

The goal of the Health Education and Wellness Rotary Action Group is to promote good health and wellness through healthy lifestyle choices and disease prevention. The emphasis is on building awareness, promoting education, and providing information to help achieve and maintain good health and to utilize effective prevention in an integrated way. Rotary members are encouraged to promote the action group in their districts and especially in their Club's.

H.E.W.R.A.G.

NEWSLETTER FEBRUARY 2025



February is Peacebuilding and Conflict Prevention Month

2025 February

www.hewrag.org hewrag@gmail.com

Greetings!

As HEWRAG begins its new year, we continue to take seriously our commitment to support Rotarians to do "Good in the World."

HEWRAG continues our emphasis on five areas of public health: Medical Missions and Health Fairs; Cervical Cancer Prevention and Elimination; Tuberculosis Awareness and Prevention; Autism Awareness and Empowerment; and Oral Health and Nutrition. We have also recently added a new area of emphasis namely Prostate Cancer Prevention. Please visit our website for details.

If you are working in these areas or if you have another area of public health that you'd like us to consider adding, we encourage you to contact us.

With the successful launch of our 1st Chapter in District 2452 followed by our 2nd Chapter in India we would like other Districts to start either District or Country chapters to follow this example. It has been approved by RI and we have all the steps to facilitate this action if a member wishes to start a new chapter in their area.

Please email us for details at josie@beachroad.co.za or ramisarkis@hotmail.com

We will be present in the Hall of Friendship at the RI Convention in Calgary in June, please pop by to say hello and attend our information meeting - the details of which will be published on the conference app.

Unlike most other RAGs we do not charge an admission fee and depend on donations from our members to run our webpage and admin costs, I realise that these are hard times but if you could spare a few dollars please go to the donations page of our website and send them to us.

www.hewrag.org/donate

We are looking for members to stand for elections to the new board any interested member should please contact me if interested. We will be holding our AGM in June at the Calgary Convention, date and time to be confirmed soon.

Stay safe and well

Josie Norfolk

Chair



March 17th, 2025

8:00 a.m. - 9:15 a.m. (PST)

Straight Talk About the Triangulum of Nicotine, Vaping, and Cannabis

Parents/Guardians, Healthcare
Providers, Interested Community
Members, and Student

A Talk with Stanford's REACH Lab



WITH DR. BONNIE HALPERN-FELSHER

Dr. Bonnie Halpern-Felsher is a Professor of Pediatrics in the Division of Adolescent Medicine, Department of Pediatrics, Stanford University. Dr. Halpern-Felsher is a developmental psychologist with additional training in adolescent and young adult health. She is the founder and executive director of her Stanford REACH Lab as well as several nationally and internationally used drug education preventions and interventions. She is the recipient of the 2025 SRNT John Slade award as well as other awards, and is the President of the Society for Adolescent Health and Medicine. Funded by the NIH and many foundations, her research has focused on understanding and reducing adolescent and young adult tobacco, marijuana, and other drug use. Her research including over 225 publications, committee, and advocacy work have been instrumental in setting policy at the local, state, and national level. She has served as a consultant to several community-based adolescent health promotion programs, participated in three Surgeon General Reports, participated in six National Academies of Science committees, and has been a member on several national campaigns and committees to understand and reduce adolescent and young adult drug use.



 stanfordreachlab.com

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 [@stanfordreachlab](https://www.instagram.com/stanfordreachlab)

REGISTER TODAY!

Scan the QR code or
visit the link below:

<https://tinyurl.com/2wjn4829>





March 31st, 2025

10:00 a.m. - 11:15 a.m. (PST)

Fentanyl Overdose Awareness: Critical Information and Prevention

Parents/Guardians, Healthcare Providers, Interested Community Members, and Student

A Talk with Stanford's REACH Lab



WITH DR. BONNIE HALPERN-FELSHER

Join **Dr. Bonnie Halpern-Felsher** from Stanford's REACH Lab, where she will provide information on the dangers of illegal fentanyl, impact on adolescents and young adults, harm-reduction strategies, and educational resources available to educators, students, parents, and more.

Dr. Bonnie Halpern-Felsher is a Professor of Pediatrics in the Division of Adolescent Medicine, Department of Pediatrics, Stanford University. Dr. Halpern-Felsher is a developmental psychologist with additional training in adolescent and young adult health. She is the founder and executive director of her Stanford REACH Lab as well as several nationally and internationally used drug education preventions and interventions. She is the recipient of the 2025 SRNT John Slade award as well as other awards, and is the President of the Society for Adolescent Health and Medicine. Funded by the NIH and many foundations, her research has focused on understanding and reducing adolescent and young adult tobacco, marijuana, and other drug use. Her research including over 225 publications, committee, and advocacy work have been instrumental in setting policy at the local, state, and national level.



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The Importance of Health Education

Health education is a vital component in promoting individual and community wellness. It empowers people with the knowledge and skills they need to make informed decisions about their health. As we delve into its significance, several key aspects stand out:

1. Empowerment through Knowledge

Health education equips individuals with essential information about various health topics, including nutrition, physical activity, mental health, and disease prevention. When people understand the factors that affect their health, they can make informed choices that lead to healthier lifestyles.

2. Preventive Health Measures

A strong emphasis on health education can significantly reduce the incidence of chronic diseases. For instance, educating communities about the risks of smoking, poor diet, and lack of physical activity can lead to behavioral changes that decrease the likelihood of developing conditions like diabetes, heart disease, and obesity.

3. Improved Health Outcomes

Communities with robust health education programs often see improved health outcomes. For example, parents educated about childhood vaccinations are more likely to ensure their children are immunized, reducing the spread of preventable diseases.

4. Mental Health Awareness

Health education also plays a crucial role in promoting mental health awareness. By addressing topics such as stress management, emotional well-being, and mental illness, individuals can recognize symptoms early and seek appropriate help, leading to better mental health outcomes for themselves and their communities.

5. Community Engagement and Advocacy

Health education fosters community engagement. When individuals are informed about health issues, they are more likely to participate in local health initiatives, advocate for policy changes, and support programs that benefit the community. This collective action can lead to a healthier environment for everyone.

6. Lifelong Learning and Adaptability

Health education is not just a one-time event; it encourages lifelong learning. As new health information and technologies emerge, individuals equipped with foundational health knowledge are better prepared to adapt and integrate these changes into their lives.

7. Reducing Healthcare Costs

By promoting preventive measures and healthy behaviours, health education can lead to a decrease in healthcare costs for both individuals and healthcare systems. Fewer preventable diseases mean lower medical expenses, allowing resources to be allocated to other critical areas of healthcare.

8. Tailored Approaches for Diverse Populations

Effective health education recognizes the diversity within populations. Culturally relevant programs that consider language, traditions, and values can enhance the effectiveness of health initiatives, ensuring that information resonates with various communities.

Conclusion

In summary, health education is a cornerstone of public health that leads to empowered individuals, healthier communities, and improved overall well-being. By prioritizing health education, we can create a more informed society that values health as a fundamental component of quality of life. As members of the Rotary Action Group, we have the unique opportunity to lead by example and implement impactful health education initiatives that make a difference globally.





EASY, COST EFFECTIVE & FUN

It's such an easy and fun thing to do for your local schools.

It can cost as much or as little as the money you have available.

Plan can be adapted to the local situation.

It's a fabulous project for your Rotary Club and in keeping with the goals of our Rotary Action Group to promote good health and wellness through healthy lifestyle choices and disease prevention. For more information give us a call or go to our website to check out the photos of a Health Day held recently.

CONTACT

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SCHOOL HEALTH DAYS

HERE'S HOW TO ORGANISE THEM

STEP 1

FIND A SCHOOL

Preferably within a larger school district and with an enthusiastic headmaster and a school hall. Aim for as many pupils as possible around the ages of 13 years old.

Arrange a date and time.

Arrange 10 stands.

Arrange volunteers to man the stands.

Arrange transport for pupils from nearby schools if possible.

Arrange give aways and samples eg Vit tabs ,toothpaste

STEP 2

ORGANISE THE THEMES FOR EACH STAND

EXAMPLES:-

Dental health & Nutrition

Hand washing and personal hygiene

TB information signs & symptoms & importance of treatment

Cervical cancer & HPV vaccinations

Bacteria and Virus the differences between

Physical exercise

HIV & Aids. Menstruation info for Boys & Girls

Clean water and Sewage disposal

Environmental Health

Smoking & Vaping & Drug abuse

CPR & Open water wisdom & lifesaving

STEP 3

ORGANISE THE VOLUNTEERS IN EACH THEME

DENTIST & DIETICIAN

DISTRICT NURSES & CANCER CARE ORGANISATIONS

PATHOLOGIST

LOCAL HEALTH DEPARTMENT & EDUCATION DEPARTMENT

AMBULANCE SERVICE OR FIRST AID RESPONDERS

LOCAL MUNICIPALITIES

LOCAL GYM

SCHOOL NURSES & LOCAL VOLUNTEER ORGANISATIONS

ROTARIANS & ROTARACTORS

Health Education and Wellness Rotary Action Group (HEWRAG) and Cervical Cancer (Prevention) Elimination

By: PDG Karl Diekman, HEWRAG CADRE Technical Officer

The purpose of this article is to inform Rotarians about how to look at cervical cancer prevention service projects in creative and meaningful ways.

THE BEGINNING

In 2010 my wife was diagnosed with a form of leukemia known as CLL. She came under the care of Dr. Alborz Alali, a Hematology Oncology specialist at our local clinic in Woodland, California. After a series of additional tests, her disease was found to be more aggressive than originally thought to be, so she began a treatment regimen in 2011. Because I attended all treatments and doctor visits with my wife, I was in weekly contact with Dr. Alali. During those visits, my wife would discuss her progress with Dr. Alali, and because of our mutual interest in travel, I would discuss travel with him.

On one visit in late 2012 we talked about a trip that Dr. Alali made to Nicaragua along with another physician from the clinic. I was shocked to hear that nearly 100% of the families they met had a family member who had died from cervical cancer and that it was a preventable form of cancer. Dr. Alali told me that within a generation he could prevent cervical cancer in that country. I thought about this for a few days and then called Dr. Alali to see if he believed that a Rotary project could be helpful.

After some discussion we agreed to create a Rotary project and began an 18-month investigation and planning process.

During this time, we were introduced to Prevention International No Cervical Cancer (PINCC), an NGO based in Oakland, California that specializes in the training and certification of clinicians to identify and treat those conditions that can lead to cervical cancer. PINCC had significant experience in Nicaragua and proved to be a great resource for planning and implementing the project.



Once the facts were gathered and the budgets developed, the Rotary Club of Woodland (my Rotary Club) signed on to be the international sponsor, and the Rotary Club of Leon, Nicaragua signed on as the Host sponsor of the Global Grant Project. By 2015 the Global Grant and Vocational Training Team (VTT) were

approved, and the work began. The project was conducted in cooperation with the Nicaragua Ministry of Health, Leon University, and the Leon District Health Agency.

By the end of the project, a team of 50 clinicians, clerks, and support workers had made three trips. The trips ranged from one week to 10 days in duration over the course of one year. During these trips the VTT members trained staff and outfitted five clinics in different regions of Nicaragua to conduct cervical cancer prevention services.



The key points to take from this project are 1) careful planning takes time, 2) government agencies are essential partners, as are institutions such as universities, and 3) a well-qualified NGO can be an essential part of making a project successful.

THE MIDDLE

In the summer of 2015 John Hewko contacted HEWRAG Co-Chairs Sheila Hurst and Jane Little about an interest that the American Cancer Society (ACS) expressed in working with Rotarians on cervical cancer prevention projects. Principally through the effort of Co-Chair Sheila Hurst and myself, we began an engagement with the senior leadership at ACS. The first major milestone was reached in November 2015 at a meeting of the Cervical Action Coalition (CCA) in London where we committed to support a global initiative aimed at preventing cervical cancer.

Our partners in this global initiative included the World Health Organization (WHO), Pan American Health Organization (PAHO), leading NGOs, and educational institutions. HEWRAG's participating in this initiative

opened new relationships whereby we became a relied-upon resource and a beneficiary of the support of key organizations.

Our relationships grew to the point where we were among the participants in the consultation process that led to the development of the WHO policy to eliminate cervical cancer as a public health problem.

The key points to take from this effort are 1) seek and take advantage of opportunities to collaborate with people and organizations when feasible, and 2) these relationships can be helpful in many ways that may not be apparent at the onset of your relationship.

TODAY AND BEYOND

Although delayed due to the pandemic, the WHO adopted its policy to eliminate cervical cancer in 2020, and since then significant advances have been made in the policy and technology arenas. Many countries now see the importance of policies and financing for HPV immunization and testing. Rotarians are becoming more engaged in advocacy for access to vaccine, examinations, and treatment. Each day we see that equipment is becoming more economical. For example, HPV testing is reducing the need for visual examinations, thus increasing capacity. Portable thermocoagulation is replacing expensive and bulky cryotherapy as the treatment of choice for precancerous lesions.



As Rotarians, we often look toward projects that are manageable and relatively inexpensive. Cervical cancer prevention projects we have undertaken can mostly be described as pilot projects, because sustaining them on scale is beyond our means. That said, our projects are important because they lead to significant social

change. One good example can be seen in the video Conquering Cervical Cancer which is a story about a statewide change in Alabama, USA. You can learn more about this project at <https://vimeo.com/moonshineagency/review/842375650/57f5dd0957>

Some of the best projects today focus on a broader range of cancers and may include breast and prostate cancer prevention in addition to cervical cancer prevention as a means of attacking the broader cancer problem.

Cervical cancer elimination projects that include a focus on additional types of cancers can expand the ability to attract public interest and funding sources.

At HEWRAG we hope you will take on a health-related project, because it will enhance the lives of your colleagues, friends, and family members.

For additional information please visit our website at <https://HEWRAG.org>

Cervical Cancer and the HPV Virus:

The State of Play

Overview

Cervical cancer is a significant public health issue, primarily caused by persistent infection with certain strains of the human papillomavirus (HPV). HPV is one of the most common sexually transmitted infections, with nearly all sexually active individuals contracting it at some point in their lives. While most HPV infections resolve on their own, persistent infections with high-risk HPV types can lead to cervical cancer.

The Link Between HPV and Cervical Cancer

1. Types of HPV:

- There are over 150 types of HPV, but about 14 are categorized as high-risk for cervical cancer, with HPV types 16 and 18 being the most prevalent.
- HPV types 6 and 11 are associated with genital warts but are not linked to cancer.

2. Cancer Development:

- Persistent infection with high-risk HPV can cause cellular changes in the cervix. If these changes are not detected and treated, they can progress to cervical cancer over several years.

Current State of Affairs

1. Incidence and Prevalence:

- Cervical cancer is the fourth most common cancer among women worldwide, with an estimated **604,000 new cases** and **342,000 deaths** in 2020.
- The burden is highest in low- and middle-income countries, where screening and vaccination programs may be less accessible.

2. Screening and Prevention:

- **Pap Smear:** Regular screening through Pap smears can detect precancerous changes in cervical cells, allowing for early intervention.
- **HPV Testing:** HPV testing can identify the presence of high-risk HPV types, providing additional information for risk assessment and management.

3. Vaccination:

- The HPV vaccine is a critical tool in preventing cervical cancer. Vaccines such as Gardasil and Cervarix protect against the most common high-risk HPV types.

- Vaccination programs have shown promising results in reducing the incidence of HPV infections and related cervical precancers.
- The World Health Organization (WHO) aims to vaccinate **90% of girls** by the age of 15 by 2030

Challenges and Barriers

1. Awareness and Education:

- Misconceptions about HPV and cervical cancer persist, leading to low vaccination and screening rates in some communities.
- Comprehensive health education is crucial to increasing awareness and promoting preventive measures.

2. Access to Services:

- Barriers such as geographic location, socioeconomic status, and healthcare infrastructure impact access to screening and vaccination, particularly in rural and underserved areas.

3. Stigma and Cultural Factors:

- Cultural beliefs surrounding sexual health and cancer can deter individuals from seeking preventive care and treatment.

Global Initiatives

1. WHO Global Strategy:

- The WHO has launched a comprehensive global strategy to eliminate cervical cancer as a public health problem, focusing on vaccination, screening, and treatment.
- The strategy includes targets for vaccination, screening coverage, and treatment of precancerous lesions.

2. Collaborative Efforts:

- Partnerships between governments, NGOs, and healthcare organizations are essential for implementing effective cervical cancer prevention and control programs.

Conclusion

Cervical cancer caused by the HPV virus is a preventable disease through vaccination, screening, and education. Despite the progress made, significant challenges remain, particularly in resource-limited settings. Increasing awareness, improving access to healthcare, and supporting global initiatives are vital steps in the fight against cervical cancer. By addressing these issues, we can work towards reducing the incidence of cervical cancer and improving health outcomes for women worldwide.

Global Grant for the Prevention and Raising

Awareness of Cervical Cancer in Bolivia

During the Pandemic, the First Five Rotary Clubs—Chicago, San Francisco, Oakland, Seattle and Los Angeles--began meeting together to share best practices to manage clubs when in-person meetings were inadvisable. Besides helping understand how to conduct Zoom meetings, the clubs decided to develop and perform community service projects which then lead to the desire to jointly participate in a Global Grant.

After much discussion, the First Five decided to focus on doing a project in Bolivia, one of the poorest countries in South America. Rotary One had recently been the International Sponsor for seven Global Grants and had developed relationships with District 4690 and a number of clubs. In discussing the matter with the DG, we were introduced to Rotarian Dr. Irma Rojas Ortega and the RC Urbari in Santa Cruz de la Sierra in the province of Santa Cruz.

Dr. Rojas and RC Urbari were interested in raising awareness about HPV and reducing the incidence of cervical cancer. Bolivia has one of the highest rates of this cancer in Latin America. In 2022, the First Five and Urbari began working with Rotarian Dr. Richard Godfrey, D5170, a retired surgical oncologist and hospital administrator on a pilot project to test 2,500 women in Santa Cruz for HPV. The First Five raised the funds to donate an Ampfire HPV PCR and test kits to perform HPV tests quickly and accurately. Dr. Richard worked with Urbari and the Hospital Municipal Villa Primero de Mayo in Santa Cruz to train health care workers in how to use the test kits.

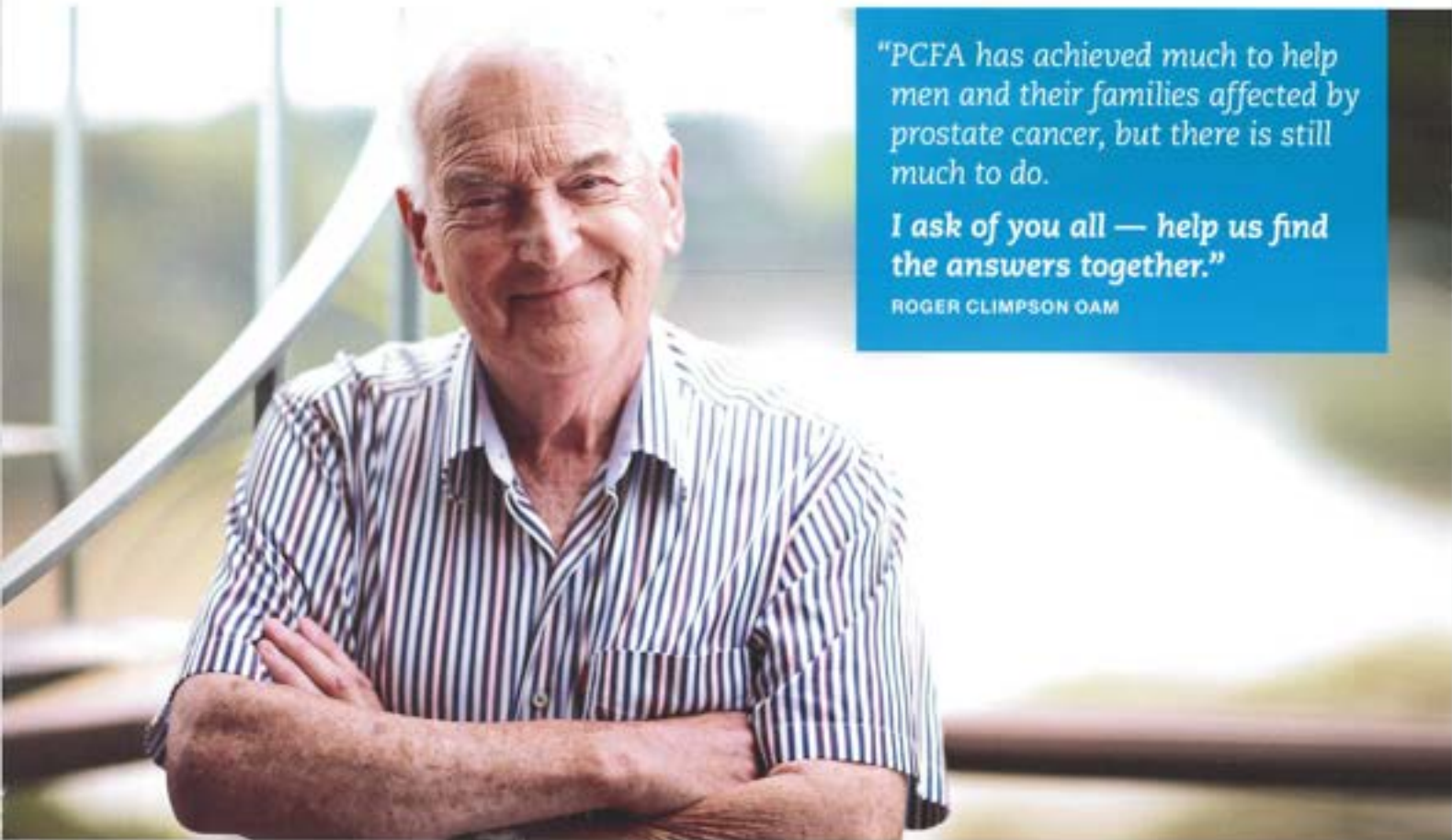
This equipment allows for the detection of 15 high-risk HPV types in a single analysis, quickly and efficiently. In the pilot, about one third of the women tested positive for HPV. These women were then referred for further treatment.

After reviewing the pilot results, RC Urbari, D4690 and the First Five in collaboration with Dr. Richard, applied for a Global Grant to test 7,500 more women. The Rotary Foundation approved the GG with a budget of US\$144,000. It will provide additional Ampfire and other equipment to treat early stage cancer as well as test kits. Dr. Richard will train local healthcare professionals in the use of the equipment for both testing and treatment. This process offers four advantages:

- Rapid results and self-detection. Patients can test in their own homes.
- Screening samples are collected using a self-collected cervical swab.
- Results are more accurate compared to other traditional tests such as Pap Smears or visual inspection.
- Faster treatment: results can be obtained in a hour and, if positive, women can be seen and treated the same day with thermocoagulation.

We expect to implement the grant shortly. As with the pilot, the test results will be carefully analyzed to determine if this process could serve as a model for broad testing and treatment in Bolivia and other locales with high HPV and cervical cancer rates.

1 in 8 Male Rotarians will be affected by prostate cancer



"PCFA has achieved much to help men and their families affected by prostate cancer, but there is still much to do.

I ask of you all — help us find the answers together."

ROGER CLIMPSON OAM

Rotary & Prostate Cancer Foundation of Australia (PCFA) — In 1996, television personality Roger Climpson OAM and fellow club members of the Rotary Club of Lane Cove founded the Prostate Cancer Research Foundation — now Prostate Cancer Foundation of Australia (PCFA).

Why — To raise funds for research and to address the suffering caused by a dire lack of information and support for tens of thousands of Australian men affected by the disease.

Since then — PCFA has become a broad-based community organisation and the peak national body for prostate cancer with representatives of Rotary joining PCFA National and State Boards.

Because of Rotary — Enormous progress has been made to improve the length and quality of life for men living with prostate cancer.

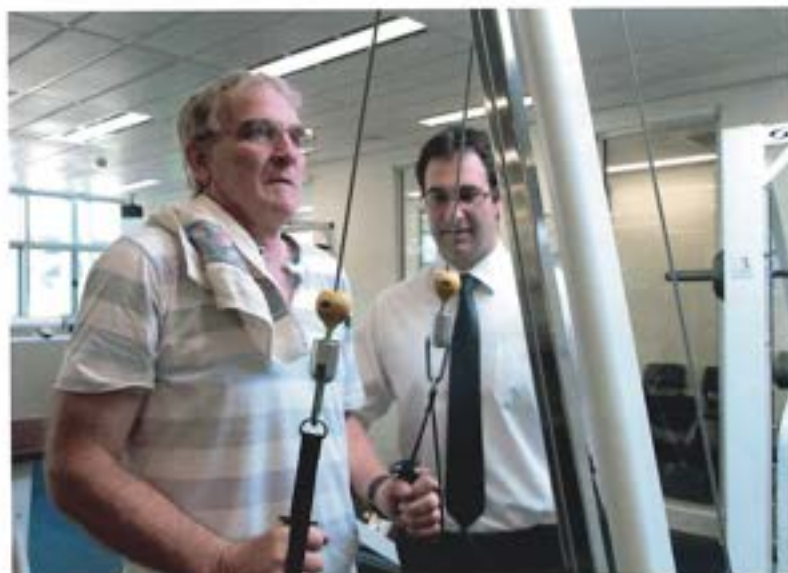
Why we need Rotary's support

Research — Prostate cancer kills more men than breast cancer kills women, yet it has relatively low research funding.

Awareness — Understanding of the disease is still lacking amongst the broader community. Your club can help us expand the number of PCFA Ambassador awareness talks across Australia.

Support — Funding is vital to offer continuity of care and grow our specialist nursing program so thousands of men and families can be supported at every point during their cancer journey.





PCFA's research program has supported some of the best young talent in the country. Their world first, cutting edge research has impacted not only on the quality of life of men in Australia but also internationally.

Prof Daniel Galvão one of our first young investigators, was funded by PCFA in 2007. Today, a full professor and director, he mentors numerous young researchers that are part of his team.

Having established the evidence that shows the benefit of exercise in the prevention and management of cancer treatment side-effects and survival, Prof Galvão is seeking to include exercise in the clinical management of prostate cancer.

How your Rotary club can help

Fundraising

- 01 **Donate to PCFA**
Call us on 1800 220 099 or visit pcfa.org.au
- 02 **Organise a fundraising event** — How about a golf day, trivia night, luncheon or gala dinner?
Call or email your local PCFA contact for fundraising ideas and PCFA merchandise
- 03 **Host a Big Aussie Barbie in September during Prostate Cancer Awareness Month**
Sign-up at bigaussiebarbie.com.au or call us on 1800 220 099

Awareness

- 04 **Book one of our free Ambassador speakers to present at your next event or meeting**
Call or email your local PCFA contact for more information
- 05 **Order our free information brochure 'What you need to know about prostate cancer'** and share with your fellow club members
Call us on 1800 220 099 or visit pcfa.org.au



"We are proud of our Rotarian roots. Your club is an intrinsic part of the local community and we would be delighted if you joined us in our pursuit of a healthier, happier future for all Australian men."

JIM HUGHES AM

National Chairman, Prostate Cancer Foundation of Australia



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Prostate cancer in Australia

- The most commonly diagnosed cancer in men
- 20,000 men are diagnosed with prostate cancer every year
- 3,300 will die because of it
- More men die of prostate cancer than women die of breast cancer

The world is awful. The world is much better. The world can be much better.

It is wrong to think these three statements contradict each other. We need to see that they are all true to see that a better world is possible.

By: [Max Roser](#)

originally published on October 4, 2018 (last updated in February 2024)

The world is awful. The world is much better. The world can be much better. All three statements are true at the same time.

Discussions about the state of the world too often focus on the first statement: The news highlights what is going wrong, rarely mentioning the positive developments in our country or the world as a whole.

A pushback on this narrative takes it to the other extreme, which is equally damaging. Solely communicating the progress that the world has achieved becomes unhelpful, or even repugnant, when it glosses over the problems people are facing.

If we only see the problems and only hear what is going wrong, we have no hope that the future can be better. If we only hear about progress and what is going right, we become complacent and lose sight of the problems the world is facing. Both of these narrow perspectives have the same consequence: they leave us doing nothing — they are worldviews that paralyze us.

It's hard to resist falling for only one of these perspectives. But to see that a better world is possible, we need to see that both are true at the same time: the world is awful, and the world is much better

To illustrate what I mean, I will use the example of one of humanity's biggest tragedies: the daily deaths of thousands of children.

What is true for child mortality is true for many other large problems. Humanity faces many problems where things have improved over time, which are still terrible, and for which we know that things can get better.

The world is awful

Globally, [4.4%](#) of all children die before they are 15 years old. This is the data for 2021, the latest available year.

This means that 5.9 million children die every year. These are 16,000 dead children on any average day, 11 children every minute.

Clearly, a world where thousands of tragedies happen every single day is awful.

The world is much better

History's big lesson is that things change. But it is hard to imagine how dire living conditions once were, making it difficult to grasp just how much the world has changed.

Data can help to bring the scale of change to mind. Historians estimate that in the past, [around half of all children died](#). This was true until the 19th century no matter where in the world a child was born.

It's hard to imagine, but child mortality in the very worst-off places today is much better than anywhere in the past. In Niger, the country with the highest mortality today, about 14% of all children die. Just a few generations ago, the mortality rate was more than three times as high, even in the best-off places.

What we learn from our history is that it is possible to change the world. Unfortunately, long-run data on how living conditions have changed is rarely studied in school and rarely reported in the media. As a result, many are entirely unaware of even the most fundamental positive developments in the world.

But this fact — that it is possible to change the world and achieve extraordinary progress for entire societies — is something that *everyone* should know. If we don't know about humanity's most meaningful achievements, then it's no surprise that we have little trust in ourselves and no hope that we can achieve a better future.

The world can be much better

Progress over time shows that it was possible to change the world in the past, but one may wonder if this progress can continue into the future. Perhaps we were born at that unlucky moment in history at which progress must come to a halt?

Studying the global data suggests that the answer is no. It is possible to make the world a better place.

One way to see this is to look at the places in the world with the best living conditions today. The best-off places show that extremely low child mortality is not just a possibility but already a reality.

The world region where children have the best chance of surviving childhood is the European Union. The mortality rate in the EU is 0.47% — 99.53% of all children survive childhood.

To see how much better the world can be, we can ask what the world would look like if this became a reality *everywhere*. What if children around the world would be as well off as children in the EU? The answer is that *five million* fewer children would die every year.

The global death toll would decline from 5.9 million to 0.6 million.

Of course, the child mortality rate in the EU is still too high, and there is no reason that progress should stop there. Cancers like leukaemia and brain tumours kill hundreds of children, even in today's richest countries. We should strive to find ways to prevent these tragic deaths.

However, the largest opportunities to prevent the pain and suffering of children are in the poorer countries. There, we know not only that things *can* be better but *how* to make them better.

You can use this research on how to make the world a better place to make a difference yourself. *Millions* of child deaths are preventable. We know that it is possible to make the world a better place.



If we can make maternal deaths as rare as in the healthiest countries, we can save 275,000 mothers each year

Maternal mortality was much more common in the past. It is much lower today, but global inequalities are still large.

By: [Hannah Ritchie](#)

February 03, 2025

For most of human history, pregnancy and childbirth were very risky; mothers would die in at least 1 in 100 pregnancies.¹

Since the average woman would have at least four or five children, the lifetime risk of dying from maternal causes would be at least 1 in 25.² This was true everywhere.

Thankfully, that's no longer the case. We've made huge strides in not only protecting infants in childbirth and the early stages of their lives, but we've also made it much safer for women.

But we're not done yet. There are still huge inequalities in the risks of pregnancy across the world. Pregnant women in countries like Sierra Leone and Kenya are around 100 times more likely to die during pregnancy or childbirth than those in countries like Norway, Sweden, or Germany.³ But it doesn't have to be this way. We could save hundreds of thousands of lives a year by closing these gaps.

I've compared three scenarios in the chart below to clarify these points.

First, we can see that the situation today is awful. **286,000 women** died from maternal causes in 2020.⁴ That's 784 deaths per day on average, or one mother dying every two minutes.

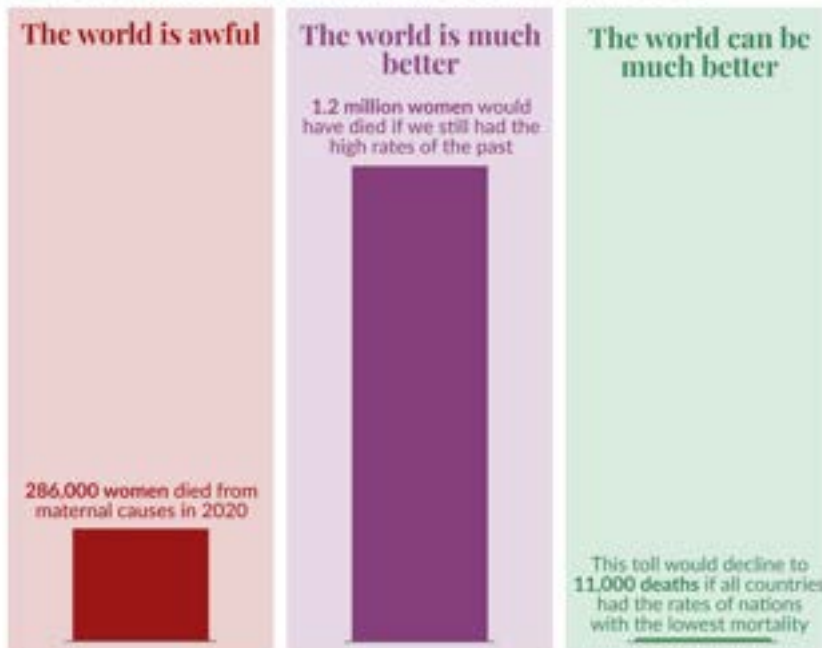
Second, we can consider the very high maternal mortality rates of the past. Particularly good long-term data is available for Finland or Sweden, which shows that in 1750, around 900 women died per 100,000 live births.⁵ Since there were 135 million births in 2020, I calculate that **1.2 million women** would have died from maternal causes that year *if* these rates hadn't improved.⁷ Things are much, much better than they used to be.

Finally, things can still be much better. We know this because some countries have maternal mortality rates that are far lower than the global average. And they all used to be in a similar position to the worst-off countries today. In Europe, the maternal mortality rate was 8 deaths per 100,000 live births in 2020. That's around 25 times lower than the global average. If all countries could achieve the same outcomes as Europe, **11,000 women** would have died from maternal causes in 2020 — a small fraction of the 286,000 deaths that occurred.

Providing the best conditions for women everywhere would reduce the global death toll by 275,000 maternal deaths a year.

We could save 275,000 women from dying in pregnancy or childbirth if we achieved low maternal mortality rates everywhere

Our World
in Data



Data source: Maternal deaths data for 2020 comes from the UN MMEIG (2024).

Note: Maternal deaths in the two hypothetical scenarios assume the same number of births in 2020, which was 135 million. The historical scenario assumes that maternal mortality rates were 900 per 100,000 live births, which was the rate in Finland and Sweden in 1750. The best-case scenario assumes that global rates were the same as Europe in 2020, at 8 deaths per 100,000 live births.

OurWorldinData.org — Research and data to make progress against the world's largest problems.

Licensed under CC-BY by the author Hannah Ritchie.

Seeing how bad conditions were in the past shows that it's possible to make massive progress in improving health outcomes. While these improvements have saved hundreds of thousands of women a year, we shouldn't be satisfied with where we are. We know we could save hundreds of thousands more.

It's unacceptable that the risk of pregnancy for some women is a hundred times higher than for others, and this is almost entirely the result of the lottery of where they were born.



HEWRAG CHAPTER 3080 - THE INDIA CHAPTER

On 13th October 2024 the Executive Meeting of HEWRAG, Chapter 3080 was held. The venue was the Chillaru Resorts, Solan. DGN and long term HEWRAG Champion, Dr. Rita Kalra, welcomed all the members and shared the vision and mission of the parent organization, HEWRAG (Health Education and Wellness Rotary Action Group). She highlighted the key role of the HEWRAG 3080 India Chapter, which was affiliated in 2023 to bring together the medical, dental, and allied health fraternities on the Rotary platform. The primary aim is to contribute to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

Unfortunately, the Chairman HEWRAG 3080 PDG Dr RS Parmar expressed regret for his unavailability due to a health issue.

Dr. Kalra outlined the key objectives of the organization, which include:

- Health Education Workshops and Seminars: Organizing workshops, sensitization trainings, mobile health fairs, and marking international health days at schools, colleges, and institutes.
- Wellness Camps: Conducting large-scale wellness camps such as Rural Medical Missions, NCD (Non-Communicable Disease) camps and cancer screening camps, International medical missions, and inter-district missions to improve healthcare accessibility, availability and affordability.
- Fellowship and Wellness for Healthcare Providers: Hosting fellowship meetings and wellness workshops focused on the wellbeing of healthcare providers.

The meeting successfully appointed Coordinators for the 7 Areas of Rotary Focus, to ensure that HEWRAG within India, focuses on Preventive Healthcare; Water and Sanitation (providing activities and training to ensure people are using safe drinking water and basic sanitation); Maternal and Child Health; Education in the health awareness arena; Community Economic Development; Peace and Conflict Resolution (advocating for health equity); and the environment (promoting positive changes in cleanliness and wellbeing mindsets). These Coordinators will lead their respective advocacy efforts. They are also responsible for forming their committees and planning projects aligned with Rotary's goals.

HEWRAG 3080 Committees and Coordinators

HEWRAG 3080 Committees and Coordinators

Sno.	Committee	Mission/Goals	Coordinator
1	National TB Control	To support India's National Tuberculosis Elimination Program by conducting awareness campaigns, promoting BCG vaccinations, providing nutrition support, and facilitating screenings.	Dr. Jay Sharma
2	Autism/Mental Health Wellness	To promote early diagnosis and intervention for autism and mental health issues through workshops, counseling sessions, and wellness programs in schools, colleges, and communities.	Dr. Vineet Nagpal, Dr. Harleen Kaur
3	Blindness Control	To prevent blindness by organizing vision screenings, cataract surgery camps, and eye donation awareness programs, particularly in rural and underserved areas.	Dr. Namrita Parmar, Dr. Gunjan Sahni
4	Cervix Cancer Prevention/ Red Socks Campaign for Prostate Cancer	To raise awareness about cervical and prostate cancer prevention through vaccination drives, screenings, and educational workshops, promoting early detection and treatment.	Dr. Rita Kalra, Dr. Neena Sablok
5	Oral Health	To improve oral hygiene awareness and provide dental screenings and treatment, particularly in schools and underserved communities, and celebrate international oral health days.	Dr. I.K. Pandit
6	Pain and Palliative Care	To provide comprehensive pain management and palliative care support through training for healthcare providers, awareness campaigns, and patient care programs in hospitals and homes.	Dr. Vinay Somya, Dr. Parvesh Sablok
7	Health Fairs	To organize large-scale health fairs that offer free health screenings, consultations, and wellness activities for the community, focusing on NCDs and lifestyle diseases.	Dr. Sanjay Kalra, Dr. Gopal Munjal

Administrative Committees and Coordinators

Sno.	Committee	Mission/Goals	Coordinator
1	International Medical Mission	To lead medical missions abroad, providing healthcare support, surgeries, and training in underserved international communities, while building global Rotary healthcare partnerships.	Dr. Bhimsain, Dr. Bhanu Parmar
2	Rural Medical Missions	To organize and execute rural medical camps, providing essential healthcare services, screenings, and treatments to remote villages with limited access to healthcare.	Dr. Kamal Atwal
3	Inter District Medical Missions	To coordinate inter-district collaborations for healthcare outreach, sharing resources and expertise to execute joint medical missions across multiple Rotary districts.	Dr. Nirmal Dhiman
4	Fellowship Events	To organize fellowship meetings and wellness retreats for healthcare providers, promoting well-being, stress relief, and stronger professional networks within the medical community.	Dr. Mahesh Mehra, Dr. Supriya Atwal
5	Health Education Seminars	To conduct educational seminars on various health topics, raising awareness on disease prevention, treatment options, and healthy living for both healthcare professionals and the public.	Dr. Ramnik Sharma, Dr. Raj Sharma
6	Telemedicine	To promote telemedicine services for remote consultations, reducing the gap between patients and healthcare providers in underserved areas by leveraging technology.	Dr. Suresh Sablok
7	Logistics Support/Social Media	To provide logistical coordination for medical missions and events, and manage social media outreach to promote health initiatives and increase visibility for Rotary projects.	Rtn. Manish Tomar, Rtn. Anil Chauhan

Future Action Plans

- Development of detailed plans for health education, wellness camps, health fairs etc.
- Mobilizing more health specialists and aligning with district-level and international Rotary missions.
- Upcoming fellowship events and wellness workshops for the professional development of health providers.

Closing Remarks

Dr. Rita Kalra thanked all the participants for their active involvement and contributions. The meeting concluded with a commitment to strengthen efforts towards achieving the SDG goals and improving community health outcomes through the initiatives discussed. All the coordinators appointed will seek to form their committee teams and share with the group.

We advocate for health education and wellness, and strongly recommend that other Rotarians interested or professionally involved in this area of action, seek to also form their own active and engaged CHAPTER of The Health Education and Wellness Rotary Action Group. While our chapter is well on its way to becoming a dynamic force in our District and Nation, YOU can be the catalyst for change in your District. To do so write to our Chairperson, Josie Norfolk, who can help support you through this process.

“Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful committed individuals can change the world. In fact, it’s the only thing that ever has.” Margaret Mead



Dr Rita Kalra



HEAD LICE WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW

What Are Head Lice?

Head lice are tiny six-legged insects that cling to your scalp and neck and feed on human blood. Each louse is only about the size of a sesame seed, so they can be hard to spot. Lice lay their eggs, called nits, on hairs near the scalp, so they're even harder to see. A glue-like substance holds them in place.

They Mostly Affect Kids

Head lice are most common in young children who go to day care, preschool, or elementary school. Children this age often play together closely and come into contact with one another's hair. They may also share brushes, hats, hair clips, and the like. Adults who live with children also have a higher risk of getting head lice.

They Spread Through Direct Contact

Lice usually crawl from one person's hair into another's. They can also survive for a short period on clothing or other personal items, so a shared hairbrush can help a louse find a new host. Lice can't jump or fly from one person to another.

They're Easy to Spot

Although lice and their nits are small, you can see them with the naked eye. They can be white, brown, or dark gray. You're more likely to find them in the hair at the back of your neck or behind your ears. The nits are round or oval specks that are tightly stuck to hairs near the scalp. If you try to slide them off, they won't budge. Combing through wet hair is a great way to spot an infestation.

They May Not Cause Symptoms

Spotting a live louse or nymph (a young louse) is often the only sign of an infestation. Seeing nits alone doesn't confirm an infestation. Head lice don't always cause discomfort. When symptoms do happen, the most common problem is itching. It may not start until weeks or even months after the lice move in.

They Can Cause Allergies

The itching from lice is caused by an allergic reaction to the bug bites. A lot of scratching may lead to sores or raw skin on the scalp. It's rare, but sores related to scratching can become infected. Call a doctor quickly if you notice signs of infection like red, swollen, or painful skin or tender lymph nodes in your neck.

You Have to Treat Them

Head lice will not go away on their own. If you think your child has an infestation, there are several steps you should take right away. Call your doctor to confirm the diagnosis. Notify your child's day care or school so other students can be checked. Examine all other members of the household for signs of lice. Finally, treat everyone who's infected at the same time.

There Are a Variety of Treatments

Over-the-counter lice-killing treatments are considered safe, but they may not be best for young children. These products kill lice but not nits. Follow instructions carefully for how long to leave the medication on and how to wash it off. You may need a second treatment 9 to 10 days later. If two treatments don't do the job, see your doctor for stronger medication.

How to Rid Your Home of Lice

Lice don't survive long on bedding, but it's best to wash the sheets of anyone being treated for lice in hot water. The same goes for clothing worn in the past 48 hours. While parents are sometimes told to clean and quarantine all of a child's stuffed animals, experts say this isn't necessary. If your child sleeps with a favorite plush toy, pop it in the hot dryer for 20 minutes or seal it in a plastic bag for 2 weeks. That should kill any creepy-crawlies.

Use Fine-Toothed Combs

Fine-toothed combs are another way to get rid of lice. These combs have teeth fine enough to pull out lice and their nits. They worked for the ancient Egyptians -- nit combs have been found in their tombs. The drawback is that it takes time and patience to comb out every last nit. You may have better luck treating the hair with a medicated shampoo than combing it to get rid of any stragglers.

Head Lice Myths

Head lice aren't a scourge of the lower classes, or a sign of poor hygiene. They affect people across all levels of income, social class, and cleanliness. The bugs can survive underwater for up to 6 hours, so even folks who bathe regularly are just as vulnerable. The good news is lice don't carry diseases.

Head Lice at School

Don't keep a healthy child home from school because of lice. Just make sure they avoid head contact with others. After treatment, dead eggs may remain in a child's hair until they are removed. Some schools have a "no nits" policy, meaning you must remove the eggs before the child returns to class. The American Academy of Paediatrics discourages this policy.

Guarding Against Head Lice

If you have young children, there's little you can do to ward off head lice. Kids will be kids, and when they put their heads together or share hair bows, lice get a ticket to ride. Your best defense is to examine your child's hair and scalp regularly so you can catch an infestation early. Quick treatment will help prevent the bugs from spreading to the rest of the family.

Super Lice Are a Myth

Yes, some lice have become resistant to treatment with common remedies, but they don't have superpowers. If they haven't been reported in your area, you probably don't have to worry. You're more likely to have trouble getting rid of lice because you didn't use the treatment properly, you misdiagnosed dandruff as lice, or you or your child got re infested.



How to Be Happy: 27 Habits to Add to Your Routine

Regardless of your version of true happiness, living a happier, more satisfied life is within reach. A few tweaks to your regular habits like getting more sleep and exercise can help you

Habits matter. If you've ever tried breaking a bad habit, you know all too well how engrained they are.

Well, good habits are deeply engrained, too. Why not work on making positive habits part of your routine?

Below, you'll find suggestions for daily, monthly, and yearly habits to help kickstart your quest. Just remember that everyone's version of happiness is a little different, and so is their path to achieving it.

If some of these habits create added stress or just don't fit your lifestyle, ditch them. With a little time and practice, you'll figure out what does and doesn't work for you.

Daily habits

The following daily habits may help you achieve more happiness in your life.

1. Smile

You tend to smile when you're happy. But it's actually a two-way street.

We smile because we're happy, and smiling causes the brain to release dopamine, which makes us happier.

While not completely foolproof, researchers have found that the link between smiling and happiness could be attributed to the "facial feedback hypothesis," where facial expressions may have a modest influence on emotions.

That does not mean you have to go around with a fake smile plastered on your face all the time. But the next time you find yourself feeling low, crack a smile and see what happens. Or try starting each morning by smiling at yourself in the mirror.

2. Exercise

Exercise isn't just for your body. Regular exercise can help reduce stress, feelings of anxiety, and symptoms of depression while boosting self-esteem and happiness.

Even a small amount of physical activity can make a difference. You don't have to train for a triathlon or scale a cliff — unless that's what makes you happy, of course.

The trick is to not overexert yourself. If you suddenly throw yourself into a strenuous routine, you may just end up frustrated (and sore).

Consider these exercise starters:

- Take a walk around the block every night after dinner.
- Sign up for a beginner's class in yoga or tai chi.
- Start your day with 5 minutes of stretching.

Remind yourself of any fun activities you once enjoyed but that have fallen by the wayside. Or you could consider starting activities you always wanted to try, such as golf, bowling, or dancing.

3. Get plenty of sleep

Most adults need at least 7 hours of sleep every night. If you find yourself fighting the urge to nap during the day or just generally feel like you're in a fog, your body may be telling you it needs more rest.

No matter how much our modern society steers us toward less sleep, we know that adequate sleep is vital to good health, brain function, and emotional well-being. Getting enough sleep also reduces your risk of developing certain chronic illnesses, such as heart disease, depression, and diabetes.

Here are a few tips to help you build a better sleep routine:

- Write down how many hours of sleep you get each night and how rested you feel. After a week, you should have a better idea how you're doing. You can also try using an app to track your sleep.
- Go to bed and wake up at the same time every day, including on weekends.
- Reserve the hour before bed as quiet time. Take a bath, read, or do something relaxing. Avoid heavy eating and drinking.
- Keep your bedroom dark, cool, and quiet.
- Invest in some good bedding.
- If you have to take a nap, try limiting it to 20 minutes.

If you consistently have problems sleeping, consider talking with a doctor. You may have a sleep disorder that requires treatment.

4. Eat with mood in mind

You may already know that your food choices have an impact on your overall physical health. But some foods can also affect your state of mind.

For example:

- **Carbohydrates** release serotonin, a "feel good" hormone. Just keep simple carbs — foods high in sugar and starch — to a minimum because that energy surge is short and you'll crash.

Choosing complex carbs, such as vegetables, beans, and whole grains, can help you avoid a crash while still providing serotonin.

- **Lean meat, poultry, legumes, and dairy** are high in protein. Protein-rich foods release dopamine and norepinephrine, which boost energy and concentration.
- **Omega-3 fatty acids**, such as those found in fatty fish, have been found to have anti-inflammatory effects that extend to your overall brain health. If you don't eat fish, you might consider talking with a doctor about possible supplementation.
- **Highly processed or deep-fried foods** tend to leave you feeling down and so will skipping meals.

If you want to eat with your mood in mind, consider starting with making one food choice for your mood each day.

For example, swap a big, sweet breakfast pastry for some Greek yogurt with fruit. You'll still satisfy your sweet tooth, and the protein will help you avoid a midmorning energy crash. Consider adding in a new food swap each week.

5. Practice gratitude

Simply being grateful can give your mood a big boost, among other benefits. For example, a two-part study found that practicing gratitude can have a significant impact on feelings of hope and happiness.

You might try starting each day by acknowledging one thing you're grateful for. You can do this while you're brushing your teeth or just waiting for that snoozed alarm to go off.

As you go about your day, consider keeping an eye out for pleasant things in your life. They can be big things, such as knowing that someone loves you or getting a well-deserved promotion.

But they can also be little things, such as a co-worker who offered you a cup of coffee or the neighbor who waved to you. Maybe it could even just be the warmth of the sun on your skin.

With a little practice, you may even become more aware of all the positive things around you.

6. Give a compliment

Research shows that performing acts of kindness may also help promote your overall well-being.

Giving a sincere compliment is a quick, easy way to brighten someone's day while giving your own happiness a boost.

Catch the person's eye and say it with a smile so they know you mean it. You might be surprised by how good it makes you feel.

If you want to offer someone a compliment on their physical appearance, make sure to do it in a respectful way.

7. Breathe deeply

You're tense, your shoulders are tight, and you feel as though you just might "lose it." We all know that feeling.

Instinct may tell you to take a long, deep breath to calm yourself down.

Turns out, that instinct is a good one. Research supports the fact that slow breathing and deep breathing exercises can help reduce stress.

The next time you feel stressed or are at your wit's end, work through these steps:

1. Close your eyes. Try to envision a happy memory or beautiful place.
2. Take a slow, deep breath in through your nose.
3. Slowly breathe out through your mouth or nose.
4. Repeat this process several times until you start to feel yourself calm down.

If you're having a hard time taking slow, deliberate breaths, try counting to 5 in your head with each inhale and exhale.

8. Acknowledge the unhappy moments

A positive attitude is generally a good thing, but bad things happen to everyone. It's just part of life.

If you get some bad news, make a mistake, or just feel like you're in a funk, don't try to pretend you're happy.

Acknowledge the feeling of unhappiness, letting yourself experience it for a moment. Then shift your focus toward what made you feel this way and what it might take to recover.

Would a deep breathing exercise help? A long walk outside? Talking it over with someone?

Let the moment pass and take care of yourself. Remember, no one's happy all the time.

9. Keep a journal

A journal is a good way to organize your thoughts, analyze your feelings, and make plans. And you don't have to be a literary genius or write volumes to benefit.

It can be as simple as jotting down a few thoughts before you go to bed. If putting certain things in writing makes you nervous, you can always shred it when you've finished. It's the process that counts.

Not sure what to do with all the feelings that end up on the page? Our guide to organizing your feelings may help.

10. Face stress head-on

Life is full of stressors, and it's impossible to avoid all of them.

There's no need to. Stress isn't always harmful, and we can even change our attitudes about stress. Sometimes, there's an upside to stress.

For those stressors you can't avoid, remind yourself that everyone has stress — there's no reason to think it's all on you. And chances are, you're stronger than you might think you are.

Instead of letting yourself get overwhelmed, try to address the stressor head-on. This might mean initiating an uncomfortable conversation or putting in some extra work, but the sooner you confront it, the sooner the pit in your stomach may start to shrink.

11. Avoid comparing yourself to others

Whether it happens on social media, at work, or even at a yoga class, it's easy to fall into a place where you're comparing yourself to others. The result? You may experience more discontent, lower self-esteem, and even depression and anxiety.

It can take practice to stop comparing yourself to others, but it's worth it for the benefit of having your inner peace and happiness.

You can start with some of the other tips on this list that can help draw your attention inward to yourself, such as deep breathing and journaling. You may also consider talking with a therapist for perspective.

Weekly habits

The following tips include weekly habits that may help you feel happier.

12. Declutter

[Decluttering](#) sounds like a big project, but setting aside just 20 minutes a week can have a big impact.

What can you do in 20 minutes? Lots.

Set a timer on your phone and take 15 minutes to tidy up a specific area of one room — say, your closet or that out-of-control junk drawer. Put everything in its place and toss or give away any extra clutter that's not serving you anymore.

Keep a designated box for giveaways to make things a little easier (and avoid creating more clutter).

Use the remaining 5 minutes to do a quick walk through your living space, putting away whatever stray items end up in your path.

You can do this trick once a week, once a day, or anytime you feel like your space is getting out of control.

13. See friends

Humans are largely considered social beings, and while the research is mixed on how exactly socialization impacts happiness, the consensus is that having social relationships can make us happy.

Who do you miss? Reach out to them. Make a date to get together or simply have a long phone chat.

In adulthood, it can feel next to impossible to make new friends. But it's not about how many friends you have. It's about having meaningful relationships — even if it's just with one or two people.

Try getting involved in a local volunteer group or taking a class. Both can help connect you with like-minded people in your area. And it's likely they're looking for friends, too.

Companionship doesn't have to be limited to other humans. Pets can offer similar benefits, according to multiple studies.

Love animals but can't have a pet? Consider volunteering at a local animal shelter to make some new friends — both human and animal.

14. Plan your week

Feel like you're flailing about? Try sitting down at the end of every week and making a basic list for the following week.

Even if you don't stick to the plan, blocking out time where you can do laundry, go grocery shopping, or tackle projects at work can help quiet your mind.

You can get a fancy planner or app, but even a sticky note on your computer or piece of scrap paper in your pocket can do the job.

15. Ditch your phone

Unplug. Really.

There's mounting evidence to support the fact that excessive phone use can lead to changes in the brain and impact your mood, with one review even revealing more serious cognitive and emotional changes in adolescents and young adults.

Turn off all the electronics and put those earbuds away for at least 1 hour once a week. They'll still be there for you later if you want them.

If you haven't unplugged in a while, you might be surprised at the difference it makes. Let your mind wander free for a change. Read. Meditate. Take a walk and pay attention to your surroundings. Be sociable. Or be alone. Just be.

Sound too daunting? Try unplugging for a shorter amount of time several times a week.

16. Get into nature

Spending 30 minutes or more a week in green spaces can help lower blood pressure and the chances of developing depression, according to one study.

Your green space could be anything such as your neighbourhood park, your own backyard, or a rooftop garden — anywhere you can appreciate and enjoy nature and fresh air.

Better yet, add some outdoor exercise into the mix for extra benefit. The same aforementioned study found that people who spent time in green spaces were also more likely to exercise more frequently and for longer each time.

17. Explore meditation

There are many methods of meditation to explore. They can involve movement, focus, spirituality, or a combination of all three.

Meditation doesn't have to be complicated. It can be as simple as sitting quietly with your own thoughts for 5 minutes. Even the deep breathing exercises mentioned earlier can serve as a form of meditation.

18. Consider therapy

We're certainly happier when we learn how to cope with obstacles. When you're faced with a problem, think about what got you through something similar in the past. Would it work here? What else can you try?

If you feel like you're hitting a brick wall, consider speaking with a mental health professional like a therapist on a weekly basis. You don't need to have a diagnosed mental health condition or overwhelming crisis to seek therapy.

Mental health professionals are trained to help people improve coping skills. Plus, there's no obligation to continue once you start.

Even just a few sessions can help you add some new goodies to your emotional toolbox.

Worried about the cost? It's possible to afford therapy on any budget.

19. Find a self-care ritual

It's easy to neglect self-care in a fast-paced world. But trying to find time to nurture yourself as much as you can is important in supporting your body's responsibilities of carrying your thoughts, passions, and spirit through this world.

Maybe it's unwinding your workweek with a long, hot bath. Or it may be adopting a skin care routine that makes you feel indulgent. Or it could be simply setting aside a night to put on your softest jammies and watch a movie from start to finish.

Whatever it is, make time for it. Put it in your planner if you must, but try to make it a priority do it.

Monthly habits

You might want to give these monthly habits to improve your happiness a try.

20. Give back

If you find that giving daily compliments provides a needed boost to your mood, consider making a monthly routine of giving back on a larger scale.

Maybe that's helping out at a food bank on the third weekend of every month or offering to watch your friend's kids one night per month.

21. Take yourself out

No one to go out with? Well, what rule says you can't go out alone?

Consider going to your favourite restaurant, taking in a movie, or going on that trip you've always dreamed of.

Even if you're a social butterfly, spending some deliberate time alone can help you reconnect with the activities that truly make you happy.

22. Create a thought list

You arrive for an appointment with 10 minutes to spare. What do you do with that time? Pick up your cell phone to scroll through social media? Worry about the busy week you have ahead of you?

Trying to take control of your thoughts during these brief windows of time can offer benefits.

At the start of each month, make a short list of happy memories or things you're looking forward to on a small piece of paper or on your phone.

When you find yourself waiting for a ride, standing in line at the grocery store, or just with a few minutes to kill, break out the list. You can even use it when you're just generally feeling down and need to change up your thoughts.

Yearly habits

Try following habits once a year or more to reflect and plan for happiness.

23. Take time to reflect

While the start of a new year is a good time to stop and take inventory of your life, you can set up yearly habits at any point in the year. Try setting aside some time to catch up with yourself the way you would with an old friend:

- How are you doing?
- What have you been up to?
- Are you happier than you were a year ago?

But try to avoid judging yourself too harshly for your answers. You've made it to another year, and that's a reason to celebrate.

If you find that your mood hasn't improved much over the last year, consider talking with a doctor or mental health professional. You might be dealing with depression or even an underlying physical condition that's affecting your mood.

24. Re-evaluate your goals

People change, so try thinking about where you're heading and consider if that's still where you want to go. There's no shame in changing your plans.

Let go of any goals that no longer serve you, even if they sound nice on paper.

25. Take care of your body

You've likely heard this before, including several times in this article. Your physical and mental health are closely intertwined.

As you build habits to improve your happiness, it's important to follow up with routine appointments to help take care your body, such as:

- seeing a primary care physician for an annual physical
- discussing and addressing any chronic health conditions with a healthcare professional and seeing recommended specialists if needed
- seeing a dentist for an oral cleaning and dental exam, and follow up as recommended
- getting your vision checked

26. Let go of grudges

This can often be easier said than done. But remembering that you are not necessarily doing it for another person or other people may help you be more open to beginning the process.

Sometimes, offering forgiveness or dropping a grudge is more about self-care than compassion for others.

Take stock of your relationships with others. Are you harbouring any resentment or ill will toward someone? If so, consider reaching out to them in an effort to bury the hatchet.

This does not have to be reconciliation. You may just need to end the relationship and move on.

If reaching out is not an option, try getting your feelings out in a letter. You don't even have to send it to them. Just getting your feelings out of your mind and into the world can be freeing. You can even shred the letter afterward if you want to.

27. Plan a trip

With an ever-hectic schedule, sometimes it's easy to forget to schedule something else that's crucial to your well-being: time off. You can reap even more benefits by planning a trip, whether it's close to home or somewhere further away.

What's more, research also backs both the mental *and* physical benefits of taking that much-needed vacation. In one such study, researchers looked at stress and heart rate as it relates to taking a vacation. They found that not only did the vacation itself reduce stress, but the weeks leading up to that planned trip had similar effect.

