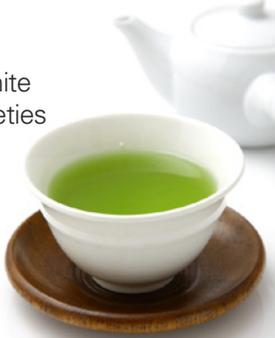
Omega-3 fatty acids—well-known for their anti-inflammatory benefits, omega-3 fatty acids are plentiful in coldwater fish such as salmon, herring, mackerel and sardines, fish oil supplements, flaxseed and walnuts.

Vitamin C—a powerful, anti-inflammatory antioxidant found in a wide variety of fruits and vegetables, Vitamin C is especially abundant in strawberries, oranges, grapefruit, kiwi, green peppers, tomatoes, broccoli, Brussels sprouts, kale and papaya.

Assorted fruits and vegetables—fruits and vegetables are rich in antioxidants, which are anti-inflammatory in nature. Aim for as many as 8-10 servings per day.

Spices—spices such as curry, turmeric and ginger have anti-inflammatory properties.

Tea—green, white and oolong varieties of tea contain inflammation-fighting antioxidants.



PRO-INFLAMMATORY FOODS

Certain foods actually contribute to inflammation. Try to avoid—or remove from your diet altogether—these foods:

- Processed foods
- Refined carbohydrates—includes white pasta, rice and bread
- Pro-inflammatory fats—saturated fats found in red meat and whole-fat dairy products, and trans fats found in crackers, cookies and baked goods.

HEALTHY LIFESTYLE CHOICES

Certain lifestyle choices can contribute to inflammation. If applicable, remove these behaviours that can add to the inflammation burden²:

- If you smoke, quit.
- Practice stress management techniques to help manage your stress load.
- If you are carrying around extra pounds, start a sensible diet and exercise plan. Fat tissue can increase inflammation.

References:

- 1 Church TS et al. *Atheroscler Thromb Vasc Biol*, 2002; 22: 1869.
- 2 Deron S.J. *C-reactive protein: Everything you need to know about CRP and why it's more important than cholesterol to your health*. New York: McGraw-Hill; 2004.
- 3 Després J. *Arterioscler Thromb Vasc Biol*, 2004; 24: 1743.
- 4 Esposito K et al. *JAMA*, 2004; 292: 1440.
- 5 Geffken D et al. *Am. J. Epidemiol*, 2001; 153: 242-250.
- 6 Okita K et al. *Atheroscler Thromb Vasc Biol*, 2004; 24:1868.

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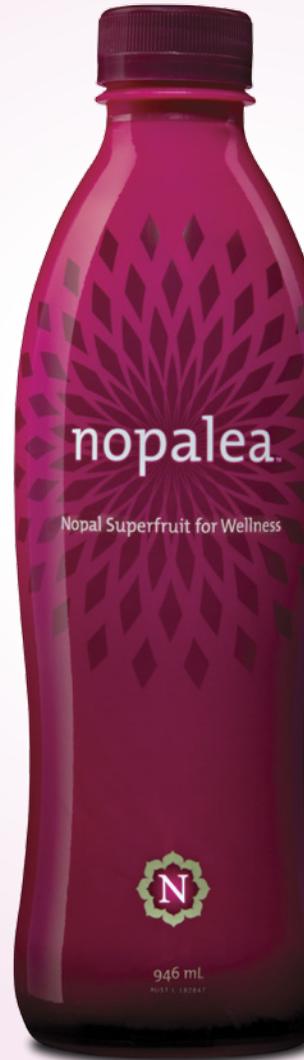
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Reference: 1 Allegra, M., et al. *The Journal of Nutrition*, 2014; 1-8





Anti-ageing heart smarts

By Lester Adler, M.D., M.D.H.



Dr. Adler is a graduate of the University of Pennsylvania School of Medicine. He is board certified in internal medicine. He is also a licensed Homeopathic Physician with an Integrative Medicine practice in Sedona, AZ.

Recently, my mother-in-law, Estelle, 89, watched her granddaughter earn her medical degree from medical school. She knew she had to be there, new pacemaker and all, and she was. What had she done right?

Estelle had been cautious. Both her parents had died too young of heart disease. Concerned, she kept up with doctors' visits and she sought guidance from a nutritionist. She faithfully took her prescribed vitamins for over 40 years, making sure she had the latest science has to offer.

HOW CAN WE BE HEART SMART LIKE ESTELLE?

Lifestyle

- **Exercise trumps any medication** for keeping our heart muscle toned and arteries flexible.
- **Do not smoke.**
- **Manage stress.** Emotional stress triggers the “fight or flight hormone,” cortisol, which constricts our blood vessels, raising blood pressure and heart rate.
- **Maintain healthy weight.** Every pound of fat requires a mile of capillaries which makes the heart’s job bigger.
- **Restrict refined carbs** because they create inflammation, affecting every organ in the body.
- **Drink green tea and eat a rainbow of foods** to allow flavonoids to work their magic. Studies have demonstrated the contribution of this class of natural molecules to cardiac health.

Supplementation—important for heart health

1. **Temper inflammation, reduce clotting, lower blood pressure and minimise irregular heartbeats by raising omega-3 fatty acid levels.** Coldwater fish are our best source. Many people are now taking high quality omega-3 pills for convenience and to avoid toxins from poorly sourced fish.
2. **Strengthen your heart muscles with CoQ-10,** a cofactor in each cell’s power-producing mitochondria. By taking it orally, we amp up our muscles’ ability to perform... namely our heart muscle.
3. **If elevated, use folate, B-6 and B-12 to reduce homocysteine (HCY).** Researchers have long noted that the higher the blood level of homocysteine, the higher the cardiovascular risk.
4. **Lower cholesterol with fibre, sterols and stanols.** Fibre reduces cholesterol by binding with bile. The body draws on its store of cholesterol to replace it. Sterols and stanols imitate cholesterol’s molecular structure, tying up the same absorption point in the intestines.

This article is intended for educational purposes only.

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<http://circoutcomes.ahajournals.org/content/2/3/279.full>
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Lose a little, gain a lot

These days, most people are familiar with the health risks of obesity and overweight: the higher your weight, the greater your risk of certain health conditions such as heart disease, high blood pressure, Type 2 diabetes and more.

The good news is this: losing a little weight to start—just 5–10% of your current weight over six months—can lower your risk of many weight-related health concerns, including heart disease and stroke. Other benefits may include:

- Better sleep
- More energy
- Reduced pain
- Increased ability to pursue hobbies
- Reduced stress on your knees, hips and lower back

Although this amount of weight loss may be less than your goal, it's better to maintain moderate weight loss over a long period of time than to lose a lot quickly and then gain it back.

Different approach, different results

Focusing on weight loss may be the worst thing you can do when trying to lose weight. Instead, concentrate on

making healthy lifestyle changes that can lead to successful weight loss, including:

Setting realistic goals: Aim for a healthy rate of weight loss—about ½ to 1 kilogram per week—which can better help you keep the weight off, and give you time to make the healthy lifestyle changes critical to lasting weight management.

Eating healthier foods: Emphasise fruits, vegetables, whole grains and low-fat or fat-free dairy. Also include lean meats, poultry, fish, beans, eggs and nuts.

Becoming more physically active:

To help manage weight, aim for 60 minutes of moderate-to-vigorous physical activity most days of the week.

References:

- <http://www.nhlbi.nih.gov/health-pro/resources/heart/aim-facts-html>
- http://www.nhlbi.nih.gov/files/docs/guidelines/prctgd_c.pdf
- http://www.nhlbi.nih.gov/health/educational/lose_wt/onepound.htm

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Gain energy *with exercise*



By Jolene Goring

Do you ever feel like you are too tired to exercise? Sometimes it can be hard to get off the couch and get active, but physical activity can actually help to energise you! Here is a quick two minute energising routine that you can do anytime you feel tired:

- Stand up and sit down five times. This gets the blood flowing in your lower body, and also gets your heart working to stabilize your blood pressure.
- While standing, raise your arms over your head as you breathe in to a count of four, and then slowly lower your arms as you breathe out to a count of four. Repeat five times.
- Grasp your hands behind your back, and pull downwards. This will help to release any tension in your neck and shoulders. Hold for a count of five.

You can do this routine as often as you like... it acts as a reset for your body to switch from tired to energised in only two minutes.

Reference:

<http://www.webmd.com/fitness-exercise/exercise-for-energy-workouts-that-work?page=1#>



Jolene Goring, Fitness Director at the TriVita Wellness Center, is a best-selling author and expert in health and fitness. An 18-year veteran of the health/fitness industry, she is a Board Certified Holistic Nutritionist.

Losing sleep? *This may be why*



We live in an increasingly sleep-deprived culture: one in three Australian adults reports difficulty sleeping.¹ Although busy schedules may certainly be a contributing factor, there may also be some less-than-obvious reasons for this lack of shut-eye.

Digital devices

If you spend your final waking hours on a digital device such as an e-reader, tablet or smart phone, you may be sabotaging your sleep. The light emitted by the screens, called short-wavelength enriched light, or blue light, can adversely affect the body's natural sleep/wake patterns, make it harder to fall asleep, reduce morning alertness and reduce melatonin secretion (the hormone that regulates sleepiness).²

Sleep-stealing snacks

When the urge to munch strikes, choosing the right foods to snack on can mean the difference between sweet slumber and a night of restlessness.

Fatty or sugary foods, caffeine and alcohol before bedtime can all wreak havoc on your beauty sleep. If you must indulge, pair a complex carbohydrate (whole-grain bread, crackers, cereals) with a lean protein (low-fat cheese, lean meats such as chicken and fish).³

Stress

This health menace impacts so many areas of wellness, it may be of no surprise that it can also disrupt your sleep. Stress can not only interfere with sleep, but it can also set off a vicious cycle: stress can lead to reduced and fitful sleep; lack of sleep, in turn, can increase stress levels.^{4,5}

References:

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- 3 <http://sleepfoundation.org/sleep-topics/food-and-sleep>
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Australians, stress and wellbeing

How stressed are Australians? Results from the Australian Psychological Society's 2015 Stress and Wellbeing in Australia survey found that 35% of adults report a high level of distress; 26% report above normal levels of anxiety; and 26% report having moderate to severe levels of depression symptoms.

As for wellbeing, survey data showed improvements in 2014 and 2015, but wellbeing levels are still lower than they were in 2011, the year the annual survey was launched.

Stress: causes and management

For the fifth year in a row, personal finances were reported as the number one cause of stress. Family issues, personal health, maintaining a healthy lifestyle, and concern about the health of friends and loved ones were other leading stressors.

Australians' most cited ways to cope with stress include: watching television/movies (85%); focusing on the positives

(81%); spending time with friends/family (81%); listening to music (80%); and reading (75%).

Social media's psychological impact

Interestingly, social media appears to be both a cause of stress and a remedy for it. About 12% of Australians report that keeping up with their social media networks causes stress, while 37% use social media as a way to manage stress.

As for overall wellbeing, social media appears to have a deeper impact on teens than on adults: one in two teens experience Fear of Missing Out (FoMo) versus one in four adults. FoMo is the fear that others may be having a good time without you, and the need to always be connected with what others are doing.



Reference:

<http://www.psychology.org.au/Assets/Files/PW15-SR.pdf>

Social media graphic courtesy of FreePik.com

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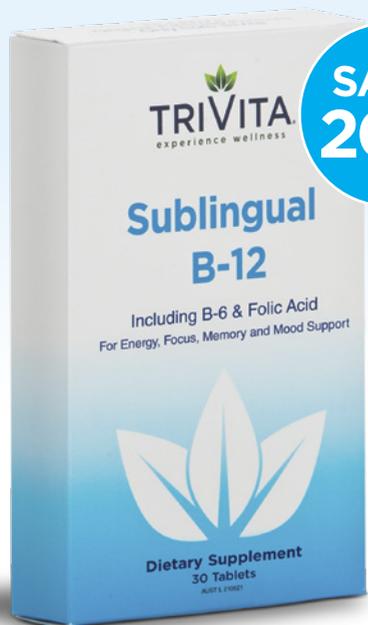
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