



# Wellbeing Insights

*Living a Better, More Vibrant Life*



## Sleep Your Way to a Stronger Immune System

Next to regular handwashing, the best way to protect yourself from viruses and other illnesses is as easy as counting sheep. The physical impact of lack of sleep extends beyond low energy, moodiness and brain fog. Have you ever noticed that you tend to get more colds, a stuffy nose or sore throat when you haven't slept well? There's a reason; science shows that when we don't get adequate sleep, our immune system suffers the consequences.

### **Immune System 101**

Your immune system is responsible for keeping the trillions of cells in your body healthy. To do this, it relies on special "soldier cells" called T-cells. T-cells activate in response to invaders

like viruses that can make you sick. These T-cells are equipped with special receptors that can identify virus-infected cells anywhere in the body. Once a virus is detected, special proteins on T-cells latch onto virus-infected cells and destroy them. The stronger the T-cell latches on, the better. The better you sleep, the better they latch.

When you're awake, certain neurotransmitters, such as epinephrine, dopamine, serotonin and histamine, are extra active, but their levels drop when you sleep. These same transmitters can bind to T-cells, weakening their ability to latch onto virus-infected cells, thus allowing viruses to multiply and spread. Without adequate sleep, an overabundance of these neurotransmitters

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can block your T-cell army from doing its job, making it easier for you to get sick.

## How do I get more sleep?

Most adults thrive on 7.5 to 9 hours of sleep each night. For kids and teens, that number is even higher. When life is stressful, getting adequate sleep can be even more difficult as we work through increased demands on our energy and challenges with quieting our minds to achieve restful sleep. Here are some tips to help:

- **Try a meditation app.** Calm and Headspace are great, particularly the sleep stories, which are designed to help you fall asleep more quickly and sleep more deeply. You can also find free sleep stories and guided relaxation sessions on

YouTube or with your subscription to Spotify and other music services.


- **Go device-free for one hour prior to bedtime.** The blue light emitted by phones, tablets and TVs blocks your body's melatonin (sleep hormone) production and signaling. Set your devices to automatically go into "night mode," which cuts some of the blue light, at a certain time, maybe 8 p.m. You can also try blue-light-blocking glasses.
- **Stick to a bedtime routine.** Take a warm bath, drink sleepy-time tea, journal or anything to help consistently tell yourself it's bedtime. Experiment to find what works for you, but stick with a routine for at least a week before moving on to something new. The idea is to get

your mind and body to equate these activities with bedtime, meaning they need to become a consistent habit.

- **Get at least 30 minutes of physical activity daily.** In a way it's quite simple; your body feels like it has done its job and accomplished something when you get regular activity. It may help to finish your workout at least 3 hours before bedtime so that you're not trying to go to bed while you're still in active mode. If you do wait until closer to bedtime for your activity, opt for something less intense, such as a 30- or 45-minute restorative yoga session.
- **Watch your diet.** This one is so important that we have a separate list of tips.

## How should I eat to get better sleep?

- **Watch your alcohol intake.** Study after study shows that while alcohol may help you feel sleepy initially, it disrupts sleep quality and often causes nighttime waking, reducing sleep duration.
- **No caffeine after noon.** Even if you think you are someone who is relatively unaffected by caffeine, research shows caffeine shortens deep, REM sleep, even in those who don't feel affected.
- **Limit water intake an hour before bed.** If you frequently wake up to urinate during the night, you might take it a step further and try ¼ cup pumpkin seeds as a daily snack. This has been shown to lessen nighttime urination.
- **Eat a kiwi.** According to one study, eating just one kiwi fruit a day can lead to better REM sleep. It's delicious and full of antioxidants, fiber and vitamin C. Why not give it a try?
- **Try tart cherry juice.** Just 2 ounces might be an effective sleep aid. It can also prevent gout.
- **Consider a supplement.** If your mind just won't shut off at night, ask your healthcare provider or dietitian about finding a supplement, such as magnesium or melatonin, and dosage that's right for you.



“ You are worth the **quiet moment**. You are worth the deeper breath. You are worth the time it takes to slow down, **be still and rest.** ”

– Morgan Harper Nichols



## On the Menu

# Manuka Honey

Manuka honey is a type of honey made by bees that pollinate a specific bush in New Zealand known as the Manuka bush. What makes this honey stand out among other varieties is its unusually high amounts of antibacterial properties. This is attributed to naturally occurring hydrogen peroxide and a compound called methylglyoxal. Most raw honey varieties already contain these properties, as well, but in lower amounts.

The importance of honey for medicinal purposes is well documented in many of the world's oldest medical references. New Zealand natives have been using Manuka honey for many years as a topical agent on cuts and burns before it was exported and marketed to the rest of the world. It has gained popularity online as a skin-purifying ingredient in natural face masks. However, more research is needed on Manuka honey to verify any profound benefits.

In the meantime, Manuka honey can make an excellent addition to your kitchen staples as an added antibacterial boost in most recipes calling for honey. Avoid using Manuka honey in recipes that require high heat, which may kill off some of the live good bacteria in the honey. Here are just a few ways you can add Manuka honey to your meals:

- Drizzle on toast with nut butter and banana.
- Add a teaspoon to your fruit and veggie smoothies.
- Use as a natural sweetener in salad dressings.
- Mix with lemon and slightly warm water to soothe a sore throat.

New Zealand has multiple different grading systems used to rate the quality and supposed medicinal strength of the honey. In general, the higher the rating number, the higher the medicinal potency and price for the product. Refer to the following table to assist in purchasing a quality product that best meets your needs.

Grading System	What the Grading System Indicates	Range
Unique Manuka Factor (UMF)	The UMF number indicates the amount of medicinally beneficial chemicals present in the honey and also verifies the product has been sourced from New Zealand, tested and audited for its purity.	Low Grade: UMF 5 - 9+ Medium Grade: UMF 10 - 15+ High Grade: UMF 15 - 20+
MGO	Primarily used by one honey manufacturing company in New Zealand, this grading system indicates that each jar of honey has been tested for potency and traced from hive to home.	Low Grade: 83+ Medium Grade: 250+ High Grade: 550+
KFactor	The KFactor standard ensures you are getting raw and unpasteurized honey, free of antibiotics, pesticides and GMOs.	KFactor 16: a monofloral honey that is entirely or mostly made from the Manuka plant KFactor 12: a multifloral Manuka that is a blend of more than one Manuka plant

## Manuka Honey Vinaigrette

### Ingredients:

- ½ cup olive oil
- ¼ cup white wine vinegar
- 1 clove garlic
- 1 Tbsp. Manuka honey
- ¼ tsp ground black pepper
- ¼ tsp tarragon
- 1/8 tsp salt

### Directions:

Combine all ingredients into a blender until creamy. Drizzle on your favorite green salad or other fresh vegetables.

*Adapted from wedderspoon.com*

### Nutrition Info

Per serving (¼ of batch)

<b>Calories</b>	237
<b>Carbohydrates</b>	4.8g
Sugar	4.4g
Fiber	0.1g
<b>Protein</b>	0.1g
<b>Sodium</b>	75mg





## Family Fun in the Sun

Looking for a way to shake up your summertime routine with the kids after weeks of socially isolating as a family? Need some new ways to fit in physical activity or bond with the little ones? We've got you covered!

### Go for a nature walk scavenger hunt.

Make a list that could include things like a colorful rock, a stick shaped like an animal or other interesting things you might find along the way. At the end of the walk you can sit down and look at everyone's treasures together.

**Have an all-out water fight.** There's no better way to beat the heat and get some activity at the same time. Don't be

a bystander; access your inner child and let the water fly!

**Picnic at a new place.** Include the kids in preparing a picnic, pack up and head out to a new park. Take a kite, ball or outdoor game to play.

**Try backyard Olympics.** This is one event where you can really let your creativity soar. Let the kids be involved in determining the events (hula hoop, basketball, corn hole, etc.). Create a scoreboard and determine prizes for overall winner, best sportsmanship, funniest moment and so on.

### Plan a themed outdoor adventure.

Take the kiddos someplace new and incorporate a costume or two based on the theme. Try taking little pirates on a hunt for buried treasure or safari guides on a search for interesting bugs.

**Plan a backyard campout.** Set up a tent and grill, and put your fire pit to use. Share stories from your childhood and encourage the kids to share. Yard games and sing-alongs are also encouraged.

**Create chalk masterpieces.** If you're tiring of sidewalk chalk murals in your driveway, head to a loved one's house to surprise them with a chalk message in the driveway or on the sidewalk.

## Mindful Minute

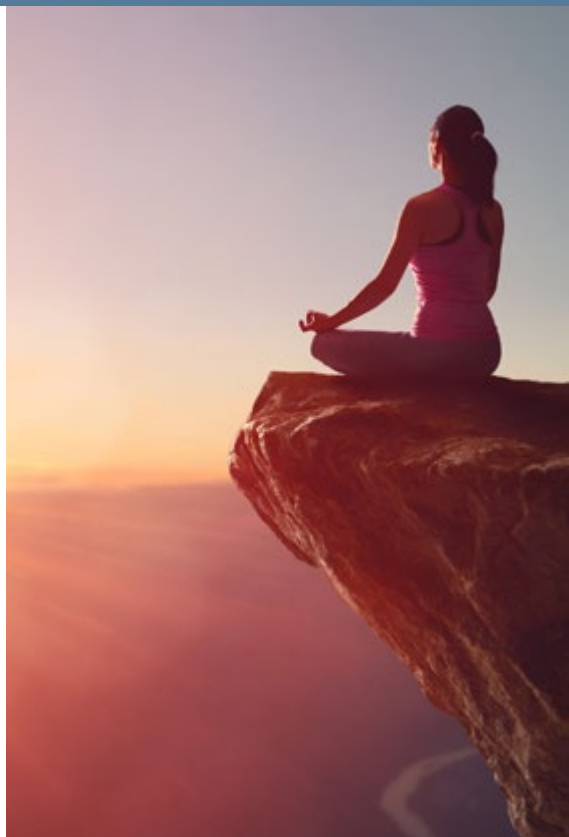
So often we go through life trying to change something – ourselves, our experience, other people. We expend precious energy on fighting and resisting “what is.” How might our life experience be different if we were to accept ourselves exactly as we are? This doesn't mean we stop trying to evolve and grow, but rather we remove the judgment and shame that often accompany the desire to change.

We cannot control our thoughts, but we can control how we relate to them. We can meet ourselves with compassion when we notice we've allowed a thought to become all-consuming. This exercise will help you **practice acceptance of your thoughts and emotions**, allowing them to come and go with more ease.


1. Find a comfortable seated position with your eyes closed. Bring your

attention into the body, feeling and sensing the breath. Expand your attention to include your thoughts. (There is a difference between noticing your thoughts and being consumed by them.)

2. Imagine your mind as a sky, with each thought passing through like a cloud. No need to hold on to any particular thought; no need to push anything away. Just let the thoughts come and go on their own.
3. Notice the weather pattern of your mind. Notice any unpleasant thoughts or emotions. Instead of pushing them away or trying to change what's unpleasant, try acknowledging their presence. Know that this emotion or thought is not permanent. Extend acceptance and make room to experience this as part of “what is” in the present moment.







## Ergonomic Tune-Up for Your Workstation

Whether you're preparing to return to your normal office space or planning for a long-term shift to working from home, it's the perfect time to take an ergonomic inventory of your workspace. Often it's the small details of a workstation setup that can lead to physical discomfort. Even if you don't feel uncomfortable as soon as you sit down, these small qualities can add up over time, manifesting in physical symptoms.

Typically, aches and pains from office work stem from physical stress due to prolonged and awkward positions, repetitive motions and overuse. When applied to the workstation, these tips will help promote good posture and correct ergonomics:

### **Chair Position & Spinal Support**

Adjust the height of the chair so that your feet rest comfortably on the floor, with your knees about level with your hips, making sure your seat is not pressing against the back of your knees. This may require you to create or purchase a footrest. If the chair does not provide lumbar support, try placing a pillow, rolled towel or cushion between the curve of your lower back and the back of the chair. If you're unable to purchase a top-of-the-line office chair, consider purchasing an orthopedic seat or lumbar support to improve your alignment.

### **Monitor Position & Head/Neck Support**

Position the monitor 18 to 30 inches from your eyes. The top of the screen should be at eye level or below so you look slightly down at your work. This will be difficult if you are working from a laptop at a table; the screen will be way too low. Consider purchasing an external keyboard and mouse

and propping the laptop screen to eye level, using boxes or books. If glare is a problem, turn off some or all overhead lights and close blinds, if possible. If you suffer from eye pain or headaches from looking at your monitor, consider using "dark mode" to reduce the contrast on your screen or lower the brightness. Lastly, limit the amount of time you hold a phone. Use computer audio, speakerphone or a headset as much as possible to avoid neck pain.

### **Keyboard Position & Hand/Wrist Support**

Forearms should be approximately parallel to the floor and there should be no hinging at the wrist. This will allow you to keep elbows close to sides so your shoulders are relaxed and there is no added pressure on the wrists. You may need to adjust the height of your chair or table to achieve this.

### **Change Positions**

Sitting at a desk all day, even with the best posture and ergonomics, can still be stressful on the body. On average, the body can only tolerate one position for about 20 minutes before needing readjustment. If you begin to feel restless or as if it's difficult to maintain good posture, it's time for a break. Once you find yourself leaning, hunching over or feeling the urge to readjust every couple of minutes, take it as your signal to reset and refresh with a minute or two of movement. Get up from your workspace and walk around, stretch or do a few minutes of yoga. Other suggestions to adjust your body position include standing at a kitchen island or bar-height table while typing, walking around while on a phone call and reclining while reading.

## Your Personal Finance Guide for COVID-19

Navigating your way through a crisis like COVID-19 starts with financial planning. While this pandemic is unique to our global economy, tried and true behaviors can help your finances from taking a drastic hit.

### Establish an Emergency Savings Fund

Having an emergency fund to cover expenses in the event of a loss of income has never been more important than times like these. How much you need to have saved depends mostly on your lifestyle. In general, it is recommended to save at least three to six months of expenses for use during an emergency. If you don't have one established, consider opening a separate bank account for this fund, and set up automatic deposits to help build its value.

### Create a Budget

Most people approach the idea of budgeting with dread because it can feel like saying no to the things you want. The truth is that a budget is just a spending plan. When you create your budget, you decide in advance what you want to do and where your money goes.

One method that has benefited others is to divide spending into three primary categories:

- 1. Essentials** – Income devoted toward expenses you must pay, such as mortgage or rent, utilities, insurance, taxes, transportation, food, etc.
- 2. Financial Priorities** – Income devoted toward planning for the future, such as building your emergency fund or contributing toward your retirement plan.
- 3. Lifestyle Choices** – Income left for the extras that help you live more comfortably and enjoyably but are not essential, such as shopping, memberships, entertainment and more.

Knowing how much you need to survive can help eliminate panic down the road because you will better understand how long your savings, stimulus or financial assistance can last. During a crisis, consider eliminating any non-essential spending and find ways to save on essentials.

### Adjust Your Lifestyle

Once your budget is established, immediately adjust your lifestyle. Under normal circumstances, it can take time and practice to properly develop a budget and implement it. Today, this diligence will be key to ensuring that COVID-19 is a minor blip on your personal finances instead of a life-altering crisis. When evaluating your three budget categories, consider how you can adjust lifestyle choices to contribute more toward essentials or financial priorities. If the expense doesn't involve things like food, shelter, health care and transportation, determine if you can eliminate it right now.

### Rebuild Your Savings

Once the dust settles, it can be tempting to immediately fall back into former routines, including spending habits. Now, more than ever, it will be important to stick to the budget you developed to get through COVID-19. You may have drawn from your emergency savings during that time so it is crucial to work on rebuilding before spending on anything extra. No one's financial situation is guaranteed, so taking this extra precaution can help you prepare for any future unforeseen circumstances.

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