

## Anxiety – Health – And – Fitness



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## Effective Steps for Managing Anxiety:

Have you ever been in a situation that brought on sweats, rapid heartbeat and shortness of breath? You probably weren't having a heart attack but an anxiety attack. If you suffer from anxiety disorders, learning to manage it is the first step to overcoming it.

Anxiety is characterized as extreme reactions to fearful situations. When someone follows you into a dark alley, those anxious feelings of a racing heartbeat and sweaty palms gives way to heightened senses and a rush of adrenalin that can save your life. This is the fight or flight syndrome.

In the case of frequent anxiety, the fearful feelings are dread of a particular situation and not the situation itself. Getting caught in traffic can cause an anxiety attack over what might happen when you get to work late. Starting a new job can bring on anxiety attacks. You don't know anyone and fear of that unknown can send you into a panic.

Everyone experiences panic or anxiety in small ways. Like the fight or flight example, it can save your life. In new situations, we get panicky but when the outcome we fear fails to materialize, the anxiety stops. For someone with chronic anxiety, this is not the case.

Every situation that brings anxiety is not life-threatening. More than likely it is an extremely stressful situation that has brought on the anxiety as a way of dealing with it. Unchecked anxiety of this type can lead to depression.

If you suffer from anxiety attacks on occasion or a more frequent anxiety disorder, there are steps you can take to keep your anxiety under control.

**1. See a professional.** This is always a good first step. Self-diagnosis of any type of physical or mental condition is unwise and can be dangerous. A professional psychologist can help you understand your anxiety and prescribe medication or other effective techniques.

**2. Get a good night's sleep.** During the sleep cycle, your body repairs itself. You feel more rested after several hours of restorative sleep, reaching the REM stage. Most people need eight hours a night which varies within an hour or two each way.

**3. Exercise on a consistent basis.** Exercise helps you to use oxygen more efficiently. It helps to get more oxygen to the brain. It also increases focus which may help you see solutions to problems rather than simply worrying about them.

**4. Meditate.** Meditation is more than chanting mantras. Yoga is an exercise that involves quieting the mind and controlling your breathing. Simple meditation such as taking 5 minutes to clear your mind everyday can work wonders in the fight against anxiety.

**5. Manage the worry.** When you feel your pulse start to quicken, count backwards from ten. As you count, focus on the situation. What has actually happened? Resist the urge to read anything more into the situation.

**6. Don't use alcohol.** You might think that the glass of wine is relaxing your tension but alcohol is a depressant. In anxious situations you could rely too heavily on it and gain another problem in the process.

**7. Find some relaxing activities.** Stress can rob you of your energy. On a regular basis, do something you like such as gardening, painting, reading or listening to music.

Anxiety can come into your life at any time. It's normal. When the anxiety becomes frequent you could be at risk for more serious conditions. If you feel your anxiety is starting to take over your life or increasingly causing you problems, seek professional help immediately. There is no need to suffer this terrible condition in silence.

## **Five Easy Toning Exercises you can Do Anywhere:**

Exercise is an important part of our lives. Staying in shape is one way to increase your life expectancy. Weight bearing exercises are important also for increasing muscle mass and bone density as you age.

Most of us have learned what to do when it comes to exercising. The problem is where and when to get the job done. With a busy lifestyle, making time for exercise is a challenge.

Weight bearing exercises aren't just for bodybuilders. As you age, especially once you hit the age of forty, you begin to lose muscle mass. For women especially, bone loss becomes a problem. When the body is in need of calcium it can rob it from your bones. Building muscle not only increases their mass but your strength.

Here are five easy toning exercises that can be done anywhere and whenever you have time. At home, at the office, or on vacation, you can do these easy yet extremely effective exercises.

**1. The Bridge Butt Lift** – Sounds like a plastic surgery technique but it is an easy way to tone your buttocks. Lay down with feet flat on the floor, legs shoulder width apart. Place your hands, palm side down, on either side of your body. Pushing with your feet, squeeze your gluteal muscles and lift your butt off the floor. Hold the position for a count of five to ten and release down to the floor.

**2. Squats** – Squats work the butt, the hamstring muscles and the quadriceps. If you aren't sure of proper form, you can use a chair. Stand with feet shoulder width apart and feet firmly planted. Push your butt back as if you were preparing to sit in a chair. Keep your abs tight and your upper body straight. Once you reach chair level stop and hold the position for a count of two to five and release. At the lowest point, place all of your weight on your heels for balance and maximum toning.

**3. Reverse Lunges** – Lunges work the quadriceps muscles. They can be hard for people with knee problems. A reverse lunge still tones the right muscle groups but with less pressure on the knee. Stand with feet together and arms at your sides. Take one leg and move it backwards until you are in lunge position: front leg bent at a 90 degree angle and back leg extended until you are on the ball of your foot. From this position lower yourself down until the back knee almost touches the floor. Hold for a count of two and return to starting position.

**4. Push-ups** – This is a classic toning exercise that works all areas of the arms plus the chest muscles. If you aren't comfortable or strong enough to perform a push-up on your toes, lower your body to your knees. Be sure your arms are tucked into the body and your back straight as you lower and lift your body.

**5. Crunches** – Abdominal muscles can be worked every day to build strength and muscle tone. Lying on the floor in sit up position, lace your fingers behind your head. Squeezing your abdominal muscles, lift your upper body until your lower back is about to come off the floor. Hold for two to five counts and return to starting position.

These five exercise moves can be done whenever you have time. The best thing about exercise is that its effects are cumulative. Even five or ten minutes at a time will work to your advantage.

## How to Overcome Emotional Eating:

Eating is a part of life. Your body gets its nutrients from food. Sometimes we can go overboard with our eating habits and it can result in gaining weight. One issue with food is emotional eating.

The problem of emotional eating may end with the scale but it begins in the mind. Stress takes its toll on your life. When your defences are compromised your health takes a hit and so do your emotions.

Everyone has good days and bad days. How we deal with the bad ones brings emotional eating into play. You look for comfort for your hurts. People who turn to food for comfort find a coping mechanism that won't judge them, hurt them or tell them "no." To complicate the issue, eating pleasurable foods can stimulate the release of endorphins just like exercise. So, after you eat, you feel better.

Emotional eaters use food to relieve stress. They hide behind the food instead of seeking solutions to the problems. This is not uncommon when the stressor is something horrible such as physical abuse or a death.

But, how do you know you are using food in this way? The first sign is obvious. You will gain weight if you eat too much. In light of the weight gain, examine other areas of your life:

- \* Have you been under stress lately at work or at home?
- \* Has anything traumatic happened in the last year?
- \* Are you dealing with a problem but haven't found a solution?

Answering "yes" to any of these questions could mean that you are an emotional eater. You eat but you are not necessarily hungry at the time. The foods that you choose are what we term "comfort foods":

- \* High fat foods like French fries, fried foods
- \* High carb foods like macaroni and cheese, mashed potatoes
- \* Sugary foods like ice cream, doughnuts, cookies, cake

There is help for emotional eaters. The first step is recognizing that you have a problem. You'll experience feelings of helplessness and guilt. The guilt is over potentially ruining your health and the helplessness lies in the fact that you don't see a way out.

Secondly, seek counselling. There are many types of counsellors out there that can meet your need. Emotional eating has nothing to do with dieting or changing your eating habits but gaining control over your emotions.

A counsellor might suggest things like visualization, practising problem solving skills, relaxation techniques and family support. Visualization helps you to see your problems in a realistic way and not blown out of proportion. You will also learn to see food as nutrition for the body and not an emotional crutch.

Thirdly, your family can learn your triggers for stress and be on the lookout for changes in your eating habits. They can help you be aware of the foods you are eating, assist you in making healthy food choices and exercise along with you. Proper diet and exercise increases immunity, blood flow and positive thinking. Yoga enhances the mind/body connection so you don't eat when you aren't hungry.

Finding new ways to solve your problems and deal with stress will push food out of the equation. You'll feel good about finding solutions which will replace the dependence on food.

## **The Power of Antioxidants for Staying Young:**

Everyone wants to grow old gracefully. Some go under the knife to get that youthful look while others opt for a more natural way to maintain that healthful glow. The way to make peace with age can be found in the types of foods that we eat and the miracle ingredient they contain.

This hidden "miracle" is called antioxidants. They have graced the pages of magazines, medical journals and every product from hand cream to supplement pills. But what are antioxidants and what can they do to keep you looking your best?

Antioxidants are substances that fight the ageing process that goes on in your body. They are not produced by the body so to get the benefit of these power-packed substances you must ingest them. A variety of foods contain antioxidants.

Let's go back to the beginning. The body continually replenishes its cells. Through a process called cellular metabolism, the body produces energy, more cells and repairs any damage. One by-product of cellular metabolism is unstable molecules called free radicals.

***Free radicals are molecules that damage your body.***

They are unstable because they are missing an electron. To get another one and become stable, free radicals will steal electrons from cells. That theft damages the cells in a variety of ways.

The results are visible and invisible changes to our bodies. The development of diseases like cancer, diabetes, arthritis and neurological deficiencies may begin to affect you as you age. Also, thinner skin wrinkles and brittle bones are a problem. Free radicals enter our body from outside sources as well: cigarette smoke, radiation and the sun's UV rays. The more free radicals we encounter, the greater the damage that can be done.

Antioxidants have been shown to be of great help in the free radical problem. Antioxidant substances combine with free radicals and neutralize them. Once they are neutralized, they can no longer do any damage. Scientists don't have any idea of a recommended daily dose of antioxidants to correct free radical damage and the diseases that come with age, but they do know that eating foods rich in antioxidants makes a huge difference in how we live.

Where do you find antioxidants? They are all around us. Look no further than your local farmer's market or produce aisle in the grocery store. Fruits and vegetables contain the principle sources of antioxidants.

Examples of antioxidants include:

- \* Vitamin C
- \* Vitamin A
- \* Vitamin E
- \* Lutein
- \* Lycopene
- \* Beta-carotene

Certain minerals like zinc and selenium also function in the body. They are not antioxidants but they boost the immune system to fight against free radical damage.

Antioxidants are also found in nuts, legumes, cold water fish, seafood and red meat. So, eating a varied diet of fruits, vegetables and the foods just named will increase the amount of antioxidants in your system and help reduce the incidence of disease. Eating fruits and vegetables in their natural form instead of juices brings the benefit of other nutrients found in the foods. Juices also contain a lot of sugar that is not needed by your body.

Food does more than stave off hunger. Natural substances found there can cause us to live longer and stay free of disease as we age.



## Top Ten Power Packed Foods:

What is the secret to a long and healthy life? It is in the food that we eat. As you well know, all foods are not created equal. Choosing and eating the right foods may help increase your life expectancy as well as the quality of your life.

Here are ten of the top power packed foods designed to give you energy, vitality and all around good health!

**1. Beans** – If they give you gas, take precautions before you eat them. Soaking them first can help. Beans of all kinds (kidney, navy, lentils, chickpeas, Northern) are high in protein. This is plant protein so it contains very little fat, carbs and calories. If fibre is a problem in your diet, eating a healthy portion of beans each day can keep your digestive system healthy.

**2. Oatmeal** – Oatmeal is coming into popularity as a food that lowers blood cholesterol. You can make it yourself with rolled oats or eat the instant kind if you are in a hurry. Oatmeal is a filling grain that also provides much needed fiber to keep hunger at bay and your blood sugar constant.

**3. Fruits** – Fruits are filled with antioxidants such as Vitamin C and A. Antioxidants fight free radical damage in the body and reduce the risk of cancer. Berries such as blueberries and grapes have the highest amount of antioxidants. But choose an array of fruits in a wide variety of colours for maximum health. The antioxidants in fruit boost the immune system to fight the effects of ageing in the body.

**4. Allium foods** – This class of foods includes garlic, onions, leeks and shallots. Garlic is known for lowering cholesterol. Allium vegetables help guard the body against the risk of cancer and many other ailments. They also help lower blood pressure and prevent blood clots. Eating these power packed vegetables in their natural state especially garlic increases their health benefits.

**5. Salmon** – Eating foods rich in omega-3 fatty acids reduces the risk of heart disease and other conditions like atherosclerosis. Wild salmon is a fatty fish but it contains good fats that has been proven to improve health in children and adults. Salmon is rich in protein which is of great use after an exercise session to build muscle tissue.

**6. Flax seed** – Like salmon it contains omega-3 fatty acids. These seeds also contain omega-6 and omega-9 fatty acids. You get a lot of power to fight high cholesterol, heart disease and diabetes with this seed. Ground flax seed can be added to fruit smoothies, sprinkled in yogurt, eaten with cereal or added to pancake mix to name a few.

**7. Peppers – Peppers are colourful.** They contain antioxidants like beta-carotene and Vitamin C. Peppers range from mild and sweet to so hot you'll be calling the fire department. All peppers contain a substance called capsaicin. Capsaicin has the properties of an anti-inflammatory, a pain reliever, lowers cancer risk and heart disease. They are good in salads, salsa and all sorts of dishes.

**8. Nuts and seeds** – Nuts are high in fat but those fats are the good kind. Peanuts, almonds, Brazil nuts, walnuts and pistachios are all providers of good fats and protein. Crush them into a fine powder and use as a coating instead of higher carb bread crumbs. Nuts help to lower cholesterol. Eat them right out of the shell with no additives.

**9. Açai** – This berry has been in the news lately. It is rich in antioxidants and increases energy. You can get more done and look better while doing it. You can get Açai juice and supplements in your health food store.

**10. Yogurt** – The fat free variety is good for you. Yogurt contains calcium, Vitamin B, and protein. If you don't drink milk, yogurt is an alternative to get your calcium in to build strong bones and teeth. Live yogurt also contains friendly bacteria to help promote a healthy digestive system.

Building a better healthier body begins with what you eat. Try these super foods to get started on the right foot.

**OK - That's it Folks.**

But for a whole lot More! ....

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