

## Mental Wellbeing: Lifestyle

May is Mental Health Awareness month. Mental health is essential to everyone's overall health and wellbeing, and mental illnesses are common and treatable.

The World Health Organization defines mental health as:

**"A state of well-being in which the individual realizes his or her own abilities, can cope with the normal stresses of life, can work productively and fruitfully, and is able to make a contribution to his or her community."**

Just as physical health is more than the absence of disease; positive mental health is more than the absence of mental illness. We know there is a link between mental health and physical health. When we experience physical illness, injury or pain it has a negative impact on our Mental Health and Well-Being. Improving our physical health can improve our Mental Health and Well-Being. Some things like genetics are out of our control, but other factors or lifestyle choices that we do have some control over, may make a big impact on our mental wellbeing. Lifestyle choices regarding our nutrition, level of physical activity, sleep habits and substance use are the focus of this article.



Eating a **balanced diet** is one of the most important ways of improving overall health. Different nutrients have different roles so it is important to eat a wide range of food rich in fruits and vegetables. Eating healthily contributes to a strong mind and body. Food can influence and improve your mental health, but it can also be detrimental. Many of the foods available today are processed, filled with preservatives and do not have the vitamins, minerals, and nutrients our bodies and minds need to function efficiently.

We are what we eat!

- Try fresh or dried fruit as a snack
- Try eating at least two vegetables with dinner
- Add vegetables to sandwiches, pastas, and soups
- Drink a fruit smoothie made with whole fruit, ice and low-fat yogurt
- Order salads, vegetable soups or stir-fried vegetables when dining out

Lack of **physical activity**, combined with a poor diet, is the second leading cause of preventable death and disease in the United States. How is a lack of physical activity related to mental wellness? Inactive lifestyles may be a symptom of depression or anxiety, especially when there is withdrawal from activities that they used to enjoy or they are more isolated. Living an inactive lifestyle increases a person's risk of developing depression.

### Get Moving!

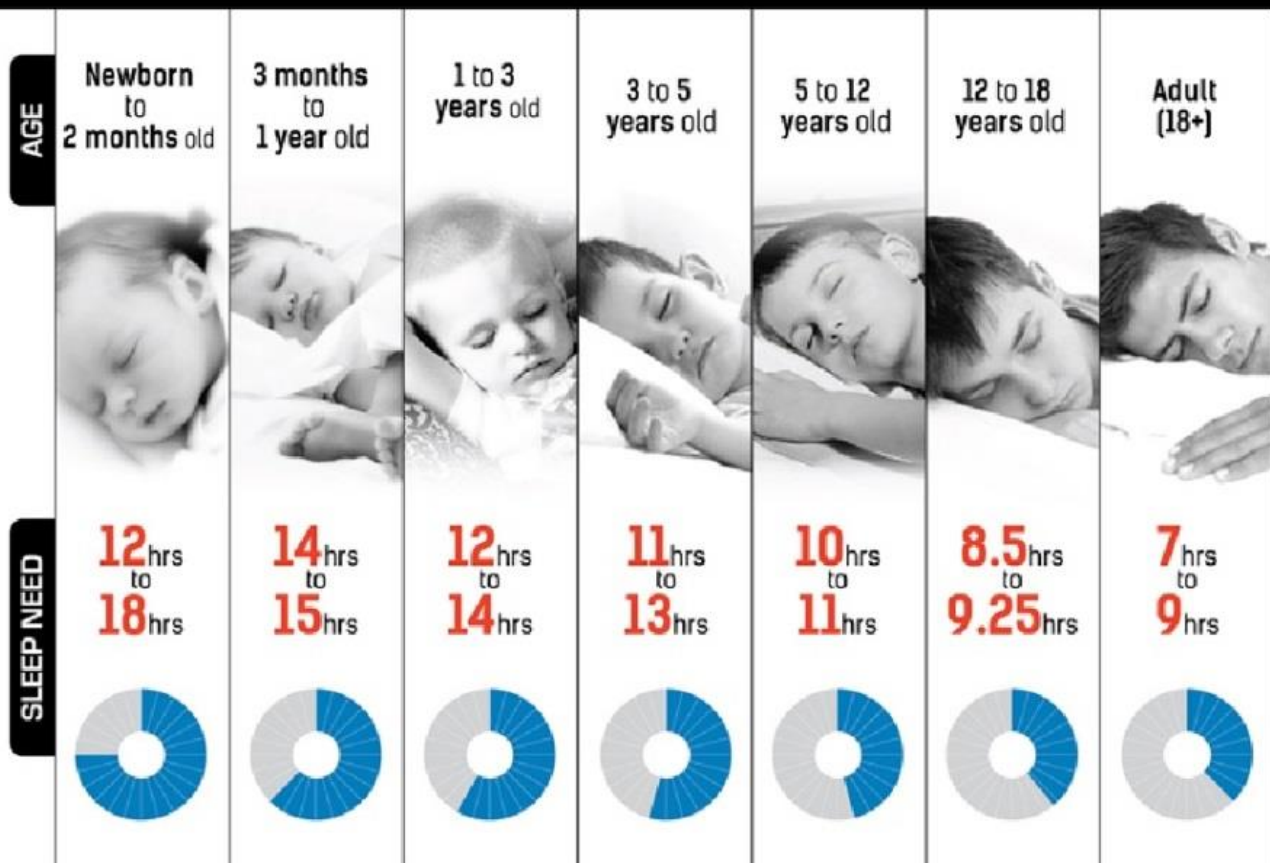
- Talk to your doctor to see if there are any special considerations you should take when exercising
- Start slow and work up to harder activities
- Find a friend to exercise with to keep you motivated and accountable



**Sleep** is necessary for your overall health, fitness and mental well-being. Experts recommend eight hours of sleep to obtain the maximum benefits, which are many. Lack of sleep has been proven to lower the efficiency of your immune system. It has also been linked in contributing to heart disease and Type 2 diabetes. Recent studies also suggest that not getting enough sleep can prevent people from losing weight.

- Get a routine-go to bed and wake up at the same time every day
- Turn off gadgets and electronics- have a technology curfew
- Make your bedroom a great place to sleep-quiet, dark and the right temp

## HOW MUCH SLEEP DO YOU REALLY NEED?



## Substance Use

The consequences of having a mental illness and substance abuse issue result in poorer mental and physical health. Finding effective treatment for and prevention of substance abuse has been difficult. Studies have made it clear that drug education and prevention aimed at children and adolescents offers the best chance to curb abuse.

Alcohol, tobacco and other drugs contribute to chronic disease, intentional and unintentional injuries, decreased productivity, social and family disruption, and lack of educational attainment. Alcohol use can increase injury, unplanned pregnancy, poor birth outcomes, childhood development, adolescent health, **mental health**, violence, infectious diseases and chronic disease. Alcohol causes more deaths and illnesses than other drugs because of its properties and also because it is used by far more people than other drugs. Tobacco use is the single greatest preventable cause of death and disease in Minnesota.

If you or a family member needs help, contact:

- Drug Abuse Hotline: 800-276-6818 [www.acenterforrecovery.com](http://www.acenterforrecovery.com)
- QUITPLAN Services: Free program available to anyone who wants to quit tobacco and offers a wide array of tools for eligible Minnesotans. For free help visit [www.quitplan.com](http://www.quitplan.com) or call 1-888-354-PLAN (7526).
- Alcoholics Anonymous Minnesota: The purpose of all AA group meetings is for AA members to “share their experiences, strength and hope with each other that they may solve their common problem and help others to recover from alcoholism.” Find an AA meeting near you by visiting <http://www.aaminnesota.org/onesearch/meetingsonesearch.php> or by calling the local St. Cloud Area AA Minnesota Help Line at: 1-320-202-1895.
- Narcotics Anonymous Minnesota Region: Narcotics Anonymous meetings are a gathering of recovering addicts, who meet regularly for the purpose of recovery from the disease of addiction.

Additional resources can also be found here: <http://mnmentalhealth.org/resource-and-provider-search> Click on the Resource Guide for a listing of local resources.

References:

Minnesota Department of Health

<http://www.health.state.mn.us/divs/oshii/ship/index.html>