

# Wellness

## Wednesday



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## Want To Feel Happier?

### Try Out These 7 'Micro-Acts' Of Joy

In our fast-paced and challenging world, finding joy and happiness can sometimes feel like an uphill battle. However, research shows that incorporating small moments of joy into our daily lives can have a significant impact on our overall well-being. These "micro-acts" of joy are simple activities or practices that can boost our happiness and create a more positive mindset.

In this Wellness Wednesday, we will explore seven powerful micro-acts of joy backed by scientific research. By incorporating these practices into your daily routine, you can cultivate a greater sense of happiness and well-being.

#### 1. Cultivate A Sense of Awe

One of the most powerful micro-acts of joy is immersing yourself in moments of awe. Awe is the feeling of being in the presence of something vast and extraordinary that challenges our mundane thoughts. It can be experienced by spending time in nature, witnessing breathtaking landscapes, or engaging in highly creative contexts. Research has shown that awe not only brings us joy but also enhances our sense of common humanity. It makes us more likely to be generous and kind towards others. So, make it a habit to seek out awe-inspiring experiences and allow yourself to be amazed by the world around you.

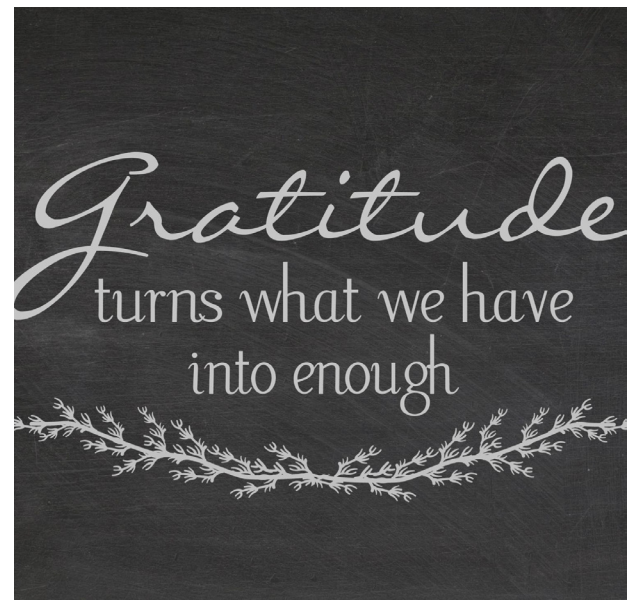
#### 2. Share in Others' Joy

Celebrating someone else's joy can be a powerful micro-act of joy in itself. Take the time to listen to others and genuinely engage in their positive experiences. Start conversations that focus on what's going well in their lives or what has inspired them. By actively participating in their joy, you not only strengthen your connection with them but also enhance your own sense of happiness and fulfillment.

#### 3. Practice Gratitude

Gratitude is a well-known practice that has been linked to increased happiness and well-being. Simply taking a few moments each day to reflect on the things you are grateful for can have a profound impact on your overall mindset. It helps shift your focus from negative thoughts to positive aspects of your life and encourages a more optimistic outlook.

Consider keeping a gratitude journal where you write down three things you are grateful for each day. This practice can be especially helpful during challenging times, as it reminds you of the positive aspects of your life.



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## 4. Engage in Random Acts of Kindness

Performing acts of kindness towards others not only brings them joy but also provides a sense of fulfillment and happiness for yourself. Engage in random acts of kindness, whether it's helping a stranger, supporting a friend, or donating to a cause you believe in. These acts can be as simple as holding the door for someone or offering a kind word. Research has shown that acts of kindness activate the reward centers in our brains, leading to feelings of happiness and well-being. By engaging in acts of kindness, you will experience the joy that comes from making a positive impact on others' lives.

## 5. Engage in Self-Reflection

Taking the time for self-reflection can be a powerful micro-act of joy. It allows you to explore how you can support and uplift others and reminds you that you have the ability to make a difference. Challenge the notion that you are powerless and instead focus on finding ways to contribute positively to the world around you. By engaging in self-reflection, you can change your perspective and recognize the potential for joy and happiness in your own life. It helps you shift your focus from self-doubt to self-empowerment, paving the way for a more fulfilling and joyful existence.

## 6. Align with Your Values

When we align our actions with our values and purpose, we experience a greater sense of fulfillment and joy. Take the time to reflect on your values and identify what matters most to you. It could be spending time with loved ones, engaging in activities that promote personal growth, or making a positive impact on the world. By incorporating activities that align with your values into your daily life, you create a sense of purpose and meaning. Whether it's volunteering for a cause you care about or engaging in activities that bring you joy, these actions contribute to a more fulfilling and joyful existence.

## 7. Prioritize Connection with Others

Building and nurturing strong connections with others is crucial for our overall happiness and well-being. Make it a priority to spend quality time with loved ones, friends, and colleagues. In our busy lives, it's easy to prioritize work and other responsibilities, but investing in relationships and social connections is essential for our happiness. Research has shown that our connection to others is a key factor in our overall well-being. By balancing work and personal life and making time for social interactions, we can optimize our happiness and find joy in the company of others.

## Final Thoughts

Incorporating micro-acts of joy into your daily life can have a profound impact on your overall happiness and well-being. By cultivating a sense of awe, celebrating others' joy, practicing gratitude, engaging in random acts of kindness, reflecting on your values, and prioritizing your connections with others, you can create a more joyful and fulfilling existence.

Remember, happiness is not a destination but a journey. By embracing these micro-acts of joy, you can cultivate a more positive mindset and experience greater happiness in your everyday life and witness the transformation they bring to your well-being.

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# PENNE ALLA VODKA WITH CHICKEN



## INGREDIENTS

### Grilled Chicken:

- 6 thin sliced chicken cutlets, about 4 ounces each
- 1 teaspoon kosher salt
- 1/2 teaspoon garlic powder
- 1/2 teaspoon Italian seasoning
- olive oil spray

### Pasta:

- 1 medium onion, cut 1/2-inch chunks
- 6 cloves garlic, smashed
- 12 ounces zucchini, peeled and cut in 1/4-inch slices (from 2 small or 1 large)
- 2 tablespoons extra virgin olive oil, divided
- 1 shallots, minced fine
- 1 teaspoon kosher salt, divided, plus more for the cooking liquid
- 15 oz can crushed tomatoes
- 1/2 cup chicken or vegetable broth
- 1/4 cup Parmesan cheese, fresh grated, plus more for serving
- 2 tablespoons tomato paste
- 1/2 teaspoon red pepper flakes, or to taste
- 3 tablespoons good quality vodka
- 1 sprig fresh basil, plus more for garnish
- 1/4 teaspoon ground black pepper
- 1 lb dry penne pasta

## HEALTHY PENNE ALLA VODKA WITH CHICKEN

By making a few simple swaps and adjustments, you can enjoy a healthier version of Penne alla vodka with chicken. This recipe eliminates heavy cream by using a pureed roasted vegetable sauce, resulting in a lighter yet equally delicious dish. Whether you're following a specific diet or simply looking for a healthier alternative, this recipe is sure to satisfy your cravings. Give it a try and savor the flavors of this Italian classic with a nutritious twist!

## DO YOU HAVE TO USE VODKA IN PENNE ALLA VODKA?

Vodka is what distinguishes Penne alla vodka from other creamy pasta dishes. It makes the creamy tomato sauce cohesive and enhances its flavor. The alcohol cooks out of the sauce, making it safe for children and people who don't drink alcohol to eat. You can swap vodka with white wine, or if you prefer not to cook with alcohol, omit it. It'll be good either way!

## Nutrition Information

Serving: 1 3/4 cup pasta with 4 ounces chicken, Calories: 519 kcal, Carbohydrates: 66.5 g, Protein: 42.5 g, Fat: 10 g, Saturated Fat: 2 g, Cholesterol: 85.5 mg, Sodium: 700.5 mg, Fiber: 8 g, Sugar: 10 g



## INSTRUCTIONS



## HOW TO MAKE IT

1. Season the chicken with olive oil, salt, garlic powder, Italian seasoning, and black pepper.
2. Roast Vegetables: Toss the zucchini, onion, and garlic with oil, salt, and pepper, and roast on a sheet pan until tender and browned.
3. Blend the roasted veggies with crushed tomatoes, broth, and Parmesan until smooth.
4. Boil salted water for the pasta.
5. Cook the chicken on high heat on a grill pan until cooked through.
6. Tomato Paste and Shallots: Sauté the minced shallot and salt in a Dutch oven or deep, large skillet. Stir in the tomato paste and red pepper flakes and cook for a minute or two.
7. Vodka: If you have a gas stove, turn it off or remove your pot from the heat. Pour in the vodka, scraping the browned bits from the bottom of the pan, and return the pot to the heat. Cook until most of the liquid reduces. Then add the pureed vegetables, basil, and black pepper, and simmer for five minutes.
8. Cook the penne until al dente according to package directions. Reserve a cup of pasta water before draining the pot.
9. How to Serve: Remove the basil sprig from the sauce and pour in the reserved water a little at a time if needed. Toss the vodka sauce with the penne and transfer to six bowls. Top each one with chicken and Parmesan.

## FEATURED EXERCISE

<https://www.self.com/gallery/yoga-poses-to-relieve-lower-back-pain>

## Featured Exercise ► Hands-Elevated Push-Up

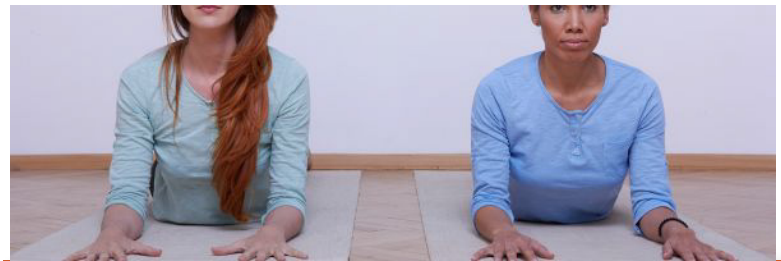


## HOW TO DO IT:

1. "Sphinx pose creates a nice natural curve of the lower back," Tyler says. It also engages your abs a bit, which is helpful for supporting the lower back.
2. Lie on your stomach, legs together and straight out behind you.
3. Place your elbows under your shoulders and your forearms on the floor as you lift your chest up off the floor.
4. Press your hips and thighs into the floor, and think about lengthening your spine while keeping your shoulders relaxed.
5. Sit up just enough to feel a nice stretch in your lower back. Don't hyperextend, and stop immediately if you start to feel any discomfort or pain.
6. Hold this position 30–60 seconds.

## BENEFITS:

Incorporating the Sphinx Pose into your daily exercise routine can have a significant positive impact on your posture, back health, and overall well-being. By regularly practicing this gentle backbend, you can improve your spinal alignment, relieve back pain, strengthen your core, and promote a sense of inner calm. Remember to approach the pose with patience, listen to your body, and consult with a healthcare professional or yoga instructor if you have any concerns. So why wait? Start reaping the benefits of the Sphinx Pose today and embark on a journey towards better posture and a healthier back.

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Regular exercise can help you control your weight, reduce your risk of heart disease, and strengthen your bones and muscles. But if it's been awhile since you've exercised and you have health issues or concerns, it's a good idea to talk to your doctor before starting a new exercise routine.



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