

Project Pearl Planning

Mental

Research

General

<https://www.health.harvard.edu/staying-healthy/the-little-things-that-can-improve-your-health>

Little Things for Health Improvement:

- Every half-hour: Every 30 minutes, it is recommended to have a short break and do the following: get up and move and drink water. Sitting down for longer periods of time may lead to an increased risk of obesity, diabetes, cancer, heart disease, and early death. So, dance, jump, stretch, or walk around your chair! To keep your body functioning, you must stay hydrated. It's not necessary to drink a whole cup of water in one sitting. All you need is an ounce or two every 30 minutes. You don't have to restrict yourself to these two options. There are many more things you can do!
- Every few hours: Every few hours, you should relax! Schedule a break in between tasks so you can destress. During these breaks, take in the scenery around you. Practice mindfulness by focusing on your current environment. You may go outside on a walk and observe the sounds, the smells, and how everything may affect how you feel now. Another way to use your break is to remove yourself from the screens! While looking at our phones, computers, and TVs, we don't blink as much because we stare at our screens. This causes dryness in the eyes, so close your eyes, read a book, or sit and listen to music!
- Once a day: Take the time out of your day to learn something new. When learning new things, our synapses (brain cell connections) strengthen and create new ones. In doing so, our minds stay sharp and running. We lose synapses as we age, so the more you learn, the better shape your brain will be! Another way to engage our brains is to create social connections. Whenever we have meaningful interactions with others, our synapses increase, moods are boosted, and loneliness is reduced. So, talk to a friend, a family member, or even a stranger! If you feel that you need to relax, you can always try meditation. Whenever our bodies are stressed, it triggers a multitude of

physiological changes which prepare us for “fight or flight.” Being constantly stressed may cause high blood pressure, high blood sugar, and much more. To unwind, take some deep breaths, do yoga, or meditate.

Harvard Health Publishing, 2022

Health Issues:

- **Heart Disease:** Heart disease is currently the number one cause of death for women of all ages. It is estimated that more than 40% of women in the United States live with heart disease. Risk factors for heart disease, such as high blood pressure and cholesterol, are more common after menopause. Symptoms of heart disease may include nausea, heart palpitations, fatigue, shortness of breath, chest pressure, and more. The following are some of the most common types of heart disease in women:

- **Coronary artery disease:** This is caused by arteries clogged with plaque, which prevents the supply of blood to the heart. This leads to heart attacks.
- **Arrhythmia:** This condition is when the heart beats irregularly.
- **Heart failure:** This is caused by the lack of blood flow to other organs in the body.

Treatments for heart disease may include medications, surgery, and lifestyle changes.

Medications may be used to regulate blood pressure and high cholesterol. Surgery may be done in a woman who has a blockage in her arteries. Lifestyle changes may be changes in diet, including a daily exercise routine, and leaving behind habits such as smoking or consuming alcohol.

Yale Medicine, 2024; CDC Heart Disease, 2024; Northwestern Medicine, 2024

- **Strokes:** Women are more likely to die of strokes than men. Symptoms of a stroke may include numbness of the arms and legs, difficulty speaking, and face drooping. There are different types of strokes, such as hemorrhagic, which is bleeding in the brain, and ischemic, the blockage of blood vessels due to blood clots.

WebMD 2024, Northwestern Medicine 2024

- **Diabetes:** Diabetes is a disease in which a person has high levels of blood glucose due to problems in the creation or usage of insulin. Women who have diabetes have a much higher risk for heart disease. Symptoms of diabetes in women may include high blood sugar levels, which trigger the growth of fungus-causing yeast infections. Other symptoms may include urinary tract infections, polycystic ovary syndrome, fatigue, weight loss/gain, and

more. Treatment may include insulin therapy and lifestyle changes

Healthline, 2024; Northwestern Medicine 2024

- Urinary Tract Infections (UTIs): UTIs occur when bacteria such as E. coli enter the urethra and begin to multiply. Typical symptoms of a UTI are pain during urination and cloudy urine. UTIs may be treated with antibiotics, or they can go away on their own without medication. UTIs may also be caused by sexual activity, age, menopause, etc.

Northwestern Medicine, 2024; WebMD 202

- Human Papillomavirus (HPV): HPV is one of the most common sexually transmitted infections (STIs). HPV, unfortunately, has no cure. However, it may be prevented through a vaccine. Most people with HPV don't realize that they have the STI because it has no symptoms. This is why it is recommended for women to have regular pap smear tests to see if there have been any changes in their cervix. HPV can cause genital warts or cervical cancer.

The Office on Women's Health, 2022

- Breast Cancer: Breast cancer is the most common cancer in women in the United States. It is a disease where the growth of breast cells become abnormal and begin to create tumors. Women have around a 13% chance of developing breast cancer during their lifetime. It is recommended for women to have yearly scheduled mammograms beginning at the age of 40.

Northwestern Medicine, 2024

- Osteoporosis: This disease causes the weakening of the bones. Women are actually at a higher risk of developing osteoporosis and are at a much higher risk post-menopause. Treatment may include increasing calcium intake, physical activity, and avoiding the use of alcohol.

Northwestern Medicine, 2024

<https://www.cdc.gov/heart-disease/about/women-and-heart-disease.html#:~:text=Heart%20disease%20is%20the%20leading,affect%20women%20at%20any%20age>.

<https://www.nm.org/healthbeat/healthy-tips/9-health-issues-every-woman-should-understand>

<https://www.yalemedicine.org/conditions/heart-disease-women#:~:text=Here%20are%20some%20of%20the,can%27t%20get%20enough%20blood>.

<https://www.healthline.com/health/diabetes/symptoms-in-women>

<https://www.webmd.com/stroke/types-stroke>

<https://www.webmd.com/women/your-guide-urinary-tract-infections>

Menstrual

Research

Menstruation

1. **Cycle and Timing:** A typical menstrual cycle lasts between 21 to 35 days, with menstruation itself (the period) typically spanning 3 to 7 days. This cycle includes four stages: menstruation, follicular phase, ovulation, and luteal phase, each governed by hormones that prepare the body for a potential pregnancy. The cycle can change with age and factors like stress and lifestyle.

Cleveland Clinic, 2024 & Nuffield Health 2024

2. **Consequences and Symptoms:** Common symptoms during menstruation include cramps, mood changes, and bloating. Some people also experience headaches or fatigue due to hormonal shifts. Period symptoms and severity can vary, especially for teens and those nearing menopause, when cycles may become less predictable.

Flo Health, 2024 & mindbodygreen 2024

3. **Nutrition and Exercise:** Diet and exercise impact the menstrual cycle. Foods rich in iron and nutrients, along with light activities like yoga, can help alleviate discomfort. High-intensity exercise may be better timed during specific phases, such as the follicular phase when energy levels are higher.

mindbodygreen, 2024 & Cleveland Clinic 2024

4. **Sex Life:** Hormonal changes throughout the cycle influence libido, often increasing during ovulation. Communication with healthcare providers can be helpful if there are questions about timing or changes in libido related to the cycle.

Flo Health, 2024

Pregnancy

1. **Birth Control and Pregnancy Planning:** Birth control helps prevent pregnancy, with different options like hormonal pills and IUDs. When stopping birth control, it may take some time for regular cycles to resume, depending on the type.

Flo Health, 2024

2. **Nutrition and Food Aversions:** Eating a balanced diet is essential during pregnancy, with special emphasis on folate, iron, and protein. Many experience food aversions due to heightened senses, particularly in early pregnancy.

Nuffield Health, 2024

3. **Exercise and Health:** Exercises such as walking, swimming, and prenatal yoga can improve mental health and ease labor preparation. However, high-impact activities are often discouraged. Always consult with a healthcare provider for personalized recommendations.

Cleveland Clinic, 2024

4. **Anxiety and Emotional Health:** Hormonal changes can heighten anxiety, making support systems and mindfulness practices beneficial. Severe anxiety should be discussed with a healthcare provider to explore options that are safe for both parent and child.

Flo Health, 2024

5. **Pregnancy Milestones and Self-Care:** Prenatal vitamins, morning sickness management, weight control, and skin care (for stretch marks) are key aspects. Common milestones include feeling fetal movement by weeks 18-20 and preparing a birth plan. After childbirth, post-partum recovery focuses on sleep and regaining strength, which can include physical and emotional support.

Nuffield Health, 2024 & Cleveland Clinic 2024

References

- Cleveland Clinic. (2024). *Menstrual Cycle (Normal Menstruation): Overview & Phases*. Retrieved from [ClevelandClinic](#)
- Nuffield Health. (2024). *Understanding the Menstrual Cycle*. Retrieved from [Nuffield Health](#)
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Graphics & Design



Colors:

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