

# International Self-Care Day

International Self-Care Day is a worldwide campaign held annually on July 24. The date being (7/24) is meant as a reminder that the benefits of self-care can and should be experienced 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. This day is meant to celebrate and recognize the importance of self-care and encourages for all people to practice responsible self-care for the benefit of their own health as well as the health care system.

**Did You Know?** If the average person sees a doctor 3 times a year for 10 minutes each time (total 1/2 hour), the rest of the time (365 days x 24 hours = 8759.5 hours) is in reality self-care.

## What is Self-Care?

“Self-care is the ability of individuals, families and communities to promote health, prevent disease, maintain health, and cope with illness and disability with or without the support of a healthcare provider” – World Health Organization

## The Seven Pillars of Self-Care

Self-care is what we can all do for ourselves to establish and maintain good health, and to prevent and deal with illness. It can be a broad term encompassing what is known as the “seven pillars of self-care” including;

1. Hygiene (general and personal)
2. Healthy eating (type and quality of food eaten)
3. Physical activity (exercise, leisure, etc.)
4. Self-awareness (mental health, living conditions, etc.)
5. Health literacy (education through resources)
6. Risk avoidance (avoid risky habits, tobacco use, alcohol abuse, etc.)
7. Optimal use of products and services (self-medication, resources, healthcare providers).

## A Pillar of Healthcare

Self-care is the foundation of good healthcare. For the healthcare system and our large and growing society, focusing only on treating lifestyle diseases would not be an effective approach. Lifestyle diseases are mostly preventable – up to 80% of heart disease, stroke and type 2 diabetes, and over a third of cancers could be prevented by eliminating shared risk factors like tobacco use, unhealthy diet, physical inactivity and the abuse of alcohol and other drugs.

## Healthy Habits



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Another important reason for a broad approach is that there are many different entry points into self-care, and one healthy behaviour can lead on to others. For example, the smoker who manages to quit smoking is more likely to start exercising. Older people aiming to maintain mental acuity (sharpness) through crossword puzzles will learn that exercise can reduce the risk of Alzheimer's by 60%. People may start anywhere in self-care, and engagement in one area can lead to interest in other areas, drawing people in to healthier lifestyles overall.

The 4 major parts that make up our overall health and wellbeing include our; mental health, physical health, social health and spiritual health.

Try some of these self-care tips and habits from each category of health:

- Physical:
  - Try a new physical activity or sport
  - Take stretch breaks
  - Exercise regularly
  - Sleep 7-9 hours every night
  - Eat a balanced diet
- Spiritual
  - Practice mindfulness
  - Try deep breathing
  - Spend time in nature
  - Engage in positive self-talk
  - Travel and explore
- Mental
  - Be compassionate with yourself
  - Know your limits
  - Express your feelings
  - Start a journal
  - Enjoy a favourite hobby
  - Read a book
  - Meditate
- Social
  - Volunteer in the community
  - Spend time with friends and family
  - Be empathetic
  - Donate to a charity
  - Join a club

Check out <http://selfcare.ca/> to learn more about International Self-Care Day!



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