



AUGUST IS NATIONAL WELLNESS MONTH

A commonly-held misconception is that wellness means being physically fit or skinny. However, you don't have to look far to see examples of well-known athletes or celebrities who are slim or in top fitness form but are not well, or have developed conditions or diseases.

WHAT IS WELLNESS?

According to the World Health Organization, wellness is not merely the absence of disease, but a state of physical, mental, and social wellbeing. It is the active process of achieving (and maintaining) good health. This involves exercise, nutrition, sleep, stress control, social connections, and awareness/control of the use of risky substances (alcohol, tobacco, and other drugs).

SETTING—AND REACHING—WELLNESS GOALS

With the focus on a new year ahead, many of us set goals for our health, diet, and exercise in January. However, as the year wears on, if the goals aren't backed up by consistent tracking, they tend to fall by the wayside. By mid-year, we are often back to focusing on the day-in, day-out of life and wellness may take a back seat.

While we can't change the demands of work, family, and other activities that impact our time, we can focus on building habits that enable us to include wellness. Take advantage of National Wellness Month as an opportunity to establish a plan for wellness; it will improve your mindset as well as your health, and can have lifelong benefits. Getting started is as easy as following these steps:

SET GOALS

Goals help define how you will include wellness in your day; a critical part of developing a habit. How many hours of sleep will you target per night? How many days per week can you get that walk or run in? Remember to keep your goals achievable. Start small and increase your goals as they become habits. Here are some suggestions:

EXERCISE



Schedule it! If your work involves sitting most of the day, take a walk during your lunch break, or take the stairs instead of the elevator. Even 20 minutes can have a positive impact on your wellbeing.

NUTRITION



Plan for each meal and don't skip them. Be sure to add some wholesome foods to your daily diet. Include an apple, raw veggies (such as celery or carrots), or a handful of nuts in your salads. Eliminate or lessen your intake of fast foods.

SLEEP



Set the stage for sleep by dimming the lights and turning off electronic devices in your bedroom. Read a book instead. Establish a pattern by going to bed at the same time each night.

STRESS CONTROL

Practice mindfulness; focus on your breathing and keep your awareness in the moment. Don't let your mind race or relive stressful events of your day.



SOCIAL CONNECTIONS

Take a few minutes to call a friend you have been thinking about but have been too busy to contact. Join a group that meets after work where you can make new friends.



RISKY SUBSTANCES

Lessen your use of substances such as alcohol, cigarettes, or drugs. Seek help if you need support.



"What is Wellness?" continued

TRACK YOUR PROGRESS

You can't manage what you can't measure. Whether you use a notepad on the fridge, a fitness journal, or smartwatch and app, tracking is essential. There are numerous apps and health trackers available to keep you accountable and motivated. Here are a few to consider:



FITNESS APPS

Fitness apps like Map My Fitness (mapmyfitness.com) and Strava (strava.com) let you log daily exercise; apps like Fit On (fitonapp.com) give you access to hundreds of classes with or without equipment.

NUTRITION APPS

These include MyFitnessPal (myfitnesspal.com) calorie counter and diet tracker. Apps like Yummly (yummly.com) and Mealime (mealime.com) help you discover new foods and recipes that fit your lifestyle and preferences.

STRESS CONTROL APPS

These include a range of options, from guided meditation and nature sounds, to white noise, music, breathing exercises, and journaling. Insight Timer (insighttimer.com) and Breathe2Relax (App Store, Google Play) are two free options to get started.

SLEEP TRACKERS

Trackers which reveal your sleep patterns can help you get the rest you need. These usually work with a watch, band, or ring, which monitor heart rate and other indicators. Some popular tools are Sleepon (shop.sleepon.us), Rise (risescience.com), and Oura Ring (ouraring.com).

No matter how you prefer to track your activity throughout the day, what is most important is that you commit to starting your wellness journey; make a plan, set your goals, and track your progress.

Flavored, Carbonated, or Still... Don't Forget Your WATER!

With this summer's record-breaking temperatures across North America, hydration is more important than ever. The good news is that you've never had more delicious options for staying hydrated!

In addition to the pure, fresh flavor of still water, there are a wide range of flavored and carbonated waters available. Nutritionists agree that carbonated water is equally as hydrating as still water, so check out your options and grab a water when you take a break!

