

# Healthy You - Fall 2021

mind, body, spirit

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**Lead Poisoning in Syracuse:** A conversation with Sandra Lane, professor of public health and anthropology.

**Lymphatic Health Practices:** The rise in popularity of self-care techniques.

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## **In The Know: Discover new research in health and wellness.**

*By Cate Willing, Senior, Public Health, David B. Falk College of Sport and Human Dynamics.*

### **Boosting your immune system:**

Being active and eating healthy are easy ways to boost your immune system. Certain nutrients in foods can help to boost your immune system while others may hinder it. Eating foods that promote the health of your immune system is especially necessary in times like flu season and to ward off viruses like the coronavirus. Nutrients like iron, vitamins A, C, D, E, B-6 and zinc (among others) can help the body's immune response. Some foods that contain these vital nutrients are bone broths, fatty fish like salmon, and turmeric. As always, eating whole, healthy foods has a wide range of benefits that go beyond immune system support and should be incorporated as much as possible into your daily diet.

*Source: CNN.*

### **The importance of getting your flu shot:**

While getting the flu shot is important every year as we enter flu season, coupled with the dangers of COVID-19, getting your flu shot this year is crucial. September and October marked the beginning of flu season, the best time to get a flu shot. The flu varies in severity yearly and impacts people differently. The vaccine is "40 percent to 60 percent effective most years" and if you do happen to catch the flu, post-vaccination, the risk of severe illness is much milder, according to the Harvard Medical School. With many protective public health measures in place because of COVID-19, the transmission of the flu may not be as widespread. But because of coronavirus, hospital availability and access to treatment if infected with the flu will be more challenging than previous years. As students at Syracuse University, we have committed to the "Stay Safe Pledge," which requires us to get vaccinated against the flu. To uphold your commitment and keep yourself healthy, visit the Barnes Center at The Arch, where the flu vaccine is available to all members of the University. [See the patient portal for scheduling information.](#)

*Source: Harvard Medical School.*

### **Incorporating meditation in your routine:**

The idea of sitting alone with your thoughts for minutes to hours can be daunting to many, but the practice of meditation can benefit all. Thought to "reduce stress, increase calmness and clarity and promote happiness," meditation is straightforward and customizable, according to *The New York Times*. Getting started with meditation is often the hardest part, but learning the basics can help you ease into this mindfulness practice. The first step in meditating is to set intentional time aside to focus on the act. Many apps, podcasts and videos are available on platforms like Spotify and YouTube that can help guide you through your meditation practice. Another type of meditation is walking meditation, which can be a way to ease into the practice for busy-minded individuals. The Barnes Center at The Arch also provides meditation classes and other mindfulness programs. For more information, visit the [Barnes Center at The Arch](#) in-person or online.

*Source: The New York Times.*

## **Lead poisoning in Syracuse: A conversation with professor of public health and anthropology Sandra Lane.**

*By Kinley Gaudette, Junior, Public Health, David B. Falk College of Sport and Human Dynamics.*

Sandra Lane, Ph.D., MPH, a professor of public health and anthropology at Syracuse University, has been fighting the lead poisoning crisis for decades. Working with student researchers and city officials to develop policy and related interventions that protect the city's children, she has accumulated extensive knowledge on the topic and shared some insight for students on campus as to why this issue matters and what is next.

Though lead poisoning is thought to be an issue of the past, this crisis still remains, and is especially pervasive in the City of Syracuse, where the percentage of children with elevated blood lead levels greatly exceeds the national average. In 2018, 1 in 5 children had elevated blood lead levels in some lower-income areas, five times the national average. Lead poisoning in children can lead to behavioral problems and learning disabilities, and can damage kidneys, blood and the nervous system. These health problems are lifetime issues that can worsen into adulthood. Lead poisoning is also a risk factor for teen pregnancy, school failure, violence and incarceration.

### **A closer look: one-on-one with Sandra Lane.**

**What are the most important things to know about the lead poisoning crisis in Syracuse?**

**SL:** That it is still a crisis. Many people think that the lead problem went away a long time ago. It didn't entirely go away. It decreased for a lot of people who were in well-maintained houses, even houses built before 1978. But for poor people who live in dilapidated rental properties— especially, say, in Syracuse but also in other cities—children are still very much poisoned by lead. Many people worry about lead in the water like in Flint, Michigan; they had a terrible problem.

We do not have a lead problem in our water in Syracuse. We get water from Skaneateles Lake, and it is healthy water. The lead problem in Syracuse comes predominantly from the underlayers of paint in houses built before 1978 that are not well-maintained. So, in those houses, which are mostly but not all rental properties (some of them are owned) the place that really is causing the most damage to children is the windowsills. Because the lead underlayers of paint pulverizes into powder in the friction surfaces of the windowsills of double-hung windows.

People wrongly believe that mothers are allowing their children to eat paint chips. While that may occasionally or rarely happen, it is not the main way that children get poisoned. Children get poisoned from the dust... If you have enough [lead] dust that would fit into a packet of sugar, that would be enough to poison 100 rooms. So, this lead dust is potent, and children especially under the age of 3 who tend to have wet faces—their noses run, they pick their nose, they suck their thumbs, etc.—they could get lead paint dust on their thumb and put that in their mouth. If they did that just a couple of times a day, that would be enough for many children to have an alarmingly elevated blood-lead level.

### **What is being done to combat this crisis?**

**SL:** There was an ordinance passed in August 2020 that would allow the houses to be inspected before they are rented. The inspection would be a visual inspection with a dust wipe. Right now, even though it has been over a year since the law was passed, that is still mostly not happening. We have been in touch with the City of Syracuse, and they said, "Yes, we plan to do that, but we have all these problems..." To me this is an emergency, and there is no more time for dragging their feet. Children's brains are at risk. We could make houses lead safe, which would be encapsulating paint on the walls and then removing the friction surfaces in the double-hung windows and covering them up with something that would prevent the paint from being pulverized.

### **Why should Syracuse University students care about this crisis?**

**SL:** Students are in the reproductive ages and presumably within 10 to 15 years many of the students who are undergraduates will eventually become parents. This is something to know about. And students are taxpayers, or they will become taxpayers. Our tax dollars pay for this not being fixed. Our research team showed in 2008—so it is more expensive now—that the City of Syracuse pays a half a million dollars a year just to cope with the lead poisoning of the children. And that doesn't even count future earnings lost.

The other thing is that Syracuse City School District has a terrible problem. Their third-graders in 2018, right before the pandemic so we are not talking about pandemic times, only 23% of children were reading at or above grade level. And, we know that lead poisoning is a risk factor for senile dementia. So, it's kind of like through the lifespan. Childhood lead poisoning under the age of 3 can change a person's life from almost cradle to grave.

### **As members of the Syracuse University community and therefore members of the city, do you think students owe it to the greater Syracuse community to actively work to combat this crisis?**

**SL:** I have faith in my students. I have found that your generation of students are incredibly idealistic and really wants to help people. And lead poisoning is something that has its tentacles in so many public health and social problems... If we fix lead poisoning, we would be a lot better off as a society. We would be able to spend money, instead of on violence and other things, we would spend more money on education. And the education we did spend money on would be more successful. And we have known about the problems of lead for well over 100 years.

For me, I am an educator. I really value education... I think students do care... With your generation, our world is in good hands. The students I teach are enormously impressive. And every single one of you seems to want to make the world better. So I am very pleased with that, and I know that you will do that in various ways in the future. And there are a lot of things to work on, but lead poisoning is so broadly negative, and it's not that expensive to fix.

## **"I am confident in myself and my abilities." The value in positive affirmations.**

*By Megan Hughes, First-year student, Public Health, David B. Falk College of Sport and Human Dynamics.*

"Nothing can dim the light that shines from within." ~ Maya Angelou.

Over the past decade a silent mental health crisis has swept across the country. College students have been one of the groups most harshly affected. According to the *American Journal of Managed Care*, the number of adults experiencing serious psychological distress is on the rise, especially among young adults aged 18-25, who experienced a 71% increase in distress from 2008 to 2017. In the face of this crisis, many have turned to positive affirmations to counter negative feelings.

At Syracuse University, first-year student Michelle Ostovari is a proponent of positive affirmations, saying, "I do think [positive affirmations] work because the more you say something, the more you believe it." In Ostovari's experience, the main goal of positive affirmations is to shift your mindset, since they "make you believe something that you wouldn't necessarily believe." Like many of us, Ostovari was exposed to positive affirmations through TikTok and related social media platforms. This widespread teaching of positive affirmations through social media platforms helps make more people aware of their feelings and beliefs.

People use positive affirmations in different ways. Some use them when they feel it is needed. Students, like Ostovari, use them daily as part of their routine. Positive affirmations are great tools to help you change your mind about any negative thoughts.

### **Here are some positive affirmations you can use:**

- "I am confident in myself and my abilities;"
- "My talents make me valuable and unique;"
- "I trust myself always;"
- "I respect myself by taking care of myself whenever I need it;"
- "I am doing my best every day;"

- "I believe in my dreams;"
- "I love myself for who I am" and:
- "The best is yet to come."
- You can also explore positive affirmations more on TikTok.

### **For more information:**

[Oprah Daily: 40 Positive Affirmations to Add to Your Daily Rotation.](#)

## **Charting your future: Don't go it alone. The value of mentoring in promoting a professional career.**

*By David Sly and Jessica Pitcher, Falk College Career Services.*

Thinking about what to do with the rest of your life can be daunting. So is preparing for life as a self-sufficient adult. These issues can be so overwhelming that many people adopt a strategy of avoidance. They tell themselves that any number of other concerns are more pressing and there will be plenty of time to think about all of that in senior year.

Sound familiar? Well, there happen to be two mistaken conclusions in those thoughts even before avoidance sets in.

Bad news first: There will not be plenty of time senior year; it will likely feel even more busy. Now the good news: The notion that anyone needs to be a self-sufficient adult or figure everything out on their own is an unnecessary weight. Falk College and the Syracuse University alumni community are full of people who have been there, will be happy to listen to your thoughts and concerns, and offer helpful suggestions.

Some call helpful people like this a mentor, a term that often stirs thoughts of formal interactions and commitment to a plan or person. Mentorship need not mean formality or commitment. In most cases, it just means opening yourself up and sharing your goals or ideas with someone whom you trust or who has experience in a professional area of interest to you.

These informal mentors are invaluable in their ability to point out mistaken assumptions, which is much better than finding out about misperceptions a week or two into a new job. They can also offer valuable suggestions for how you can bring that dream closer to reality. Informal mentors include trusted professors, internship supervisors, alumni and your friendly career services office.

If you are having trouble finding a mentor, Falk Career Services can help with that, as well. Every year we host multiple events designed to connect students with alumni and professionals in a range of fields relevant to Falk students.

Keep an eye on the Handshake events page, think up a few questions you might have and just show up. If you are looking for a more formal mentor relationship, there is good news on the horizon. Falk Career Services has piloted an alumni mentorship program that links students with alumni across the country who are open to sharing their experiences, advice and professional connections to help you succeed. Check out Handshake, keyword "Falk," for additional information.

Clearly, you can gain a lot from seeking mentors, with plenty of data out there to make that case (just check the links below for a starting point). You might ask, then, whether you should feel guilty about gaining all this benefit from someone else? Well, these Falk alumni and staff are here for one reason only, an interest in giving back to the University and helping current students find the same (or greater) success. Still unsure? There is also good evidence that mentoring others is connected to greater personal objective and subjective career success as well.

So, don't wait. Take that step to share your interests or worries with someone who has been there. At the least, they can listen and offer a new perspective. Just remember that saying a plan out loud does not commit you to it, but it will help you learn more about that potential road ahead and about yourself. Taking this step may also improve the confidence and career success of your mentor, which, incidentally, you should keep in mind after you've successfully navigated the post-graduation world for a few years. Paying that mentorship forward to a new generation of students will help everyone involved.

### **For more information:**

[Falk College events on Syracuse University Handshake.](#)

[Falk College Career Services resources for students.](#)

## **Self-care: Me time! The importance of allocating time for self-care.**

*By Siya Kumar, Sophomore, Public Health, David B. Falk College of Sport and Human Dynamics.*

Nowadays, it's difficult to scroll through social media or the internet without finding some post or article about self-care. But as frequently as self-care is mentioned, we often sacrifice our health and well-being to tend to our busy lives and responsibilities. Especially amid a global pandemic, physical and emotional stress levels can run rampant.

Dessa Bergen-Cico, a professor of public health at Syracuse University, specializes in mindfulness-based and complementary health practices, such as the effects of mindfulness-based stress reduction practices on an individual's health. She wants you to practice self-care.

"In my direct experience for 25 years of working with college students, it can be difficult to fit time in [for self-care], and they can sometimes think that they're doing things that are a form of self-care that really aren't," she says.

Prioritizing self-care and incorporating it into our schedules may seem like a luxury, or even selfish and unproductive, but maintaining a healthy body and mind will make you more efficient and better rested in the long run. According to one of Bergen-Cico's studies published in the *Journal of American College Health*, a group of undergraduate students who participated in a mindfulness-based stress reduction program, including practices of yoga and meditation, were found to experience significant increases in psychological health.

Self-care days are a new trend in which individuals deliberately take time to tend to their mental, physical and emotional needs. While for some people this could mean going to the spa or a shopping trip, self-care definitely doesn't need to be expensive or complicated. A self-care day can include activities as easy as getting a good night of sleep and eating nutritious food. Those may sound basic, but can easily become less of a priority in our daily lives.

As college students on a budget with never-ending assignments, we can find practices that can be done straight out of a dorm room, such as drinking tea, caring for your skin, reading a book, doing yoga and even coloring. For some people, doing absolutely nothing might be the right thing to do when life gets exhausting. Try to unplug from your device and avoid responding to unnecessary correspondence.

A self-care day should be about taking time out to focus on yourself. Self-care can look different from person to person, depending on individual likes, interests and needs. Ultimately, you need to familiarize yourself with your own body and the ways by which you can best manage stress and other negative emotions like anxiety.

Apart from tasks and activities, practicing self-love and being kind to yourself are crucial components of self-care. This could mean including positive affirmations about your body, mind and personality as a part of your daily routine; ditching social media; or surrounding yourself with positive friends and family. If you're usually hard on yourself in terms of diet and exercise, use the day to relax and place no restrictions on yourself.

How often to have a self-care day is up to the individual. Incorporating some self-care into your daily routine is equally as helpful. Be kind to your own mind, body and spirit, so you can be kinder to others and ready to take on the many responsibilities that life has to offer. Healthier, happier people are the key to creating a better world for all.

### **For more information:**

[Psychology Today: Self-Care: 12 Ways to Take Better Care of Yourself.](#)

## **Lymphatic health practices: The rise in popularity of self-care techniques.**

*By Cate Willing, Senior, Public Health, David B. Falk College of Sport and Human Dynamics.*

If you have taken any biology or human anatomy course, you have probably studied the lymphatic system. Since it has likely been a few years, here's a quick refresher. The lymphatic system works as part of your immune system to protect your body from illness-causing bacteria, manage fluid levels in your body and remove waste products from the lymph, according to the Cleveland Clinic. The lymphatic system plays a crucial role in promoting health, and keeping our immune system intact has promoted an interest in lymphatic-specific health practices, especially over the last year and a half.

Lymphatic drainage and lymphatic massaging are two ways to promote lymphatic functioning externally. The ancient Chinese healing tradition of *gua sha*, a form of lymphatic massaging, has taken TikTok by storm in the last year, amassing 717.8 million views on the *gua sha* hashtag as of October 2021. According to Healthline, soft strokes made to the skin with a tool is meant to promote blood flow and manage inflammation. As part of traditional Chinese medicine, *gua sha* techniques have been in practice dating back to 220 BC. Using *gua sha* techniques have morphed into a general understanding of lymphatic drainage through jade rolling, another common tool, as well as ice rolling and other practices.

While scientific evidence for long-term benefits and treatment through lymphatic massaging remains unfounded, tools and self-care rituals like massaging can contain symptom-relieving properties. Medical News Today cites potential benefits to individuals with lymphedema, fibromyalgia and other conditions.

However, the average college student may find solace in self-care and skin care practices like lymphatic massaging. Lilly Peters, a senior at Syracuse University, says she was "first introduced to lymphatic drainage from a video tutorial using the *gua sha* technique and a jade roller tool in the beginning of 2021." After seeing a few videos on the benefits of using the *gua sha* technique, Peters began to use it in her daily routine. "The goal of using lymphatic drainage techniques for me is more of a way to practice self-care," she says.

Through incorporating massaging techniques to relieve symptoms or to improve skin quality, circulation or other benefits these practices tout, you may be taking better care of your body, promoting overall feelings of wellness.

TikTok and other social media platforms have given students a way to learn about different practices to practice for overall well-being, specifically in the self-care world. There can be negative side-effects with lymphatic massaging, *gua sha*, jade rolling and other techniques that are not supported by evidence-based research. Consultation with a medical provider is always key when incorporating new health-related practices into your routine.

### **For more information:**

[Healthline: How to Use Gua Sha for Tension, Puffiness, and Lymphatic Drainage.](#)

[Medical News Today: How to perform a lymphatic drainage massage.](#)

[Cleveland Clinic: Lymphatic System.](#)

**Re-thinking your cosmetics: Your skin has absorption properties.** Exploring the effects of cosmetic ingredients on the skin.

*By Thy Mai Vu '20, SUNY College of Environmental Science and Forestry.*

How many of us are aware of what is really in the cosmetics we put on our face? For many, the daily behavior of using makeup and skin care products diminishes the awareness we should have for what we put on and in our body. We care so much for the quality of the food we eat, but why do so many of us stop at that? Learning what is really in your makeup can go a long way in promoting internal and external health.

According to a study by the Environmental Working Group (EWG), on average, women use about 12 beauty products and put 168 chemicals on their bodies each day. The beauty industry is self-regulated because of minimal regulation from the Food and Drug Administration. While the FDA has an Office of Cosmetics and Colors, the laws that govern this office haven't been updated since its conception in 1938. Even though Congress passed the Federal Food, Drug and Cosmetic Act in 1938, only nine chemicals are banned.

The FDA recommended consumers avoid using products that contain parabens. Parabens may appear on cosmetic labels as methylparaben, propylparaben, ethylparaben or butylparaben. They are used in many makeups and moisturizers. The EWG says concern for parabens in cosmetics comes from the parabens' properties that can disrupt hormones in the body, which can increase the risk for cancer and birth defects. Since studies have shown negative health effects of parabens, many companies have begun to omit parabens from their products, so when shopping for cosmetics and skin care look for options that are paraben-free.

Ingredients that are marked as fragrance, such as perfume and essential oils, can also harm your skin. According to [Healthline.com](https://www.healthline.com), the chemicals that make up fragrance can cause both short-term and long-term health effects, such as skin irritation and potential cancer risks. For people who are sensitive to chemicals, fragrances can trigger harmful effects, such as allergic reactions and migraines, and can cause asthma.

Making smart, educated choices when purchasing beauty products can help to prevent these negative health effects. You can do so by:

- making sure to check all the ingredients on the labels of products and doing research on products before purchasing them;
- using fewer products or choosing products with fewer ingredients;
- being wary of products that claim they are "pure," "organic" or "natural," as there is no legal backup for these claims and such a claim does not automatically make them safer and;
- using products that have organic certification or certification with a recognized organization that promotes nontoxic products.

### **For more information:**

[U.S. Food and Drug Administration: FDA Authority Over Cosmetics: How Cosmetics Are Not FDA-Approved, but Are FDA-Regulated.](#)

## **What's the real deal with **caffeine**? Caffeine dependency and sleep deprivation.**

*By Veronique Wojcik, First-year student, Food Studies, David B. Falk College of Sport and Human Dynamics.*

Caffeine is often considered a college student's best friend. Whether it's consumed through coffee, tea, energy drinks or soda, caffeine and its ability to reenergize us remain the same. Though beneficial in the short term, caffeine can have lasting effects on our sleep time and quality.

Jane Burrell, Ph.D., professor of nutrition and food studies at Syracuse University, argues that "if you consume a lot of caffeine, it definitely disrupts our sleep." Caffeine can interrupt our sleep habits because it takes away from our ability to enter into the deep sleep that makes us feel rested. Too much caffeine has the potential to lead to sleep deprivation and a cycle of caffeine dependency, ultimately leaving us with sleeping issues. Despite this, caffeine's negative effects can be managed by mindfully deciding how much and when to consume caffeine.

It is best to drink our caffeine in the morning and avoid the afternoons, so its stimulant properties do not keep us up late at night. Burrell emphasizes that the amount of caffeine consumed should be considered. She does not suggest that caffeine be cut out entirely but, instead, swapping a medium or large coffee for a standard 8-ounce cup can make all the difference.

"We should have no more than 400mg of caffeine each day," she says. That amount is equal to four 8-ounce cups of brewed coffee or 10 cans of cola.

Too much caffeine will not only prevent us from falling asleep, but it can lead to a caffeine dependency. "When you develop a tolerance to caffeine, some people can become dependent, which can create withdrawal symptoms when it gets taken away," Burrell says.

If you find yourself dependent on caffeine, it may be difficult to overcome. Small steps, like decreasing the size of your drink or changing the source of your caffeine from energy drinks to coffee and tea, are ways you can combat this dependency. Tea and coffee contain nutrients that offer our body more benefits than just an energy boost. Additionally, they do not contain added sugars in their natural form that energy drinks and cola may contain. It is important to be aware of the ingredients and caffeine content in your favorite drinks.

Coffee and tea are great morning starters. However, it is important to be mindful of when and how much you are drinking to avoid caffeine dependency and sleep deprivation.

### **For more information:**

[U.S. Food and Drug Administration: Spilling the Beans: How Much Caffeine is Too Much?](#)

[Journal of Clinical Sleep Medicine: Caffeine Effects on Sleep Taken 0, 3, or 6 Hours before Going to Bed.](#)

## **Hours spent on **Zoom**: What's the effect? Exploring Zoom dysmorphia.**

*By Martena Frye, First-year student, Public Health, David B. Falk College of Sport and Human Dynamics.*

Zoom is a widely popular platform that most students have grown accustomed to during the COVID-19 pandemic. While in quarantine, students' mental health has suffered—and continues to as we transition back into the in-person environment. Isolation over the past year and a half has impacted not only students' mental health, but also their perceptions of themselves, most apparent through body image or body dysmorphia.

Not only have our perceptions of ourselves changed during the pandemic but also our perceptions of how we feel other people view us has changed—making this a two-fold issue.

Psychoanalyst and author Phil Mollon explains in *Psychology Today* that “the Zoom screen has become a modern-day mirror, one that we all peer at much more often than ever before.”

This constant time looking at yourself is leading to a new phenomenon, Zoom dysmorphia. Zoom dysmorphia is defined as “continued dissatisfaction with one's personal appearance combined with prolonged exposure to the perceived unsettling image,” which may further trigger or worsen body dysmorphic disorder, known commonly as body dysmorphia. Though not an official diagnosis, it can be understood as a concept and a part of body dysmorphia, a fixation “on what [individuals] think needs to change [about themselves] and avoiding social interactions,” according to *Psychology Today*.

Extended time spent on Zoom naturally has implications for college-aged students.

Students at Syracuse University have noticed changes in their perceptions of themselves since the pandemic began. First-year student Kelsey Jones has found that Zoom “affected my awareness [of myself]. I found myself only allowing to show my body from my shoulders up. I tried to wear less revealing clothing such as hoodies [and constantly] adjust the way I sat or the way my shirt sat.”

In general, social media creates a fake version of an “ideal” body type.

The nature of quarantine forced extended time inside, and, naturally, time spent on electronics and social media increased for many. “Social media such as Instagram, TikTok, Twitter and Snapchat constantly expose people to different types of body and beauty standards,” says Jones. “Altered pictures and images are things I see every day.”

Jones' account of her time spent on social media is just one of many examples of the impacts of media use and potential harmful impacts to body image. Jones continues, “Whether it be beauty filters or full-body Photoshop, it is not rare to see these.”

For college students, it can be hard to distinguish between what is real and what is fake on social media, and this progression fits into the idea of Zoom dysmorphia. So, what can we do about it? As students, we can use positive affirmations centered around body positivity to boost our self-esteem as well as utilizing other campus resources.

Within the Syracuse University community, Jones suggested collaboration among campus groups to promote positive body image. “[In] creating body positivity posters to have around campus and in [The Barnes Center at The Arch] to help spread positivity,” the campus can become more aware of how to promote body positivity, she says. This can help the University community know that people care about the effects of body image and a community of body positive people exists for people who are struggling with body image issues.

Campus groups, including Students United for Body Acceptance, CHAARG and other resources from the Barnes Center at The Arch can help you get started on your body positivity journey.

## **For more information:**

[Syracuse University CHAARG website.](#)

[Psychology Today: What Is "Zoom Dysmorphia" and Why Does It Hurt So Much?](#)

[Cleveland Clinic: 7 Tips for Building a Better Body Image as an Adult.](#)

## **The whole truth about whole grains. Understanding the value of eating whole grains.**

*By Janet Pease, Former Head of Collections and Research Services, Syracuse University Libraries.*

Some of the key ingredients in a healthy diet are whole grains. Experts recommend that adults have three servings (48 grams) of whole grains a day, but currently only about 8% of U.S. adults are getting that much. And some consumers who think they are meeting that requirement might not be, at least in part because of misleading ingredient labeling on packaging. We need to become super-sleuths.

### **Why are they important?**

According to the U.S. Department of Agriculture, grains are an important source of many nutrients. These include fiber, protein, several B vitamins (thiamin, riboflavin, niacin and folate) and minerals (iron, magnesium and selenium). Research studies have shown that whole grains as part of a healthy diet may help reduce blood cholesterol levels and lower the risk of heart disease, obesity and type 2 diabetes.

### **What does whole grain mean?**

Every grain starts as a whole grain and has three parts: the bran (outer skin that contains antioxidants, B vitamins and fiber), the germ (the part that grows into a new plant when pollinated; contains numerous vitamins, protein, minerals and healthy fats) and the endosperm (contains carbohydrates and smaller amounts of protein, vitamins and minerals).

According to the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA), to be called a whole-grain food, the food must contain all three of these components in the same proportion as in nature, even if the grain has been processed or refined (e.g., cracked, crushed, rolled and/or cooked).

When grains are processed and refined—the most common practice for making breads, cereals and pastas—the bran and germ are removed. As a result, grains become less nutritious, losing up to 25% of their original protein content, as well as other essential nutrients. Manufacturers may later fortify the product by adding vitamins, minerals and fiber during processing, but a naturally whole grain is a healthier choice.

## So what's the problem?

Food labels provide a lot of misleading information that consumers need to wade through to find the real deal.

As consumers have become more health-conscious, “made with whole grains” has become a huge draw in grocery stores, and the market is expected to grow to an estimated \$46.2 billion by 2022. Unfortunately, being made with whole grains does not mean that the product is made only with whole grains. In reality, there could be few whole grains in the product. And words such as stoneground, cracked wheat, multigrain or seven-grain are also misleading. These terms indicate nothing about whether the grains are whole or refined.

## Check labels carefully.

The Center for Science in the Public Interest is trying to get the FDA to address the misleading information, but what can you do to make sure you are getting the real thing?

Read the labels on products carefully. You cannot go by just the name or the big print touting health benefits on the package of processed foods.

The ingredient list is what you need to look at. Ingredients are listed in descending order by weight. Make sure that whole grain, whole wheat, whole wheat flour or whole oats is listed first.

Be aware, though, that just because a product contains whole grains, it does not guarantee that it's a health food. Granola bars, for example, may be made with whole grains but may also include a lot of added sugar or salt.

## Partial list of whole grains:

- Barley
- Oats (including oatmeal)
- Wild and brown rice
- Buckwheat
- Whole rye
- Whole wheat
- Millet
- Farro
- Quinoa
- Popcorn

## For more information:

[Oldways Whole Grain Council.](#)

[U.S. Department of Agriculture.](#)

[U.S. Food and Drug Administration.](#)

## Plant-based diets: Taking a closer look at protein intake.

*By Serena Kollmorgen, First-year student, Public Health, David B. Falk College of Sport and Human Dynamics.*

In recent years there has been a significant increase in individuals participating in some sort of plant-based diet. These diets include vegan, vegetarian, pescatarian and everything in between. Although health may be a primary reason for switching to this lifestyle, concerns remain about adequate protein intake while eating plant-based.

What exactly is a plant-based diet? According to the Harvard Medical School, anywhere from vegan or vegetarian to flexitarian can be considered in the general category of plant-based diets. Veganism includes a strict no-meat and no-meat-products rule, exempting milk and dairy products from the diet. The vegetarian diet eliminates meat. Pescatarian diets include eating fish while omitting poultry and other meat products. Flexitarian, on the other hand, is the label given to those who switch back and forth from eating or not eating meat and fish.

*The New York Times* notes in 2019 that about 10% of the world's population partakes in a strict vegetarian or vegan diet, and within America about 6% of the population identifies as vegetarian, compared to 2% in 2013. This increase is said to be due to a general awareness of environmental and ethical impacts of eating meat, as well as additional research on the health benefits of vegetarian and vegan lifestyles. These two diets provide similar nutrients, and opponents of the diets are mainly concerned with reaching adequate protein intake.

Proteins are used in the body to help build and repair muscle and as an energy source. The concern with plant-based diets is they lack enough protein to substitute for what meat or other animal products provide.

First-year Syracuse University student Andrea Raugh shares her tips for consuming enough protein as a vegetarian. “With dinners and more full meals, I eat a lot of tofu and beans and throughout the day, I’ll snack on nuts or protein granola bars. My favorite meal at Syracuse is going to Chipotle and getting tofu in my bowl there.”

There are many ways to meet your required protein intake, although on a plant-based diet, attention and planning are key to meeting these goals. Protein powders provide yet another option to boost your protein intake. These supplements are densely packed with protein and can be added to smoothies and other drinks. Raugh explains, "One of my favorite snacks that helps me get protein is a smoothie from Otto's Juice Box with added protein powder in it."

Syracuse University students are fortunate to have access to dining halls with an A+ rating in vegan options for four consecutive years from the People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals.

The Barnes Center at The Arch provides nutrition and eating habit counseling with a registered dietitian through appointments available on the Patient Portal. This resource can assist students with any needs or questions concerning the topic of protein and plant-based diets. Decisions on incorporating plant-based food into your diet should be made through consultation with medical providers.

### **For more information:**

[The New York Times: It's Called 'Plant-Based.' Look It Up.](#)

[Harvard Medical School: What is a plant-based diet and why should you try it?](#)

[Syracuse University Food Services menus.](#)

[Syracuse University Barnes Center at The Arch: Nutrition.](#)

## **Prolonged computer use: Dangers, and solutions through stretching.**

*By Nicole Pulido Sophomore, Public Health David B. Falk College of Sport and Human Dynamics*

With many activities and classes now online, students find themselves hunched over their computers for long periods of time. Because this shift to prolonged sitting and increased screen time is recent, we may not realize how detrimental this can be to our health.

Prolonged sitting can bring about a variety of aches, from tense shoulders to back pain. These daily aches are easy to dismiss, but taking control of them now will help prevent long-term damage. Implementing a routine of easy, quick stretches is one way to address these pains.

Contrary to popular opinion, stretching should be carried out more often than just before or after exercise. Stretching can also increase one's flexibility, mobility of joints and overall physical and mental health. So, which stretches will help target pain directly correlated to prolonged sitting? Dr. Charles Aranda, a Philippine board-certified orthopedic surgeon and sports medicine physician, along with Jinkle Joy Arandia, a sports physiotherapist from the Philippines, recommend the following stretches to the *Manila Bulletin*.

### **Neck pain:**

"Sit or stand upright with your spine straight, shoulders relaxed, and neck centered in a neutral position. Tuck in your chin, and gently pull your head down with one hand to stretch the back of your neck. Hold the stretch for 15 to 20 seconds."

### **Tense shoulders and upper back:**

"Start by standing or sitting comfortably on the floor or in a chair. Now, place your right hand on the top of your head and gently pull it to your right. Keep the back straight and shoulders relaxed. Hold for 15 to 20 seconds, and then slowly lift your head back to the starting position. Repeat on the other side. Pro tip: Stabilize your body by holding onto a chair using one hand while your other hand is doing the exercise."

### **Tight lower back:**

"Lie flat on either the ground or a mat with the legs fully stretched out. Hold each end of a rolled-up towel and wrap it behind the foot. Then pull the leg up in front of the body to feel a slight stretch in the hamstring muscle. Hold this position for 20 seconds, and then lower the leg down slowly."

"For another stretch to help you restore your lower back, lie on your back and hug one knee into your chest. Straighten your other leg along the ground. Pull your knee toward your chest as tight as you can for 20 seconds. Repeat on the other leg."

While incorporating stretches into your life is important, it is equally vital to set some time aside to take a walk or do any activity that allows your body to take a break from sitting. The Barnes Center at The Arch hosts numerous events weekly, like hikes and ice skating; take advantage of these activities to get outside and be active. But if you find yourself short on time or unable to get out of your dorm for these activities, there are simpler ways to ensure you get some sort of physical activity. For instance, next time you're on your way to class, opt for taking the stairs instead of going up the elevator or take the longer route to class instead of the shortcut.

Although it's not easy to change your routine and implement stretches into your daily life, it's important to be aware of the risks associated with sitting for too long. The next time you find yourself in this situation, check your posture and make time for some quick stretches. By being more informed and knowing ways to help treat pain related to prolonged sitting, you can start working toward a healthier you. Visit the Barnes Center at The Arch concerning activities related to stretchy or physical activity.

### **For more information:**

[Mayo Clinic: Stretching: Focus on flexibility.](#)

[Manila Bulletin: Hunched over your laptop all day? These stretches are for you.](#)

## Experiencing back pain? Look in your backpack. Ways to reduce back strain.

*By Lily Esteghamati, Senior, Public Health, David B. Falk College of Sport and Human Dynamics.*

Carrying your backpack to and from class every day may seem harmless, but if it is packed with too much weight, you may experience painful effects. Many students experience unnecessary back and shoulder pain and do not realize it can stem from the weight of their backpacks. Students carry around backpacks filled with laptops, notebooks, binders and much more that average between 12 and 20 pounds.

A good way to test if your backpack places an unnecessary strain on you is to put the backpack on the scale and weigh it. If it weighs more than 10 percent of your body weight, it is considered to be overweight. Members of the University of Iowa Hospitals and Clinics Rehabilitation Services recommended that your backpack should only hold the essentials, so that it does not exceed the recommended weight.

If any of the following statements resonate with your backpack use, it's likely you are carrying too much weight on your shoulders:

- You have red marks on your shoulder after carrying your backpack;
- You grunt when putting your backpack on or taking it off;
- You have a tingling feeling in one or both arms when wearing your backpack and;
- You have achiness or pain in your back.

When you put on a heavy backpack or wear it the wrong way, the weight can force you to lean in unnatural ways. You compensate for this by leaning forward, which can cause issues with balance and posture over time. Heavy backpacks also apply pressure to your shoulders, which, according to KidsHealth.org, forces your spine into an unnatural position and may damage your muscles and joints.

You can avoid injury.

Prevention starts with placement of the items in your backpack. Place the heavier items closer to the back of the bag and the lighter items toward the front. It is important to secure the items so they do not shift when you are walking. By only taking what you need for the day to class, you can lighten your load. If that is not possible, consider carrying a heavy item in your arms instead of putting it in your backpack. Many doctors recommend using a rolling bag, which eliminates any strain on your shoulders or back.

If you do choose to carry a backpack, it is important to wear and position it correctly.

### How to correctly wear and position a backpack.

- Always wear both straps rather than throwing the backpack over one shoulder;
- Adjust the length of the straps so that the bag is worn at the top of the torso and not hanging below and;
- Clip the waist and chest buckle, so the weight rests on the hip bones rather than only the upper body.

### For more information:

[Symmetry Physical Therapy: How to Properly Wear a Backpack.](#)

[Nemours TeensHealth: Backpack Basics.](#)

[University of Iowa Hospitals and Clinics: Is your backpack too heavy?](#)

[Independent School Management \(ism\): Stuffed Backpacks: How Much Weight Is Too Much?](#)

## Navigating the **transition** from **high school** to **college**. The impact of athletics and clubs.

*By Serena Kollmorgen, First-year student, Public Health, David B. Falk College of Sport and Human Dynamics.*

Being a first-year student on campus comes with countless exciting opportunities, but we all know leaving home and being welcomed into a new environment brings some difficulties as well. Whether it's missing home, missing family or getting used to a new schedule, first-year students work through countless changes. An adjustment that is sometimes overlooked is the change in routine from being a high school athlete to a student in college, without athletics.

According to NCAA statistics, only about 7% of high school athletes will continue to play at the college level, and about 3.8% go on to the Division I level, meaning over 90% of students could be going through this transition. Fortunately, Syracuse University provides ways students can remain active and involved on campus, filling this void many students find themselves facing.

First-year student Audrey Ingraham explained her experience trying to regain the team atmosphere on campus. "I think probably the hardest thing about it all would be missing that feeling being a part of a team, having team events and things outside of just the games," says Ingraham, who was involved in two sports throughout her high school career. Her hope is to find ways to stay fit and become a part of a team atmosphere again at Syracuse University.

Ingraham emphasized the importance of making students aware of the extracurricular groups and clubs on campus, including 40 Greek life organizations. "I chose to go out and give club volleyball a shot," says Ingraham. "I'm also just excited to be able to continue to play."

Club sports and other extracurricular activities give students an opportunity to surround themselves with students who share similar interests. Here at Syracuse University, a majority of these club sports host practices and games, attend tournaments and create a team atmosphere. Says women's club lacrosse member Mills Waddell, a junior, "As a freshman, joining a club team was helpful to get to know people because there were practices through the fall when we first got there. I've loved the people on the team, and the tournaments are pretty competitive, so it's fun to still play in real games."

Students encounter many abrupt changes between high school and college. Taking advantage of activities through the Barnes Center at The Arch, involving yourself on campus in extracurricular clubs, or joining an intramural team are all ways to manage this transition and fill this void that many students experience.

### **For more information:**

[Syracuse University Barnes Center at The Arch: Sports Clubs.](#)

[The National Collegiate Athletic Association \(NCAA\).](#)

## **The truth about workout supplements: Exploring uses and Benefits.**

*By Kinley Gaudette, Junior, Public Health, David B. Falk College of Sport and Human Dynamics.*

Every fitness influencer on social media seems to have a discount code for some type of workout supplement, so they must be great, right? These different pills and powders, such as branched-chain amino acids (BCAAs) and pre-workout, have become increasingly popular. To find out their true uses and benefits, we must delve into the science of these supplements and understand the goals they seek to accomplish.

Professor Jessica Redmond, in the Department of Nutrition and Food Studies at Syracuse University, explains that it can be difficult to know where supplements come from.

"The first thing to know about any dietary supplement is that in the United States, the way that dietary supplements are regulated is very different than how food is regulated and how medicine is regulated... There's no requirement [from the government to supplement companies] that they demonstrate that their products are safe and effective before they can be sold," she says.

One PubMed study showed that muscle protein synthesis was 22% greater in subjects who drank 5.6 grams of BCAAs after working out compared to subjects who drank a placebo. But does this mean that BCAAs are essential for reaching your fitness goals? Whey protein, another popular supplement, contains all nine essential amino acids and has been proven to be more effective in muscle growth. An article by HealthLine describes BCAAs as being effective for muscle growth and recovery, but whey protein is another great option.

Pre-workout can vary by brand but usually contains caffeine and creatine. The goal of pre-workout is to increase energy levels in preparation for a good gym session. According to LiveScience.com, pre-workout doesn't directly influence energy levels, but it does alter the feeling you get during a workout, and that feeling can influence performance. The ingredients in pre-workout can increase blood flow and increase your heart rate.

Too much caffeine can have detrimental effects. This is the main problem with pre-workout, especially if it is used in amounts that exceed the suggested serving size. According to HealthLine, too much caffeine can negatively impact your sleep patterns and can amplify anxiety. That said, if used correctly, caffeine can positively influence productivity during workouts and provide an energy boost when needed.

Overall, the key to using supplements is understanding how much to use and when to use them.

"For someone starting out with exercise, I would definitely say just stick to water during the workout along with a basic healthy eating plan," says Redmond, "and then if you progress to doing more high-intensity exercise, and you feel like your workouts are not really maximizing your body's capabilities, that might be the time to consider a supplement."

It's all about balance, context and timing. Remember, these supplements are meant to enhance workouts. Healthy eating and consistent exercise can still do the trick on their own.

### **For more information:**

[Healthline: Should You Take Pre-Workout Supplements?](#)

[Live Science: The Truth about Pre-Workout Supplements.](#)

[Frontiers in Physiology: Branched-Chain Amino Acid Ingestion Stimulates Muscle Myofibrillar Protein Synthesis following Resistance Exercise in Humans.](#)

## **STDs: Are you at risk? Exploring risk of STDs among college students.**

*By Brooke Breton, Junior, Public Health, David B. Falk College of Sport and Human Dynamics.*

Lisa Olson-Gugerty, a public health professor at Syracuse University and nurse practitioner, works daily with college students affected by sexually transmitted diseases (STDs).

"I would say every day somebody's coming in for a request or every other day for testing for STDs; at least one or two people a day in an urgent care center at that normal volume is about 60, 70 patients every 15 hours," Olson-Gugerty says.

"A large percentage of those seeking STD testing are college-age," she says. Olson-Gugerty's experience demonstrates just how common STDs are among college students, but why is this?

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, STDs are spread through sexual activities and the sharing of bodily fluids. Some STDs, like pelvic inflammatory disease, do not always cause symptoms immediately, which can cause them to worsen over time and result in permanent damage to the reproductive organs.

In the article "Knowledge and attitude about sexually transmitted infections other than HIV among college students" in the *Indian Journal of Sexually Transmitted Diseases and AIDS*, Nagesh Tumkur Subbarao and A. Akhilesh wrote, "Young individuals are more likely to practice unprotected sex and have multiple sexual partners. In addition, they may not have access to the required information and services to avoid STIs. Furthermore, they may feel hesitant to approach the facilities where information is available." This explains the increased risk for young adults ages 15 to 26.

Knowing how to prevent STDs is crucial for college students.

An obvious way to prevent an STD is to abstain from engaging in sexual activity, although this is not realistic for most young adults. To prevent getting an STD, an individual should know their partners personally and know whether engaging in this act will put them at risk for developing an STD. Another more common way to prevent an STD is to use a condom and get vaccinated for sexually transmitted diseases, if available.

Olson-Gugerty says STDs often have "to do with actually pubic hair and grooming." She explains, "The majority of people that I see shave their pubic hair and [it] is meant to be protective. It's a secondary sex characteristic, and quite frankly you should have it."

Olson-Gugerty says a sexually transmitted disease is more likely to be spread if an individual does not have any pubic hair, due to the individual grooming. This allows for more direct skin-to-skin contact, increasing the likelihood of the spread by taking away an additional protective barrier.

Sexually transmitted diseases are common among young adults. Having one is nothing to be ashamed of. The stigma surrounding STDs can limit the knowledge that is shared about them, because they are often only discussed with medical professionals. Many students do not realize the high risk of their actions, and it is important to recognize what an individual can do to help themselves before it's too late.

The Syracuse University campus provides resources to help educate us and prevent STDs, including the Safer Sex Express, a no-cost, sexual health supply ordering service for Syracuse University students. Students may order condoms, lubricants, oral dams and hand protection. Each order is placed in discreet packaging to ensure the recipient's privacy. Students living in a residence hall may have their order delivered to their mailbox. Those not living in a residence hall may pick up their order in the Barnes Center at The Arch between 8:30 a.m. and 5 p.m.

## For more information:

[Syracuse University, Barnes Center at The Arch: Sexual Health.](#)

[Indian Journal of Sexually Transmitted Diseases and Aids: Knowledge and attitude about sexually transmitted infections other than HIV among college students.](#)

## Crystal clear: Students explore mental and social health benefits through crystals.

*By Sophia Lehrer, Sophomore, Human Development and Family Science, David B. Falk College of Sport and Human Dynamics.*

Gen Z has become one of the most spiritual and mindful generations, so is it any wonder students at Syracuse University have recently taken the crystal world by storm? Walking into class there is always at least one student who has crystal jewelry. It could be a pendant, bracelet or earring set, crystals attached to their water bottle caps or even raw crystals placed next to them while working on assignments or taking tests. One thing's for sure they're around. But what do these crystals do? Why are we so fascinated with them? Do they really work?

According to Time.com, crystals are said to promote physical, spiritual and emotional healing while being held or touching specific parts of the body. Crystals, while not extensively studied in a scientific context, have been researched for the power that they hold for individuals, through personal accounts. Often, the placebo effect of crystals may contribute to the positive benefits. "If people believe that a treatment will make them feel better, many of them do feel better after they have had the treatment," Christopher French, a professor of psychology at Goldsmiths, University of London, told TweakIndia.com.

Many types of crystals have different uses. For example, crystals that might benefit some students are the Carnelian, which are said to boost energy levels and help with love by boosting attractiveness, according to Charms of Light, a crystal website. The clear quartz is said to keep students motivated and sustain clarity to optimize study and test-taking.

Although there is a lack of scientific studies to confirm any clear evidence that these rocks can brighten or change one's mood, anecdotal evidence suggests that people who use crystals really like them and think they make a big difference in their day. Nathalia Kobrosky, a Syracuse University sophomore, says, "Wearing my clear quartz necklace to classes makes me feel like I can actually focus for once. I love and believe in it because it seems to be working for me, so anything I can do to help myself study more I'm going to try." She recalls TikTok as her first encounter with clear quartz. Indeed, the trendy app has played a prominent role in marketing crystals through influencers who share their personal beliefs and benefits as endorsements to Gen Z students in hopes that we try for ourselves.

So, if crystals seem like something you want to try, Earthbound Metaphysical Shoppe on South Main Street in North Syracuse is highly recommended by crystal believers all over campus. Whether you may have doubts about the real benefits of crystals, or are instead a die-hard crystal believer, crystals are a great way to bond with other students and a good conversation starter in class. So why not go and check out what the crystal world has to offer? There's nothing to lose and both peace of mind and friendship to gain. You just might join the many Syracuse University students who swear by their crystals' positive effects on their college experience.

Benefits and health claims of crystals are not medical advice and should be looked into on an individual level before engaging in such practices.

## For more information:

[Healthline: Healing Crystals: What They Can and Can't Do.](#)

[Tweak India: Crystal clear: Your guide to understanding the healing potential of these pretty rocks.](#)

[Time Magazine: You Asked: Do Healing Crystals Actually Work?](#)

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