HOW DO THE DIFFERENT DIMENSIONS OF WELLNESS WORK TOGETHER?

Wellness refers to a healthy balance of mind, body, and feelings, which results in an overall sense of well-being. Previously, there was emphasis on physical health as the measure for defining well-being, but evidence has shown the importance of a more holistic approach when assessing wellness. The Epilepsy Foundation’s Wellness Institute focuses on eight dimensions of wellness: emotional health, stress management, sleep, diet and nutrition, physical activity, independent living, social relationships, and education/employment.

While each of the wellness dimensions are important on their own, they are all connected to each other. As one dimension improves or is challenged, so are the others.
Below are some examples of how these dimensions work together:

**Emotional Health:** Positive emotional health improves your ability to deal with challenges and serves as a foundation for making healthy choices such as being physically active, eating well, managing stress, and getting enough sleep.

**Stress Management:** Managing your stress can improve your emotional health, reduce your blood pressure and heart rate, and help you sleep better at night. Additionally, reducing your stress can help you improve your social relationships and your ability to live independently.

**Sleep:** Research shows that getting enough sleep can have positive effects on your emotional health. If you get enough sleep, you are less likely to be irritable or react poorly when faced with a challenge. Reducing these reactions can enhance your social relationships and improve your education or employment performance.

**Physical Activity:** Studies demonstrate that just 10 minutes of physical activity can have positive effects on your mood. Physical activity can help reduce stress and improve sleep quality. People who regularly exercise report greater levels of alertness and memory recall, which may aid your performance at school or work.

**Social Relationships:** Adults who are more socially connected are healthier and live longer than people who are more isolated. Social relationships also provide support to manage stress and help achieve success in school or work environments.

These are just a few examples of how different dimensions of wellness interact with each other. It is easy to focus on one aspect of wellness, especially if it is challenging for you. But try to be mindful of all the different dimensions and how they have an impact on your overall wellness.

If you live with epilepsy, looking after your overall health can enhance your seizure control. And for people who care for someone with epilepsy, focusing on your own health is very important. Sick, stressed, or sleep-deprived caregivers are not able to provide a high quality of care.

Looking at all eight dimensions at once can be overwhelming. However, if you start by making small positive changes in one or two of the dimensions, you can improve your overall health. Remember wellness is a journey, and each day is a new opportunity to improve your wellness. The small choices we make daily contribute to our overall well-being.
We all know that eating a healthy diet is important for our overall well-being. Foods in their whole form that are rich in vitamins and minerals, essential proteins, quality fats, and low glycemic carbohydrates give our body the fuel to function optimally.

However, it can be a shock to the wallet initially when you replace processed foods with whole foods. Yes, they are more expensive. But they also provide higher nutritional value, resulting in more bang for your buck. Not to mention, eating healthy leads to increased energy and vitality and reduces illness. If you’re sick less often, you miss fewer work days and your medical costs go down, therefore, making and saving you more money.

This online nutritional comparison calculator compares foods’ nutritional value. For example, when comparing approximately 100 calories of a fruit roll (#1) versus an apple (#2), the nutritional values are vastly different (see the chart to the left).

With that said, the sticker shock of buying foods in their whole form can be overwhelming and may even seem undoable. Don’t give up yet as there are still ways to save money when buying unprocessed, whole foods. Below are ways to buy healthy food without breaking the bank.

- Make a shopping list to meet your meal plan needs
- Buy frozen vegetables and fruit
- Buy frozen meat
- Store food properly so it won’t spoil
- Compare unit price vs bulk price
- Sign up for your store rewards program
- Cut out coupons
- Don’t shop hungry
- Grow your own cost-effective garden
- Join a community supported agriculture (CSA) or shop seasonally at local markets
- Limit going out to eat

For more information, visit our page on healthy eating.
ON SLEEP

World Sleep Day is March 15, 2019. The body uses sleep to recover from the wear and tear of daily living and is a necessary part of life. Getting the right amount of sleep is essential for mental and physical health, quality of life, and safety.

Sleep and epilepsy are closely connected. Sleep can affect the timing, number, and severity of seizures, and inadequate sleep is a common seizure trigger for many people.

People with problems sleeping should talk to their epilepsy providers as well as their primary care providers to sort out possible causes of sleep difficulties.

If you are a caregiver for someone living with epilepsy, it is very important you make healthy sleep a priority for yourself. Parents of children with epilepsy generally do not get enough sleep.

Sleep needs are different for each person and can change as you age. For adults, 7 to 9 hours is recommended. For school-aged children, 9 to 11 hours is recommended.

How to Get a Good Night’s Sleep

No matter how much sleep you need, there are several steps you can take to improve your sleep habits. Here are some tips to get a good night’s sleep.

- Set a realistic time for bed and stick to that schedule.
- Follow a relaxing routine at the end of the day to shut down and de-stress.
- Turn off electronics an hour before bed and remove all electronics/blue light from your bedroom.
- Get some sun during the day to jumpstart the production of melatonin, a hormone that regulates your sleep/wake cycles.
- Keep the bedroom dark, quiet, and cool for the best sleep (between 60–67 degrees Fahrenheit).
- Use fans or humidifiers to create white noise and soothe you.
- Create a sleep-friendly bedroom with a comfortable mattress and pillow.
- Get plenty of exercise during the day.
- Avoid large meals right before bedtime.
- Avoid stimulants and alcohol in the evening.
- If you must use sleep aids, talk to your health care provider.
- If you have a sleep problem that does not get better by improving your sleep habits, talk to your neurologist.

For more information, visit sleep and wellness.