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INTEGRATING WELLNESS

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MOLE REMOVAL

An expert guide



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THE CORTISOL CONNECTION

Piroska Cavell explores the link between wellness and aesthetics and the role of cortisol in weight gain.

Wellbeing is a term we are now hearing and seeing promoted more and more widely in the health, aesthetics, and fitness industries.¹ But what does it mean? Wellbeing is a multidimensional concept covering a multitude of social sciences, including psychology and health.² While wellbeing is prominent in popular culture now, it has been a concern of many civilisations dating back to the ancient Greeks.

There are numerous models of wellbeing, and with the increase in popularity of positive psychology³, there is a multitude of 'wellbeing' books, tutorials, podcasts and social media platforms encouraging us to look after our health and wellbeing, putting it at the forefront of everything we do. This is now moving into an era of increased interest in longevity and a form of medicine known as functional medicine⁴ with a focus on improving all areas of our health in order not just to live longer but to live in the best possible health as we age.

Changing concepts of ageing

It used to be widely accepted that as we age, we will gain weight, find it hard to lose weight, develop heart disease, high blood pressure, high cholesterol, diabetes, lose muscle mass and strength, develop weak bones and potentially the most worrying of all, experience cognitive decline. But the good news is, with all the new evidence emerging, we now know that the previously accepted 'ailments of old age' are

not inevitable and are actually preventable. We do not have to look forward to living our older years consuming a cocktail of medications to keep us existing.

Ageing and hormones

A great example of our newfound understanding relating to ageing is hormones. Hormones are an area that has exploded, particularly in women's health. We now know that these hormones affect every area of your body⁵ and that the reduction in oestrogen that occurs with menopause, in particular, reduces women's protection from heart disease, reduces libido, and slows collagen production, causing not just the skin on their face but also the tissues of the vagina to lose elasticity. This decline in hormones reduces muscle tone and bone protection. It also affects cognitive function, leading to increased anxiety, depression, and unopposed cortisol, the stress hormone, to increase.

We also now know that testosterone is not just responsible for your sex drive but is related to your ability to experience all types of pleasure as well as keeping your mood level and motivation high and allowing you to continue to improve your strength and regulate your weight.

Now, with careful hormone replacement therapy, we can protect patients from some of the effects of ageing on their hormones.



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Cortisol and weight gain

Cortisol is an inflammatory hormone.⁶ An excess of cortisol promotes the storage of fat around the organs and on the abdomen, raising inflammation in the body, which can trigger diabetes, heart disease, stroke, and cognitive disruption.

Patients with abdominal obesity often have elevated cortisol levels. Furthermore, stress and glucocorticoids control both food intake and energy expenditure. In particular, glucocorticoids are known to increase the consumption of foods enriched in fat and sugar.⁷⁻⁸

We can regulate high cortisol levels by adding magnesium to our bodies.⁹ When you are under continued high levels of stress, magnesium, an essential mineral for your body, is leaked out. Magnesium is essential for stabilising your blood pressure, nerve function and blood sugars. It also makes protein, bone, and DNA. The most effective way to replace it is not with oral supplements but through the skin. You can bathe in magnesium flakes; you can also use sprays and gels. We can also manage high cortisol by sweating it out to release it with regular exercise.

We can also manage cortisol by journaling and writing out our negative thoughts. This is the mind-body connection, which is at the core of well-being.

The mind-body connection and its role in weight management

The best example of the mind-body connection is the rapid rise in heart rate

and blood pressure when we are scared by something. Our emotional feeling – fear – triggers this physical reaction.

The power of the mind over the body has now been widely researched and evidenced. In 1992, Yue and Cole conducted an experiment involving volunteers imagining exercising a muscle, not physically moving the muscle. The volunteers achieved a 22% increase in muscle mass from brain power alone.¹⁰

Another famous experiment was by Langer in 1981, 'The Counter Clockwise Study'¹¹ then repeated for TV in 2010 for the BBC 'The Young Ones'. The experiment took older people into an environment that replicated their lives from their much younger days, including décor and clothing. They had to live as they did then; no walking aids or concessions were made for their chronological age during the experiment. They all emerged in shockingly better health mentally and physically; one went in using a wheelchair and left using just a cane. They were significantly stronger, fitter, healthier and happier than when they went in.

This mind-body connection is evident, particularly in weight loss and weight management. Many overweight people are stressed, unhappy, and anxious. Weight gain becomes part of a cycle as they unwittingly eat to feel better, very often consuming high-fat, high-sugar, high-carb, ultra-processed, energy-dense food. They unknowingly chase a dopamine hit to help them feel better. This is known as comfort eating.¹²

Dopamine is a 'feel good' hormone released when food that is very sugary or easily converted to sugar in the body is eaten.¹³ But, to get the same 'feel good' factor as you do from the first time you eat it, you need to increase the quantity to get the same 'hit'. This develops 'cravings', which can lead to bingeing.

Cravings can become a relentless drive to eat, but emotions, not hunger, trigger this. A big part of successful weight management and weight loss is exploring, identifying and managing these emotions. Significant weight loss can be achieved with a focus purely on food intake and exercise, but this is not sustainable, which is why so many experience a lifetime of dieting trapped in the diet cycle. The process of being aware of being overweight, then deciding to act, maybe delaying it for a while, then exploring different methods to lose weight.

Finally, when the decision is made to take action, it is usually focused on a target, which is based on a number on a scale. Significant weight loss is often achieved. And the goal is reached. But because the mindset and emotional drivers have not been considered people will return to their former habits, regain the original weight and more. This then causes a multitude of negative emotions, self-loathing, depression, and anxiety. Then eventually the pattern is repeated. Willpower alone is not enough.

Successful sustainable weight loss is only possible when we work on the mind together with the body and this is when people can become free of the diet cycle

and a lifetime of continuously thinking about food and ricocheting from self-love to self-loathing repeatedly.

Connecting your physical and emotional health is sleep. We have known for centuries that sleep is essential for maintaining both your emotional and physical health and consequently your wellbeing.

However, we now know that the brain is cleansed every night by what is called the glymphatic system. This is an extremely exciting discovery. The brain is essentially deep cleaned every night, washing out all neuro toxic waste products from itself. This ensures the brain can function at its full potential regulating all your body systems including both physical and emotional. It is widely acknowledged that lack of sleep

can affect your mood, your concentration your judgement, making you depressed, anxious but we now know that lack of sleep prevents this process leading to a build-up of toxins in the brain causing a myriad of physical and emotional issues. It takes around seven hours every night to complete this process and it is most effective when you sleep on your side.

Your body is an amazing machine and is designed to work at its optimum, and we will continue to strive to do so no matter how we treat it. With these new advances often termed bio hacking we can now with the right help unlock the secrets to maintaining our health and wellbeing from within. Allowing us to work with our bodies using our amazing resources to live longer, happier, fitter lives.



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To download a CPD Reflective Learning Form, produced in association with the British Association of Cosmetic Nurses (BACN) & the British College of Aesthetic Medicine (BCAM), please use the QR code or visit bit.ly/CR-CPD in your web browser.

Resources

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