What is Living Well?

We often speak about health as though being healthy is the mere absence of illness—but there is so much more to being healthy than simply not being sick. When we talk about wellness, we’re talking about all of the different things that contribute to our overall health and well-being. At first, one might assume that there are only two aspects to our personal wellness: being physically and emotionally well. Though physical and emotional wellness are both important, they are not the only aspects of our personal wellness. Our wellness can include our involvement in our job or occupation as well as our dedication to learning in all aspects of our life, which some call our intellectual development. Our social life can also affect our wellness. Spending time with others who we care about and with whom we are close can be part of living well. Our spiritual connection, however we may define it, can also be a part of our overall wellness to the extent that we question and appreciate the unknown parts of life. Finally, the extent to which we embrace our impact on the environment around us can also affect our wellness. Our own personal wellness is just that—very personal. If one part of your wellness is more important to you than another, that is okay. The degree to which each part of our wellness is important to us or even included in our definition of wellness is entirely up to each individual person.

When Can Living Well be Beneficial?

Having an understanding of our own personal wellness can be extremely beneficial to our well-being. Living well does not equate to living perfectly: eating strictly by Canada’s food guide, always getting at least 8 hours of sleep at night, and never missing out on 30 minutes of exercise a day is an unrealistic expectation of ourselves. Living well means living a balanced life and enjoying all things in moderation. Eating a treat one day should not invoke guilt. If living well is your goal, the focus should be on achieving balance—not perfection. Living well means different things to different people. Living well is beneficial when we can find a balance of what it means to us as individuals to be well and to live well.

When Can Living Well Become an Issue?

Being well can mean accepting that things change by adapting and doing the best that we can by our own standards. For example, if you are unable to set aside enough time to make a healthy meal before a big term test one day—that is okay. Our wellness can fluctuate and change and some days, achieving our wellness goals are unrealistic. It is important that we are striving to achieve a balance in our lives. Concerning ourselves over small changes in our health routine or feeling guilty for not being able to live a perfectly healthy life are both possibilities of when living well can become an issue. By not accepting the possibility of change and attending to a definition of personal wellness and balance that is not your own, your aspirations to live well could become an issue.
What Can I do to Live Well?

Exercise Well

Exercising and engaging in an active life does not necessarily mean going to the gym every day or competing in long distance runs. Like all parts of our wellness, exercising well means exercising in ways that you enjoy, to the extent that your body requires to feel healthy and strong. If you enjoy going to the gym, that is great. That being said, an active lifestyle can also take many different forms. If you enjoy playing a sport, try organizing a pick up sport with friends, registering for intramurals, or joining a team off-campus. Other ways to exercise may include going for a walk, gardening, or even choosing to take the stairs instead of the elevator. There are plenty of ways to exercise!

Eat Well

Eating well does not mean eating perfectly. When we eat well, it means that we are “eating a variety of foods that give you the nutrients you need to maintain your health, feel good, and have energy.” Part of eating well is also enjoying eating, which can be described as being mindful when we eat. This can involve behaviours such as eating slowly, taking a break from studying or work while we eat, turning off the television, and eating with others when possible.*

As a student, you can also book a free consultation with our campus dietitian! For more information, recipes and to read our dietitian’s food blog, visit [https://www.uoguelph.ca/studenthealthservices/diet](https://www.uoguelph.ca/studenthealthservices/diet) [1]

If you would like more information on eating well, see the Healthy Eating Active Living Information Kit at [http://tiny.cc/mj4odx](http://tiny.cc/mj4odx) [2].

*Source: University of British Columbia, Nutrition and Food Link: [http://students.ubc.ca/livewell/topics/nutrition-and-food#healthy-eating-habits](http://students.ubc.ca/livewell/topics/nutrition-and-food#healthy-eating-habits) [3]

Sleep Well

Though it is not always possible for students, it is recommended for adults aged 17 and up to get between 7-9 hours of sleep at night. (Student Health 101, February Issue). Below are some ideas for sleeping well that you can include in your sleep routine in order to get the best sleep you can:

- Avoid or decrease the amount of stimulants that you have in a day (e.g. caffeine, nicotine, etc.)
- Exercising
- Avoid exercise late in the evening, right before you go to bed
- Avoid eating large meals immediately before going to sleep
- Make sure you’re getting some exposure to sunlight – going outside during the day can help you with maintaining a consistent sleep-wake cycle by telling your body that it is time to go to sleep or time to wake up
- Maintain a relaxing, consistent bedtime routine
- Use the bed and bedroom only for sleep and sex, not for work, watching T.V. or studying
- Ensure your sleep environment is comfortable – not too hot or too cold, comfortable sheets, not too bright, etc.

[Kathy Somers Relaxation, Stress Management and Better Sleep Programs](https://www.uoguelph.ca/mentalwellbeing) [4] are available for University of Guelph Students at a subsidized cost.
Living well means that we are looking after ourselves and tending to our own needs, which include connecting with other people. As humans, we are social beings and require time spent with others. The amount of time that you like to spend with others and how you like to spend your time with friends, family and others who are important to you is completely up to you. The important thing is that you are spending time with others to whatever extent you are comfortable with and enjoy. If you want to start making new or different connections, try thinking about what you like to do and seek out opportunities to get involved. There are plenty of organizations, clubs and events on campus and off campus that are full of people looking to meet others with similar interests.

Find Balance

An important part of living well is finding balance. This does not mean eating perfectly all of the time; getting 8 hours of sleep every night; or even exercising each day of the week – in fact, accomplishing all of that is likely impossible. Life happens, things change and we must adapt and accommodate those changes. Rather than seeking perfection, we should seek balance. If we know that one week we are going to be extremely busy and do not have time to exercise as much as we need to, we might want to balance that by making sure we get enough sleep to have an enjoyable day. It is important that your own balance of wellness works for you and keeps you feeling happy and healthy.

Where Can I go for Help?

Click here for a list of resources [5].