

Cooperative Extension

Promoting Healthy Families, Schools and Communities: Making a Difference

Mindful Meditation for Stress Reduction

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The term mindfulness is used in many ways today to describe an awareness for stress reduction and better well-being. Dr. Jon Kabat-Zinn defines mindfulness as “paying attention in a particular way: on purpose, in the present moment and non-judgmentally”. According to Patel, Jewell and Rhodes who wrote the *Mindfulness Activity Guide for Adults*, mindfulness has many definitions and can have a different interpretation and effect on everyone. The practice of mindful meditation can improve both emotional and physical health as well as support overall well-being. In this fast-paced world taking time out each day to quiet the mind can provide relief of physical pain, mental and emotional discomforts. In addition, it can provide a sense of clarity in day-to-day activities through awareness in the present moment.

Physical benefits of mindful meditation include boosting the immune system along with better management of chronic pain and chronic disease. Starting a mindful meditation practice can reduce stress and alleviate some of the chronic challenges we face as Americans, such as stress eating, emotional eating, substance use disorder and other addictions. Mindful practices foster an overall healthier lifestyle as awareness of your body and mind take the forefront, which can also improve sleep. Mindful meditation does this by allowing the mind quiet time to better associate the differences in processing stressful situations. Mental and emotional well-being supported by mindful meditation include stress, anxiety and depression symptom reduction and improved focus. It helps us to adapt to varying circumstances because it expands cognitive flexibility, reduces the likelihood of emotional reactivity, nurtures the ability for self-compassion and self-acceptance while improving the sense of work - life balance.

However, finding the time and ways to quiet your mind is not easy. The practice of mindful meditation allows for our brain to do what is natural, which is - thinking. Our minds are constantly thinking, so take a minute to sit quietly and you’ll realize just how many thoughts come to the forefront of your mind. The human brain is designed to think which occurs naturally and inherently. Rather than struggling to clear thoughts from the brain, mindfully meditating recognizes the thought and then lets it go. If that thought comes back while trying to meditate, acknowledge it again and try not to expand on it but rather let it go once more. Doing this will teach the mind to let troubling thoughts move away. While practicing mindful meditation you should focus on

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Healthy Food Predictions for 2022

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**Trends
2022
& Beyond**



As 2022 starts, we think about our health habits in 2021 and then look to a healthier 2022. Nutrition research still supports the Dietary Guidelines for Americans that are reviewed and updated every 5 years. The 2020-2025 edition is our newest update. It focuses on whole-food, plant-based,

minimally-processed foods that are low in added sugar, salt, and processed fat especially saturated and trans-fat.

Here are the trends that I have observed over the past year as well as my thoughts on how they will influence consumers as well as our health.

The science stays the same. The DASH Diet and Mediterranean Diet along with the MyPlate icon still provide the most relevant scientific information for nutrition and health as they support the Dietary Guidelines.

Consumers' eating habits have not aligned with the Dietary Guidelines and healthy eating. One study showed that only 3% eat healthily. The rest of the American population consumes too much fat, salt and sugar to meet the Guidelines. Sales of plant-based foods keep trending upwards in double digits and are over \$7 billion a year in the US, according to The Plant-Based Association, who say they are expected to triple globally by 2030. Remember, plant or vegan foods can still be highly processed. methods of cooking and food preparation make a difference in whether a dish or prepared food is healthy.

Covid-19 has created change in food habits. The pandemic has caused consumers to worry, which has disrupted many lives, their health, our food, and food systems along with schools, restaurant and food service systems. However, there is hope on the horizon. New Covid treatment vaccines, and social distancing along with Personal Protective Equipment are enabling us to go from "stuck" at home to back to life.

Consumers are starting to follow mindful behaviors to control their weight, prevent and treat chronic disease, move more, eat healthier, and navigate the inflation of costs for healthy food they can afford to purchase. The shift to social media adds so much truthful and not so truthful information on cultural differences, new methods of cooking and information that is not particularly science based.

Consumers want flavor and convenience first, but they do care about health, even if their desires do not always match with science (gluten-free and keto/carb-free being two examples). American consumers are embracing online food delivery. There is an explosion of food delivery services for restaurant meals such as GrubHub, DoorDash, and Uber Eats, to mention a few. Also, Instacart and Amazon are offering robust grocery delivery services. Online shopping, farmer's markets, and local food markets bring many healthful options to consumers on a budget.

Hot topics include gut health and fiber. The research on the microbiome emphasizes a plant-based diet that is high in fiber to promote a healthy microbiome and the growth of healthy bacteria. This is one of the most heavily researched areas of health and nutrition and will continue to give us new information on digestion and other body systems.

There is an opportunity for better days in 2022 if we make healthy eating a priority. We need to take stock in our own health, take small steps to eat mindfully and make sure we get 150 minutes of exercise weekly. Good luck and follow science-based nutrition along with food research for a healthier future!



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Nuts For NUT-rition

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Nuts are a nutrient and calorie dense food and have many health benefits. There are different kinds of nuts, coming in all shapes and sizes, and a variety of ways to eat them. A little goes a long way though, so it is important to control portion sizes. The American Heart Association recommends eating about four to five servings of unsalted nuts a week. One serving is a small handful of nuts or 1 ounce of nuts. Most nuts are anywhere between 150 – 200 calories per ounce.

Some health benefits of nuts include having a good balance between protein and carbohydrates along with the ability to help regulate or reduce fasting blood glucose levels. Studies have shown that regular consumption of nuts can reduce the risk of cardiovascular disease as well. Nuts are packed with protein, healthy fats, and many important vitamins and minerals. One important mineral found in nuts is magnesium. Among the many roles of magnesium, it affects the release and activity of insulin- the hormone that helps control blood sugar. This micronutrient is one of the reasons that nuts can help with managing blood sugar.

Nuts are also high in healthy fats including monounsaturated (MUFA) and polyunsaturated (PUFA) fats and omega-3 fatty acids. Unsaturated fats can help improve blood cholesterol levels and decrease the risk of heart disease and type 2 diabetes. Omega-3's are essential fatty acids that play an important role in heart disease prevention.

Different kinds of nuts have different amounts of nutrients in them, so it is important to consume a variety of nuts to get the most health benefits. When comparing nuts, the amount in one serving size will vary because of the different sizes and weights. Here is an example comparing the different amounts of nutrients in 1 oz of pecans versus 1 oz of almonds:



Pecans

- 1 oz = 19 halves
 - 196 calories
 - 1.8 g Saturated Fat
 - 6/12 g PUFA/MUFA
 - 3.9 g carbohydrate
 - 2.6 g protein
 - 34 mg magnesium



Almonds

- 1 oz = 23 nuts
 - 163 calories
 - 1.1 g Saturated Fat
 - 3.4/9 g PUFA/MUFA
 - 6 g carbohydrate
 - 6 g protein
 - 77 mg magnesium

Ounce for ounce, almonds are the tree nuts highest in fiber, calcium, vitamin E, and the B-vitamins riboflavin and niacin. They are also one of the highest sources of magnesium, which can be hard to get.

Nuts are versatile and can be incorporated into your diet in a variety of ways. Whether it is blending them in a smoothie, using them as a topping in salads or yogurt, or just snacking on them raw, the possibilities are endless. Nuts are petite powerhouses of nutrition and have a lot of health benefits, especially in reducing the risk of heart disease.

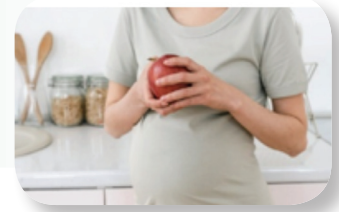
With so many kinds of nuts available and different ways to use them, try reaching for a handful the next time you are craving a snack or add them into your favorite recipe. Just remember to watch your portion size because one ounce a day is good, but more than that a day is not better.

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The Role of Nutrition in Fertility

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The experience of infertility can take a significant physical, economical, and emotional toll on couples. Infertility is defined as an inability to become pregnant after 1 year of trying to conceive. According to the CDC about 6% of married women 15 to 44 years of age in the United States are unable to get pregnant after one year of trying. In addition, about 12% of women in the United States

have difficulty getting pregnant or carrying a pregnancy to term. Common causes of infertility in women are related to a condition affecting either the ovaries, fallopian tubes, or uterus. Infertility is not always a women's problem, according to the CDC a male factor is identified along with a female factor in about 35% of couples with infertility. In about 8% of couples with infertility, a male factor is the only identifiable cause of infertility. Male factor infertility can be related to sperm production.

Many couples may know that factors like age, smoking, excessive alcohol use, weight gain or weight loss, and absence of menstruation can increase the risk of infertility, but what about diet. Can nutrition play a role in increasing a couple's chance at getting pregnant? Let's look at the research.

The Nurses' Health Study II analyzed whether intake of protein from animal and vegetables is associated with ovulatory infertility in 18,555 women. What they found is that women with high levels of carbohydrate consumption had a 78% greater risk of ovulatory infertility. The study also showed that consumption of animal protein was associated with a 20% higher risk of ovulatory infertility while consumption of vegetable protein was associated with a 43% lower risk. Moreover, a literature review published in the American Journal of Obstetrics and Gynecology found that adherence to a healthy diet that includes seafood, poultry, whole grains, fruits, and vegetables is related to better fertility in women and better semen quality in men. In addition, the researchers concluded that higher intake of healthy fats like omega-3 and omega-6 fatty acids and lower intake of trans-fat may be beneficial for enhancing female fertility.

A study published by a research team in Harvard found that women with ovulatory infertility who followed an eating pattern like the one above, had a 66% lower risk of ovulatory infertility and a 27% reduced risk of infertility from other causes, than those participants who did not follow this diet closely.

There still needs to be more research done regarding the infertility diet. According to the Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics, one area that researchers agree upon is that extremes in body weight are not beneficial for infertility. A body mass index (BMI) above or below the recommended range

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So, what does an infertility diet include? According to research, patients are encouraged to consume a whole food, plant-based diet. They are encouraged to consume 40% of total energy intake (calories) from carbohydrates, ~30% of total energy from fats, and ~30% of total energy from protein. In addition, patients are encouraged to consume:

- ◆ **Multi/Prenatal vitamins** (folate, calcium, iron, choline, vitamin D, and vitamin B12)
- ◆ **More vegetable protein**, less animal protein (beans, green peas, lentils etc.)
- ◆ **Nutrient rich essential fatty acids** (Omega-3 and Omega-6)
- ◆ **More high-fiber, low-glycemic, carbohydrate-rich foods** (including whole grains)
- ◆ **1-3 servings of full fat or whole fat dairy foods**
- ◆ **25 grams of soluble and insoluble fiber per day** (foods high in fiber include whole wheat bread with 2 grams of fiber per slice, lentils with 15 grams of fiber per 1 cup)
- ◆ **5-9 servings of vegetables and 2-3 servings of fruit per day**
- ◆ **4 - 16oz bottles of water per day**

New Year, New Goals

Barbara O'Neill, Ph.D., CFP®, Distinguished Professor and Extension Financial Management Specialist Emeritus, Rutgers Cooperative Extension Beginning Investors: Develop A Plan



At the start of a new year, many people resolve to make changes in their lives: lose weight, get organized, save money, spend more time with family, quit smoking, get more exercise, and do better in general. While we often call these plans “resolutions,” they are essentially goals.

Setting goals is a lot like planning your next vacation. In order to develop both an action plan and a travel itinerary, you must know your starting point and destination and the time frame and cost of the “journey.”

Below are ten tips to achieve your goals in 2022:

- ✓ **Start With Your Dreams** - Remember that a dream is vague like “I want to send my child to a good college,” or “I want to be comfortable in retirement.” A goal is specific and has dates for beginning and ending (e.g., “I will start saving this month to save \$20,000 for the down payment on a townhouse”).
- ✓ **Be Specific** - Write down what you want to accomplish and when. Goals should be “SMART”: Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Realistic, and Time-related. In other words, they should have a definite outcome and deadline and be within reach, based on personal income and assets.
- ✓ **Develop an Action Plan** - Work backwards to break a goal into small pieces. The more specific a financial goal, the easier it is to determine how much savings is required. For example, a \$20,000 “new used” car in 5 years will require \$4,000 in annual savings or about \$77 per weekly paycheck.
- ✓ **Consider Opportunity Costs** - Measure the cost of something, not only by its price tag, but by what you give up by losing the opportunity to do something else with your money. For example, if you have the money for either a car down payment or a vacation and you choose the car, you could forego the vacation.
- ✓ **Pay Attention to “Small Stuff”** - Don’t forget that small steps add up and can lead to big rewards. If you want to save money, you won’t do it if you don’t pay attention to where nickels, dimes, and dollars go every day. Ditto for paying attention to calories in food if you are trying to lose weight. Decisions that you make daily will determine the outcome of your goals.
- ✓ **Address Your Obstacles** - Think of all the things that might prevent you from reaching your goal. Write them down on a sheet of paper. Beside each obstacle you list, write down several ways you could overcome the obstacle. For example, automating savings to “pay yourself first.”
- ✓ **Share Your Goals** - Tell other people about your goals so there are people to support you and hold you accountable. You will be less likely to get “off track” if people that you know and love are encouraging you and watching your progress.
- ✓ **Identify Resources** - Identify people and/or places to help you achieve your goal. Are there books you could read or a group of people who are working toward the same goal? Are there family, friends, or mentors at work who could assist you in some way? Reach out for help, if needed.
- ✓ **Reward Yourself** - Give yourself small rewards along the way for encouragement and motivation. As you reach milestones toward accomplishing your goal (e.g., saving \$1,000), do something fun that you enjoy (e.g., attending a play or eating at a nice restaurant).
- ✓ **Evaluate and Adjust** - If you aren’t making progress, re-group. Don’t give up. Adjust your plan. See what is working and what is not. Look at how you spend your time, energy and money. Are you moving toward your goals? If not, make some necessary adjustments.



In summary, think SMART goals when you are thinking about making changes in your life. Research indicates that people who take the time to set goals and plan ahead are more successful financially.

Remember, people don’t plan to fail, they fail to plan - and set goals with specific action plans.

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may make it more difficult to get pregnant. Along with a healthy eating pattern, it is equally important to include moderate-intensity physical activity for at least 30 minutes a day on most days of the week. Until we know more, couples trying to conceive should consume a healthy diet which is already recommended for everyone. They need to maintain a healthy weight and remember to take their prenatal vitamins as recommended. If you are looking to increase your chance of getting pregnant, looking to achieve a healthy weight, or want to learn more about a healthy eating pattern, consider seeing a registered dietitian nutritionist in your area.

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something simple, like breathing or the feeling of your skin. Gently allow thoughts to be cleared out by anchoring thoughts on your breath and the rhythm of your breathing.

Mindful meditation can be done just about anywhere, sitting, standing, walking, or lying down. Find a posture or spot to hone the skill of mindfulness each day that is comfortable and will allow for quiet. Learning the skill of peacefulness is like training for a marathon, it takes practice! Consider setting some time aside each day to start and make it a priority, time is hard to find but creating less stress in life is worth the investment. Making time free from electronics and the hectic lives of today will allow for clearer and more stress-free living. For free guided mindful meditations check out: <https://cih.ucsd.edu/mindfulness/guided-audio-video>.



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