A REASON TO GET OUTSIDE EVERY DAY

A PATH TO BETTER HEALTH MIGHT BE CLOSER THAN YOU THINK — MAYBE EVEN IN YOUR OWN BACKYARD!

Sally Abel, DNP

Chronic diseases like high blood pressure, diabetes, heart disease, and cancer are some of the main causes of death around the world. One big reason for these health problems is not getting enough exercise. In fact, the average American spends 40% or more of their day sitting down, which increases the chances of these serious health issues. While regular exercise can help prevent or lessen these conditions, many people find it hard to go to the gym because of problems like location, cost, and time. Even though we know exercise is good for us, many struggle to fit it into their daily lives.

The good news is that recent studies show that spending time outside can greatly improve health and happiness. While exercising in a gym is helpful, outdoor activities have special benefits for both our bodies and minds. Research has demonstrated that being outdoors—whether it's just for fun or a planned workout—can decrease stress, lower blood pressure, and help keep blood sugar levels steady. Plus, being in nature is linked to better sleep and less anxiety and depression.

If you want to enjoy the many benefits of nature, here are some easy (and free) ways to get started:

- **Walk Around the Neighborhood:** Take a nice walk around your area and enjoy the sights and sounds around you. This simple activity can clear your mind and lift your spirits.

- **Do Gentle Stretching and Breathing:** Spend a few minutes in your backyard stretching and practicing deep breathing. This helps increase flexibility and makes you feel relaxed and calm.

- **Visit Local Trails:** Check out Bear Creek Park to explore walking paths and playgrounds. The beautiful scenery can make you feel happy and encourage you to move more.

- **Enjoy Nature at Garden of the Gods Park:** Make a trip to Garden of the Gods Park, where you can see amazing rock formations while walking on paved paths. The beautiful views can inspire you to explore and serve as both exercise and a peaceful getaway.

Trying new outdoor activities is often more fun with a friend or family member. Inviting someone along not only makes it more enjoyable but also helps build strong social connections, which is important for mental health. Your future self will surely appreciate prioritizing your health and happiness by enjoying time outdoors!

Dr. Sally Abell, a Doctor of Nurse Practice at the Health Center at Printers Parkway, 340, strives for all patients to feel welcomed and heard while offering the best possible care.

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SLEEP YOUR WAY TO BETTER HEALTH

Bradley Stokes, DO

Sleep is very important for our health and well-being. It affects how we feel and function every day. I often tell my patients that even if they have serious health problems, not getting enough sleep can make everything worse. Good sleep helps our bodies recover and keeps our minds sharp.

Why is Sleep Important?

- **Immune System Function:** Good sleep helps our immune system work well. When we don't get enough sleep, we get sick more often and take longer to recover. Our bodies need sleep to produce special proteins that fight off infections. Without enough sleep, it can be harder for our bodies to stay healthy.

- **Managing Chronic Diseases:** Sleep is closely tied to conditions like obesity, diabetes, and heart disease. Poor sleep doesn't directly cause these issues, but it can make them harder to manage. Not getting enough sleep can mess with hormones that control hunger and stress. This can make it tough to keep a healthy weight or blood sugar levels. Sleep helps keep our bodies balanced.

- **Emotional Health and Mood Regulation:** We all know how a bad night's sleep can affect our mood. When we don't sleep well, we can feel grumpy or more stressed. Over time, not getting enough sleep can lead to bigger problems like anxiety and depression. Sleep helps us process our emotions and memories, so without it, we can struggle to feel better.

One common sleep issue is sleep apnea. This happens when someone's airway gets blocked during sleep, causing them to wake up often to catch their breath. This can lead to very tired days, even after what seems like a full night's sleep. It's important to recognize signs like daytime fatigue and talk to a doctor if you think sleep apnea could be a problem, as it can harm your health if not treated.

In conclusion, getting enough good-quality sleep is essential for our physical, emotional, and mental health. Not sleeping well can lead to serious health problems over time. Just as there's no health issue so serious that poor sleep won't make worse, getting enough restful sleep can also help improve almost any health concern.

Dr. Bradley Stokes is a medical care provider at the Health Center at Jet Wing. He is dedicated to providing care and working together with patients to discuss their needs. To learn more about services at Peak Vista, visit PeakVista.org or call 719-632-5700.

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