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READY TO TAKE THE ICY PLUNGE?

Why Hollywood Stars Use This Unique Recovery Tool

Want to look like an A-list Celebrity?

Then you should know one of their health and beauty tricks for staying in shape — taking ice baths. Big names like Chris Hemsworth, Madonna, and Tom Cruise all take advantage of cold-water immersion. Here are five benefits this icy treatment provides.

Reduces Muscle Soreness

After a grueling workout, many people turn to ice baths or cold showers to ease sore muscles. Cold-water immersion shows promise in reducing delayed onset muscle soreness (DOMS) compared to passive interventions like rest or heat packs.

Boosts Immune System

A plethora of anecdotal evidence supports the immune-boosting potential of cold-water immersion. People who regularly partake in cold swimming often report that they “haven’t been ill” for extended periods.

Enhances Emotional and Mental Well-Being

Cold-water immersion has also been credited with offering emotional and mental benefits. While the research is not exhaustive, many proponents attest to improved mood and mental clarity following a dip in cold water.

Provides Anti-Inflammatory Effects

One of the critical assumptions about cold-water immersion is its ability to reduce inflammation, particularly in skeletal muscles. While human data are limited, many believe the practice may be effective for this purpose.

Improves Metabolism

While the science is still in its infancy, some evidence suggests that the body has to work harder to maintain its core temperature when exposed to cold water, potentially aiding in weight loss and metabolic function.

More research is needed to substantiate many of these claims, but existing evidence makes a compelling case for the advantages of cold-water immersion. Whether for athletic recovery or general wellness, this practice may be worth adding to your routine.

New Year, New Resolutions, New Smile

Reasons to Smile in the New Year!

Happy New Year! 2024 is officially here, and many of us have likely set a few goals in the form of resolutions this year. Often, these objectives focus on health, wellness, or beauty. While these types of self-improvement goals are undoubtedly important, we usually overlook one aspect of our well-being when making those resolutions: our smiles.

Your smile is more than just an expression; it’s an integral part of your overall health and wellness. In fact, smiling has been shown to increase dopamine, serotonin levels, and positive emotions — even if the smile is fake. Smiling also makes you appear more attractive and happier to others, resulting in an outside source of validation, confidence, and positivity that compounds the chemical reaction occurring already in the brain.

These feelings are part of why a smile can be so important to people. I’ve witnessed many patients who choose to only have dental work done on the teeth that show in their smile, and I can understand the desire.

But smiles never seem to make the New Year’s resolution cut despite how vital they are to our feelings of health and wellness. So, this year, as you set your wellness goals, here are a few reasons your smile — and smiling more — might be worth a resolution of its own.

Smiling can be a form of mindfulness.

According to research by Pamela Strasser, MA, MSc, when smiling is combined with meditative practices, it “significantly increased levels of mindfulness, compassion to others and gratitude.”

Participants in this study achieved these results, Strasser says, because smiling accomplished something called the “positive



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mind-body connection,” a simple awareness of the “pleasant [physical] experience of smiling.” This awareness allowed the “practitioner to savor these positive sensations, thoughts, and emotions,” which boosted these feelings and allowed them to carry over after they finished the meditation.

Smiling can improve your cardiovascular health.

Every time you smile, the muscles in your face contract, which helps increase blood flow to your brain. As your blood can move more freely, it reduces your blood pressure. In fact, in one study from the journal Psychophysiology, researchers found that participants who smiled more often had lower heart rates during challenging or stressful tasks than those who did not smile.

Smiling boosts your immune system.

We already mentioned that smiling releases happiness neurotransmitters like serotonin and dopamine in the brain.

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Why Does Our Body Suddenly Jerk Awake?

And Other Fun Facts About Our Body

Your body can do weird things you may have never been able to explain. Well, we're here to fix that! Here are four fun facts about the human body you may have always wondered about.

Lactose Intolerance

Lactose intolerance is the inability to fully digest lactose, a sugar in milk and dairy products, as a result of the LCT gene in the body mutating during infancy. The prevalence of lactose intolerance differs by ethnicity and is more common among people of Asian, African, and Native American descent, but the condition affects 65% of the global population. Lactose intolerance generally manifests in adolescents and young adults and varies in prevalence depending on the region in which a person lives.

One-Nostril Breathing

Most people do not breathe equally from both nostrils, a phenomenon known as the "nasal cycle." One nostril is usually dominant for a period, ranging from

90 minutes to several hours, before switching to the other. This cycle is believed to be regulated by the autonomic nervous system and is a natural process most people aren't consciously aware of. This is also why when you get sick, one nostril can get congested while the other works fine.

Body Jerks When Exhausted

Have you ever tried to fall asleep only for your body to quickly jerk for no apparent reason? That's called a hypnic jerk but is also known by other names, like sleep start. The twitch typically happens during the early stages of sleep and is considered a benign myoclonic jerk, a form of involuntary muscle twitch. While the exact reason is not entirely understood, it is theorized that the jerk is a neural mechanism that helps the body transition from wakefulness to sleep. It may occur more often when you are exhausted or anxious.

Your Ears Keep Growing

While most parts of the human body reach a specific size and stop growing, ear cartilage grows slowly as people age. This phenomenon is due to specialized cartilage cells called chondrocytes that continuously produce new cartilage material. This ongoing growth is not usually noticeable daily, but it can become quite apparent when comparing photographs from different stages of a person's life.



BREAK A SWEAT WITH LOW-IMPACT WORKOUTS!

Protect Joints, Enhance Strength, and Aid Recovery

Low impact doesn't necessarily mean low intensity. While these workouts are gentle on joints and ligaments, they can still make you break a sweat! Low-impact workouts involve movements that don't require jumping, running, or any other activity that can be harsh on your skeletal system. That's why they are perfect for people starting to exercise, recovering from an injury, or looking to give their joints just a bit more TLC. Here are some examples of accessible low-impact workouts to try.

Rowing

You've probably seen rowing machines at the gym and were too intimidated to hop on. Yet, rowing machines offer a total body workout without the stress on your joints! No weights are required, and rowing is a strength and cardio workout that can vary in intensity depending on the equipment settings. Simply strap your feet in, grab the handlebar, and start rowing!

Swimming

Perhaps the most popular low-impact exercise is swimming. Injured athletes and older gym-goers have long cherished it because the water allows the body to move without pressure on joints and ligaments. The low-impact workout includes cardio, strength, and flexibility! Similar to rowing, swimming allows plenty of customization for intensity.

Pilates

If you're searching for an activity that's less cardio-focused and more strengthening, then head to your nearest Pilates class! Pilates is a low-impact form of exercise involving a variety of movements that target your core muscles and improve your body's alignment. Many people comment on their improved balance and posture after regularly practicing Pilates, which can make you feel and look taller!



Cycling

Former runners are known to be cycling fans because it offers the same rush and cardio as running but without the joint pain. Whether on a stationary bike at home, in a spin class at the gym, or cycling through the neighborhood, you're bound to get your heart pumping. Be sure your bike is adjusted correctly for your size and that you follow the correct form to avoid strain or injury.

The key to each of these workouts is to practice with proper form and technique. Partner with a professional or a personal trainer to ensure you gain the maximum benefit from your low-impact workout.



Carbs have long been a villain when it comes to trending diets, but are all carbohydrates truly bad for you? The food pyramid doesn't lie; we all need carbs for sufficient energy. However, some carbs are better than others. The difference is that some are *slow-digesting carbs* while others are *fast-digesting carbs*.

Carbs turn into glucose (sugar), but some break down faster than others and can cause quick blood sugar spikes.

Crack the Carb Code

What You Need to Know About the Glycemic Index

This can lead to an immediate burst of energy, but you'll soon be crashing and feeling hungry all over again.

The slower these carbs are digested, the more stable your blood sugar levels are, leading to longer-lasting energy throughout the day. You will also feel fuller for longer. What separates slow-digesting carbs from fast-digesting carbs is their glycemic index score.

What is the glycemic index?

The glycemic index (GI) rates different foods by how quickly they release glucose into the bloodstream. The higher the GI score, the faster the carbs are converted to sugar. Any carb with a GI score over 70 is considered a high-GI food (fast-digesting carb). An average score ranges from 56 to 69. However, only slow-digesting carbs have a GI score below 55.

Fast-Digesting Carbs to Avoid

The goal is to consume carbs that will keep you feeling full longer and not lead

to rapidly increasing blood sugar levels. In order to do so, you should avoid the following fast-digesting carbs:

- Candy
- Cake
- Soft drinks and juices (with added sugar)
- White rice
- White bread
- Ice cream
- Most breakfast cereals
- Sugar

Slow-Digesting Carbs to Consume

To feel less hungry, try eating more low-GI foods, such as:

- Leafy vegetables
- Tomatoes
- Nuts
- Whole-wheat pasta
- Brown rice
- Quinoa
- Oats
- Legumes
- Fresh fruits

Incorporating more slow-digesting carbs into your diet will help with weight management and controlling your blood sugar. But you should also be aware that you're consuming a well-balanced diet!

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But what may surprise you is that these same chemicals are vital components of our immune system. Dopamine acts as a regulator, keeping everything in check, while serotonin helps control inflammation and actively sends immune cells to the sites of inflammation in our bodies.

Set and achieve smile goals this year.

Now that you've seen just a fraction of how powerful a smile can be for our health and wellness, you may be wondering how to incorporate your smile into your New Year's resolutions this year. Of course, you can set a goal to smile more, but if you're looking for a more structured approach, here's what I'd recommend.

- **Regular Dental Check-Ups:** The foundation of a healthy smile (that you want to show off) begins with regular dental visits to keep those pearly whites smile-ready..
- **A Mindful Smiling Routine:** You can perform Pamela Strasser's study yourself by taking a few minutes each day to do some mindful smiling. If you don't know where to start, I recommend "The Practice of Smiling Guided Meditation Script," which you can find at [MindfulnessExercises.com/practice-of-smiling](https://www.MindfulnessExercises.com/practice-of-smiling).

- **A Comprehensive Oral Hygiene Routine:** Don't forget to brush and floss daily; it's a simple step to prevent dental issues that might one day ruin your smile.
- **Teeth Whitening:** You can enhance your radiant smile by considering teeth whitening treatments, adding an extra sparkle to your grin as you embrace the New Year with a brighter, whiter set of teeth.

And, speaking of teeth whitening, if you're interested in brightening your smile for the new year, we have some great news for you! **Our custom take-home whitening tray and gel will give you the bright, healthy smile you deserve, and this month, we're offering \$100 off of the original price, which is regularly \$550!**

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Wishing you a year filled with great smiles and better health,