

The Three Pillars of Mental Health

Social isolation and other roadblocks thrown up by the pandemic disproportionately affected emerging adults, interrupting their process of establishing identity, community, and life purpose (2). So, how can young adults improve and sustain their emotional well-being? Research has shown that there are 3 health behaviors that support mental and physical well-being.

In a 2020 study consisting of 1,111 young adults aged 18-25, researchers analyzed participants' reports of daily activities and mood (1). Researchers focused on daily self-care habits and how those impact biological mechanisms and psychological states. Wickham et. al. (2020) found that young adults can take control of their mental health by making small yet powerful lifestyle changes that fall within three pillars of well-being (1).

| 1 - Sleep Quality | 2 - Exercise | 3 - Healthy Diet |
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| Sleep quality, not quantity, is the most important pillar. Quality sleep for young adults can range from 8 to 12 hours. | Physical activity helps counteract mental health problems in young adults. Exercise for young adults promotes well-being by releasing endorphins, reducing cortisol (the stress hormone), and building self-esteem. | Flourishing levels are highest for young adults who eat 4.8 servings of fruits and veggies daily—making it one of the top foods to eat every day. That's because fresh produce contains nutrients that support brain function and healthy serotonin levels. |
| To get better quality sleep, try to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Keep your room dark and cool - Stop using devices 30 minutes before bed - Establish a relaxing bedtime routine | To establish an exercise routine: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Find an accountability partner - Exercise while listening to a podcast - Do 5-10 minutes of physical activity several times throughout the day | How to eat more raw fruits and veggies: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Dip veggies in hummus or peanut butter - Add raw veggies to cooked grains or pasta - Make fruit or vegetable smoothies. |

Incorporating these three pillars into your daily routine can lead to positive changes in overall well-being.

ONE OF THREE PILLARS OF MENTAL HEALTH

Sleep

Sleep issues affect both our physical and emotional wellbeing. There has been an increase in sleep issues during the COVID-19 pandemic.



Tips for a Good Night's Sleep

Avoid alcohol and caffeine close to bedtime.

Decrease screen time before bed.



Have a **consistent bedtime and wake time.**

Unwind before bed (e.g. shower/bath, read, yoga, meditate).

Stay physically active, but not within a few hours of bedtime, as it can have energizing effects.

Spend time outside in the morning to strengthen our biological clock.



Avoid eating large meals, instead have a light snack.

Get up if you can't fall asleep within 30 minutes. Do something relaxing then try again.

For more information:
www.mdsc.ca



Mood Disorders Society of Canada
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ONE OF THE THREE PILLARS OF MENTAL HEALTH

Physical Activity



The Government of Canada advises that regular physical activity has been found to give us energy, decrease stress, make us stronger, and prolongs independence as we age. Staying physically active has become even more important.

Tips for Staying Active

Aerobic Activities

- Establish reasonable goals for daily activity!
- Walk around your house, go up and down your stairs.
- Dance to your favourite music.
- Do gardening or lawn work.



- March on the spot.
- Walk, jog, or bicycle around your neighbourhood - maintain physical distancing and avoid crowded spaces.
- Try an online cardio class!

Muscle Strengthening Activities

- Perform arm-curls with either dumbbells or household items, such as soup cans, laundry detergent, water bottles etc.
- Try yoga, which can also help to reduce anxiety.



- Use stairs to do step-ups or lunges, or a chair to do arm dips .
- Perform body weight exercises, like push ups, sit-ups.
- Try an online class!

Always follow your Provincial Health guidelines and consult your doctor before starting an exercise routine.



ONE OF THE THREE PILLARS OF MENTAL HEALTH

Nutrition

Eating a nutritious diet helps our body stay healthy and also fuels our mental health.

A well balanced diet will provide you with foods rich in vitamins, minerals, antioxidants and fibre.



Develop a weekly food plan to ensure you have the right amount of nutrients in your diet:

B-Vitamins

Can be found in whole grains, meat, poultry, eggs, legumes, and leafy vegetables.



Fibre

Found in wholegrain foods, fruits (berries, melon, oranges), vegetables (broccoli, carrots), legumes, nuts and seeds, & potatoes with skin.

Omega-3

Good sources of it include fatty fish (tuna, salmon, sardines), chia seeds, and flax seeds.



Antioxidants

Can be found in fruits and vegetables. Try to include at each meal, like a veggie omelet for breakfast or a stir-fry for dinner!



Vitamin D

Can be found in fatty fish, eggs, and fortified foods such as a milk.



For additional information, please visit

www.mdsc.ca

www.food-guide.canada.ca/



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Source:

1. Wickham, S.R., Amarasekara, N. A., Bartonicek, A., & Conner, T. S. (2020). The Big Three Health Behaviors and mental health and well-being among young adults: A cross-sectional investigation of sleep, exercise, and Diet. *Frontiers in Psychology, 11*.
<https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2020.579205>
2. Newport Institute (2021). *The Three Pillars of Mental Health for Young Adults*. Retrieved January 27, 2022, from
https://www.newportinstitute.com/resources/mental-health/pillars-of-mental-health/?utm_source=paradot&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=12_30_21_nh_refresh_top_articles&utm_content=4th_img