

How Being Happy Makes You Healthier



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“Happiness is the meaning and the purpose of life, the whole aim and end of human existence.”

The ancient Greek philosopher Aristotle said these words more than 2,000 years ago, and they still ring true today.

Happiness is a broad term that describes the experience of positive emotions, such as joy, contentment and satisfaction.

Emerging research shows that being happier doesn't just make you feel better — it actually brings a host of potential health benefits.

This article explores the ways in which being happy may make you healthier.

Promotes a Healthy Lifestyle

Being happy promotes a range of lifestyle habits that are important for overall health. Happy people tend to eat healthier diets, with higher intakes of fruits, vegetables and whole grain.

A study of more than 7,000 adults found that those with a positive well-being were 47% more likely to consume fresh fruits and vegetables than their less positive counterparts.

Diets rich in fruits and vegetables have consistently been associated with a range of health benefits, including lower risks of diabetes, stroke and heart disease.

In the same study of 7,000 adults, researchers found that individuals with a positive well-being were 33% more likely to be physically active, with 10 or more hours of physical activity per week.

Regular physical activity helps build strong bones, increase energy levels, decrease body fat and lower blood pressure.

What's more, being happier may also improve sleep habits and practices, which is important for concentration, productivity, exercise performance and maintaining a healthy weight.

One study of over 700 adults found that sleep problems, including trouble falling asleep and difficulty staying asleep, were 47% higher in those who reported low levels of positive well-being.

That said, a 2016 review of 44 studies concluded that, while there appears to be a link between positive well-being and sleep outcomes, further research from well-designed studies is needed to confirm the association.

Summary: Being happy may help promote a healthy lifestyle. Studies show that happier people are more likely to eat healthier diets and engage in physical activity.

Appears to Boost the Immune System

A healthy immune system is important for overall health. Research has shown that being happier may help keep your immune system strong.

This may help reduce your risk of developing colds and chest infections.

One study in over 300 healthy people looked at the risk of developing a cold after individuals were given a common cold virus via nasal drops.

The least happy people were almost three times as likely to develop the common cold compared to their happier counterparts.

In another study, researchers gave 81 university students a vaccine against hepatitis B, a virus that attacks the liver. Happier students were nearly twice as likely to have a high antibody response, a sign of a strong immune system.

The effects of happiness on the immune system are not completely understood.

It may be due to the impact of happiness on the activity of the hypothalamic-pituitary-adrenal (HPA) axis, which regulates your immune system, hormones, digestion and stress levels.

What's more, happy people are more likely to take part in health-promoting behaviors that play a role in keeping the immune system strong. These include healthy eating habits and regular physical activity.

Another article explains

Be Happier, Be Healthier?

Can increasing positive emotions in our lives make us healthier? After all, plenty of studies have shown that positive psychology interventions which generate PA – including practicing gratitude and kindness, savoring positive events, engaging in mindfulness can increase psychological well-being. As the authors of the review conclude more long-term studies are needed with diverse populations and methodologies to create effective interventions that will improve health outcomes. For patients with chronic illnesses, for instance, the interventions must take into account the stages of the disease, the context, the kind of PA, and the patient's psychological needs. In the meantime, however, we can take heart in the promising findings of the current research: A steady and varied diet of positive emotional experiences can be a key contributor to a healthy life.

References

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