

## HEADLINES:

How to fit wellness into your day

## TEASER:

Health and wellness doesn't have to be complicated. Here we offer some simple tips to help you squeeze in self-care practices throughout your day.

Living in a fast-paced world, it's easy to get sucked into the vortex of busyness. You tend to cope by embracing habits that appear to make life a bit more convenient, at least for the short term. But over a period of time, these habits could have a detrimental effect on your physical and mental wellbeing.

## Why bother

Unhealthy lifestyle increases your risk of developing [chronic illnesses](#) such as heart disease, diabetes, chronic respiratory diseases, and some types of cancer.

In Oman, these four lifestyle diseases have been identified as the cause of [72% of all deaths](#), costing the healthcare system [OMR 1.1 billion](#). It's worth pointing out that these conditions don't happen overnight, but months, even years of inactivity can take its toll on your health. [Johns Hopkins Medicine](#) aptly described these illnesses as 'sitting disease'.

If being overwhelmed by your daily tasks is getting in the way of you staying healthy, allow us to introduce you to some steps you can take to create an everyday routine for a healthier life.

- **Practice 'clean eating'** – No, this doesn't mean washing food before consuming it. Clean eating is all about eating more whole foods like fruits, vegetables, wholegrains, healthy fats, and lean protein, and less highly processed foods and snacks with high salt or sugar content. So when you're out grabbing your morning coffee on your way to work, opt for a piece of fruit or crudités with hummus instead of a Danish pastry or cereal bar, which can contain surprisingly large amounts of sugar. Also, stock up on healthy grab-and-go snacks like dried fruits, nuts, and quinoa chips.
- **Have a healthy breakfast** – Breakfast is important to refuelling your brain and body after an all-night fast (sleep). But it's often an overlooked meal. If done right, breakfast can actually help you keep hunger at bay, maintain blood sugar levels, and reduce the urge to snack. Start your day with a meal comprising whole foods from each of the five food groups. For example, a slice of wholewheat toast with guacamole and fried egg, or oatmeal porridge with berries, honey, and chia seeds. You can find more healthy breakfast ideas [here](#).
- **Drink more water** – Hydration is also important, even if you're mostly indoors. Keep a water bottle on your desk and refill it throughout the day. If you're one of those people who still forgets to drink even if a glass of water is sitting in front of you, set a reminder on your phone.

- **Follow the ‘just one more’ rule** – British medical doctor and food expert [Dr. Rupy Aujla](#) has written about this simple trick to increasing one’s whole foods intake. When preparing a meal, think about how you can add one (or two) more portions of fruits, vegetables, nuts, and seeds. For example, when making a simple green salad, throw in some pumpkin seeds or add a dash of tahini to the dressing.
- **Shop right** – At the end of the day, you are what you eat. But if all your pantry and fridge have to offer is processed foods, it’s hard to resist especially if you’re tired and hungry. Set the tone right for the rest of your week by planning your shopping well, whether you’re going to the groceries yourself or ordering online.
- **Exercise first thing in the morning** – There’s a debate about the best time of day to work out. Some say morning, others say night. For busy people, it’s probably best to exercise first thing in the morning and cross that task off your list. That way, even if the day saps your energy, you’ve at least done your workout.
- **Move your body** – You can sneak exercise into your day by flexing your muscles. For example, while sitting at your desk, take a five-minute break to do [stretching exercises like these](#). You could also stand up every 30 minutes to stretch your legs.
- **Walk as much as you can** – If the weather permits, try parking farther away in the parking lot, or getting off one stop earlier if you’re taking the bus or metro to work. Walking the extra distance will do your body a lot of good.
- **Practice diaphragmatic breathing** – We are born with the knowledge of how to [fully engage the diaphragm](#) to take deep, refreshing breaths. You can see this among babies, when their belly moves as they breath in and out. But as we get older, we lose the habit and end up taking shallower, upper chest breathing. Diaphragmatic breathing is a mindfulness technique that can reduce anxiety, lower blood pressure, and decrease heart rate, as it balances the level of oxygen and carbon dioxide in the blood.

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