

The Fundamentals of Health

A key principle in Traditional Chinese Medicine is that our simple daily behaviors are particularly important in shaping our health and well-being. Six daily activities include Thinking, Breathing, Movement, Diet, Relationships and Sleep and are considered the base upon which our health and energy rests. If our foundation is strong and stable, we are able to maintain the balance and harmony in life's storms.

THE SIX FUNDAMENTALS OF HEALTH

1. **Thinking**
2. **Breathing**
3. **Movement through Yoga**
4. **Diet**
5. **Relationships**
6. **Sleep**



THINKING

The brain controls our body's functions and thoughts. It coordinates physical movement, thinking and emotions. The brain and the body depend on each other and are affected by each other's condition. Scientific research is discovering that our body's cells converse with each other. This confirms the ancient Chinese medicinal theory that every part of our body communicates with every other part of our body. Our thoughts and feelings will be manifested in our body.

Encourage this intercommunication in these ways:

- **Eat food that is high in quality.** Eliminate foods high in sugar, caffeine and food that is highly processed. After 2 weeks assess how you feel. Many people discover increased clarity in thinking and discrimination.
- **Respect your emotions.** Be mindful how you feel. If not recognized, emotions may store themselves in the body's cells and be unveiled physically.
- **Pay attention to your thoughts.** Ancient insight states, "Where our consciousness goes, energy flows". What we focus on expands.



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BREATHING

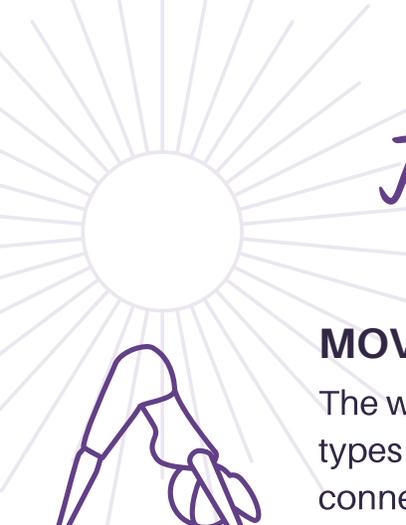
With each breath we supply the lungs with oxygen, which is eventually transported to every part of the body. There are two basic types of breathing: **diaphragmatic** (abdominal breathing) and **thoracic** (chest breathing). Thoracic breathing is commonly shallow and can create stress and tension in the body. These uncomfortable feelings result when the maximum capacity for air or oxygen is not reached.

By **placing more emphasis on diaphragmatic breathing**, you can alleviate restricted breathing. Just as fully filled tires are vital for the operation of your car, a full inhalation and exhalation will have a strong influence on the performance of all internal organs. Learning to practice breathing will help to integrate the body and the mind. The benefits will be endless!

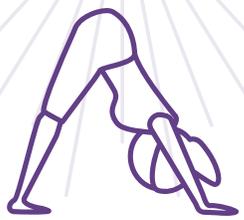
Here are some helpful suggestions when starting a daily practice of breathing exercises:

- First, one must always be mindful, simply by paying attention to the breath... without judging
- Progress to diaphragmatic (abdominal) breathing
- Close your eyes and place one hand on the lower abdomen
- Focus on the hand as it rises with each inhalation and falls with each exhalation
- Practice each day for 10 to 20 minutes Try to consistently practice at a set time to develop a positive health pattern
- As this breathing becomes natural, you will be able to call upon it throughout your day to provide a more relaxed and healthier environment.

"Life is in the breath. He who half breaths, half lives."



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MOVEMENT THROUGH YOGA

The word Yoga means “union.” What makes yoga different from other types of exercise is the bond between the breath and movement. This connection develops a union which then integrates body, breath, and mind. You can use Yoga as an efficient system to maintain health that can balance and revitalize the body systems.

In Yoga there are **two fundamental practices: the cultivation of awareness and relaxation.**

- **Awareness** is the human ability to pay close attention to something, to be present, to be mindful. Yoga is attention training.
- **Relaxation** is the conscious release of unnecessary and therefore unpleasant tension in the body

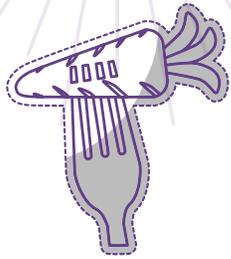
Yoga can help to interrupt the stress of everyday living and counteract its pressures. Here are some observed benefits:

- Physically boosts flexibility, strength, coordination and body awareness while improving memory, concentration and a sense of well-being.
- Enhances the ability to concentrate and improves memory.
- Encourages self-esteem with a physical activity that is noncompetitive.
- Teaches techniques for self-health, relaxation and inner awareness.

**If you have a medical condition or past injury, please check with your health care professional before beginning any exercise program. If you have not been exercising, start by adding more movement into your daily life: walk rather than drive, reach, bend and stretch more in your daily activities. Remember to use common sense; stay within your limits and do what is available to you.*



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DIET

Diet is one of the most important and direct factors of our health. A fundamental principle is “you are what you eat.” The following are some simple guidelines that can make a world of difference:

- Select and **eat natural whole and unrefined foods**. Choose foods that are fresh and chemical-free. Avoid processed foods, preservatives and animal foods raised with antibiotics and hormones.
- **Limit alcohol intake**, along with caffeine and refined sugars.
- **Seek balance in your eating**. Eat when hungry and drink when thirsty.
- **Chew your food well**. This will help to develop mindfulness of what food is good for you. Food taste better the more you chew it, it is better digested and you are less likely to over-eat.
- **Consume only to 80%**. Overeating causes imbalance, cloudy thinking and sleepiness. It also burdens the digestive system.
- **Take pleasure in your meals**. The appearance and ingestion of foods should be a pleasurable experience!
- **Avoid eating when upset or very tired**. When under stress, the body is not ready to receive or digest food properly. Perhaps wait until you have calm down or have rested.
- **Selection and preparation of food is crucial to maintaining good health**. It is estimated that 70% of our everyday illnesses are diet-related. A majority of illness can be prevented with proper nutrition.



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RELATIONSHIPS

Friendship and closeness with others is an important part of life. Frequently we experience our relationships in an almost unaware way...drifting through our interactions with others as if on "automatic pilot" without giving much thought to the worth of these relationships.

Wellness is dependent on the balance and quality of our relationships. As much as we need to choose food that is good for us and sensibly exercise our bodies, we must nurture our relationships.

- Be mindful of the relationships in your life.
- After reflection you may find that there are things that you would like to change in those interactions or in the way that you involve yourself in relationships. Create a plan of action and follow through with it.
- Relationships in which you engage yourself mindfully are much more gratifying and healthier than those in which you participate on "automatic pilot."



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SLEEP

One of the most natural and pleasurable activities we do is sleep. Some conditions for healthy sleep are:

- **Eat healthy food** and refrain from eating prior to going to bed.
- **Proper exercise** allows the body to recover more efficiently during sleep. When the body and mind are tired, sleep comes readily.
- **Avoid unnecessary worry, mental activity, stress, caffeine intake or stimulation.** These factors won't let you sleep even if the body is tired.
- **Allow a quiet time in your routine prior to falling asleep.** Some suggestions are to practice diaphragmatic breathing, listen to quiet music or read a good book.

Sleep is not just a form of rest! Sleep plays a critical physiological role and is vital for intellectual development. Therefore it is important to respect the role sleep plays in the fundamentals of health.

