

# Ten everyday things with unexpected health benefits

Think you know what's healthy and what's not? You may be surprised.

While we all know the basics of healthy eating and exercise, there are many unexpectedly healthy things you may not be aware are good for you. Here are our top 10 surprising things that can make you healthier.

## Taking photographs

If you find yourself getting snap happy on a holiday or night out, this may be no bad thing. Research suggests that recalling good memories and having a positive view of the past can help boost happiness levels and health, yet according to separate research we find it more difficult to recall good memories than bad ones. If you have trouble focusing on happy memories, try compiling some photo albums of your favorite moments for an instant health and happiness boost.

## Stress

While we all know about the health dangers of long-term stress, stress in short bursts can actually strengthen your immune system. In cases of acute stress, the body prepares itself for danger or threat (the fight-or-flight response) through the release of hormones including cortisol, which causes a short term boost to the immune system. So next time you find yourself getting tense before a job interview, presentation or big sports match, take consolation in the fact that you are doing your immune system a favor.

## Surfing the internet

Think that browsing Facebook and searching for celebrity gossip is a waste of time? Think again. Researchers at the University of California Los Angeles found that searching the web helps boost brain health in those middle-aged and older, and could even prevent some of the effects that ageing has on the brain. The study found that browsing the internet stimulated the areas of the brain that control language and memory as well as helping to improve decision-making and complex reasoning.

## Crying

We all know that laughter is good for us, but the surprising news is that shedding some tears could also do wonders for your health. Researchers at the University of South Florida found that 88.8 per cent of people feel better after crying, while it has been suggested that crying helps release the chemicals that build up in our bodies during times of stress. So, next time you feel yourself welling up after a weepy movie or emotional day, give your health and mood a boost by letting the tears flow.

## Getting married

Multiple research studies and statistics suggest that those who are married live longer than singletons due to the fact they experience less social isolation. Furthermore, while it's never a standalone reason for raising kids, research suggests that if you decide to start a family you could boost your health even more. A study of over 1.5 million men and women found that having one to two children reduces your risk of numerous conditions including cancer, alcoholism and heart disease.

## Housework

It may not be your favorite activity, yet keeping your home clean and tidy could help you stay fit and healthy and keep off those extra pounds. According to a poll on household chores, the average person walks more than 22 miles and burns off 50,000 calories a year while cleaning their home, making it a great alternative to the gym. Furthermore, research funded by Cancer Research UK found that doing household chores can reduce women's risk of breast cancer by 30 per cent in pre-menopausal women and 20 per cent in those post-menopause.

## Having a big butt

If you regularly spend hours in the gym trying to trim inches off your thighs or butt, it may be time you stopped and showed your curves a little appreciation instead. While you may despair of your curvy rear end, research shows that fat stored in this area mops up harmful fatty acids, contains an anti-inflammatory that prevents arteries from clogging, and cuts your risk of heart disease, diabetes and stroke.

## Dirt

With the soaring popularity of anti-bacterial hand gels, clothing and washing products, it is easy to believe that dirt is the ultimate enemy. However, while it is generally good to pay attention to hygiene, a little bit of dirt could be better for you than you think. Contrary to popular belief, being sterile doesn't keep you healthy and in fact research suggests that exposure to friendly bacteria found in soil can actually help boost the immune system and alleviate depression.

## Beer

While many of us associate beer with beer bellies, drinking this popular tipple in moderation could actually have more health benefits than red wine. Research studies have shown that moderate consumption of beer can help reduce risk of heart disease, stroke, diabetes and dementia. On top of this, beer is rich in many nutrients, including magnesium, selenium and B vitamins, and contains a cancer-fighting compound found in hops.

## Your friends

It seems to be relatively rare that the things we love are good for us, yet in the case of our friends this is definitely the case. Research suggests that your friends can help you live longer by reducing feelings of depression, stress and risky behavior, and encouraging you to look after your health. In fact, a study by Brigham Young University found that having a good social network boosts your survival chances by 50 per cent, while having few friends affects your longevity as much as smoking 15 cigarettes a day.