

FACT SHEET



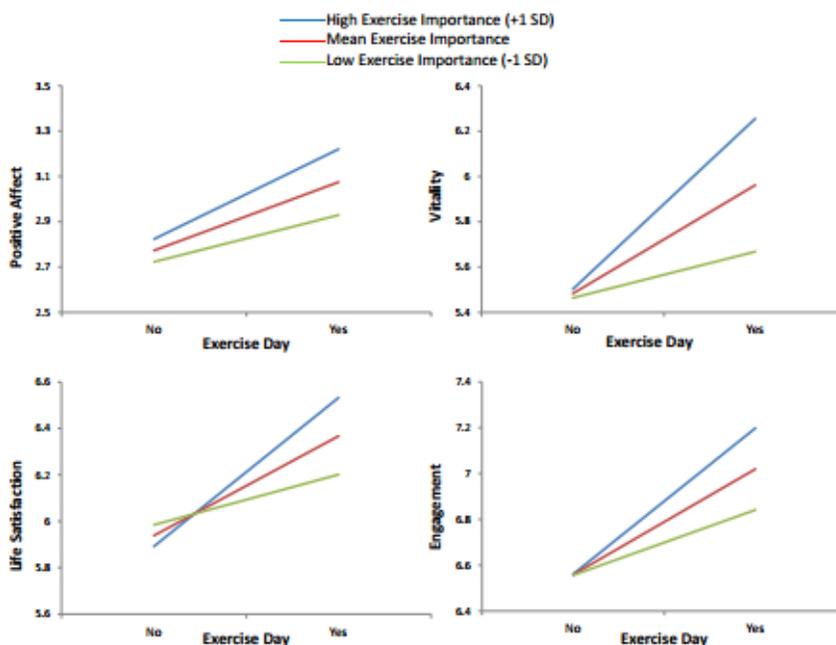
University
of Victoria

Health and well-being

How do the decisions we make each day about our health and lifestyle affect our level of well-being, or our overall sense of how well life is going? Researchers with the Laboratory for Integrative Lifespan Research at the University of Victoria are trying to find out.

To see which types of behaviours can affect well-being on a daily basis, we had research participants answer a survey about well-being, stress and health on seven days over two weeks. We did this study to see how well-being, stress and health are linked and build upon work done by other researchers in the same area. For example, other studies have shown that a high stress level is associated with higher consumption of high-fat snacks, caffeine and cigarettes, as well as with low physical activity and vegetable consumption.

The results of our study showed that the quality of sleep (interestingly, not the number of hours slept) was related to the number and severity of stressors reported by participants; that is, people who said they had a good, restful night's sleep were more likely to report fewer and less severe stressful events than people who had not had a good sleep. In similar studies with both students and older adults, we asked survey questions about their level of physical activity. For both age groups, we found that on days when people exercised, they scored higher on all aspects of well-being, such as life satisfaction, vitality and self-acceptance compared to non-exercise days. Those who exercised also reported experiencing more positive emotions than negative, and this was consistent regardless of the type of exercise done.



Other health factors that can affect well-being include time spent indoors, physical ailments or pain and nutrition. Our results showed that well-being was generally higher when each of those factors was lower. We didn't find any substantial effects of tobacco, alcohol or caffeine intake. Therefore, to maximize daily well-being, it's a good idea to get outside, eat healthily and manage physical health symptoms by working with your doctor to make lifestyle changes.

To review, our research has shown that daily well-being tends to be higher when individuals:

- have a good night's sleep
- exercise
- spend time outdoors
- eat healthily
- manage or treat physical discomfort or pain

To learn more about health and well-being, see:

- BC Partners for Mental Health and Addictions Information: Managing Mental Well-Being. <http://www.heretohelp.bc.ca/skills/managing-well-being>
- Alwin, D. F., & Hofer, S. M. (2011). Health and cognition in ageing research. *Journals of Gerontology: Psychological Sciences*, 66B, i9-i16.
- Giacobbi, P. R., Hausenblas, H. A., & Frye, N. (2005). A naturalistic assessment of the relationship between personality, daily life events, leisure-time exercise, and mood. *Psychology of Sport and Exercise*, 6(1), 67-81.
- O'Connor, D. B., Conner, M., Jones, F., MacMillan, B., & Ferguson, E. (2009). Exploring the benefits of conscientiousness: an investigation of the role of daily stressors and health behaviors. *Annals of Behavioral Medicine*, 37, 184-196.