

Wellness and the Environment: Caring for Oneself and the Planet

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"What is good for your health is good for the planet" (Hoelscher, 2021). For nurses, this statement becomes evident through daily behaviors that simultaneously contribute to personal and planetary health, demonstrating the nurse's ability to multi-task!

Active Transportation

Good for Your Health

Active transport, such as walking or biking instead of driving, can benefit your health. According to the Office of Disease Prevention and Health Promotion (2023), physical activity carries many benefits. One benefit includes a reduced risk of all-cause mortality, cardiovascular disease, hypertension, type 2 diabetes, an adverse blood lipid profile, dementia, and depression. The Office of Disease Prevention and Health Promotion (2023) also reports that walking or biking more frequently reduces the risk of bladder, breast, colon, endometrium, esophagus, kidney, lung, and stomach cancers. Overall, choosing to walk or bike instead of driving enhances quality of life through improved sleep, weight maintenance, bone health, and physical function. As an added benefit, walking and biking

are linked to a reduced risk of falls and fewer, less severe injuries from falls that do happen (Office of Disease Prevention and Health Promotion, 2023).

Good for the Planet

Walking or biking reduces greenhouse gas emissions that cause climate change. A typical passenger vehicle emits about 4.6 metric tons of carbon dioxide (CO₂) annually, or 400 grams per mile (Environmental Protection Agency, 2023). In addition, gasoline cars produce methane and nitrous oxide, which can further harm the environment. All vehicles can further emit hydrofluorocarbons from leaking air conditioners, possibly exposing pedestrians to harmful emissions. In addition to the gases produced outside a vehicle, air pollutants can also impact those inside a vehicle. Panchal et al. (2022) found that concentrations of air pollutants *inside* cars can be higher than those breathed outside by active travelers. Car commuters miss the benefits of physical activity, and they may inhale more pollutants.

Exposure to Nature

Good for Your Health

While biking or walking, there is a good

chance a person might see trees, foliage, and other natural phenomena. Spending time outdoors in green spaces has been linked to lower mortality, better sleep, lower blood pressure, and reduced risk of chronic disease (Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health, 2024). Weir (2025) reviewed psychological research showing that time in nature is associated with cognitive benefits and improvements in mood, mental health, and emotional well-being. Even in socially and economically fractured societies, trees can connect communities, foster economic advantages, and increase civic pride (Arbor Day Foundation, n.d.).

Good for the Planet

Mackay and Schmitt (2019) found a robust association between connection with nature and pro-environmental behaviors across various demographics. People who connect with nature tend to do more to protect it. This is good for the planet because trees help to clean the air and reduce the amount of CO₂. In one year, a tree will absorb more than 48 pounds of CO₂ from the air and release oxygen in return. Additionally, trees filter our water, slow storm surge, reduce flooding, provide shade, and cool cities by up to 10 degrees Fahrenheit (Arbor Day Foundation, n.d.).

Gardening

Good for Your Health

One way to connect with nature is by planting and growing flowers, fruits, and vegetables. According to Chalmin-Pui et al. (2021), people participating in home and urban gardening report less stress, increased physical activity, and better overall well-being. In addition to prevention, gardening can improve health in those with existing disabilities. Chalmin-Pui et

al. (2021) concluded that those who have physical disabilities, such as back pain or arthritis, also reported an increased feeling of overall well-being.

Good for the Planet

Offering food and beauty, gardens contribute to the environment by regulating water absorption, enhancing air circulation, and cooling through plant transpiration and shading. Furthermore, gardens provide vital habitats for wildlife and promote genetic diversity (Cabral et al., 2017).

Eating Less Meat

Good for Your Health

Growing fruits and vegetables in a garden or orchard could entice people to eat less meat. According to the American Heart Association (n.d.), compared to meat and other animal-based foods, a plant-forward diet

carries less risk of developing heart disease, stroke, obesity, hypertension, hyperlipidemia, type 2 diabetes, and many cancers.

Good for the Planet

Poore and Nemecek (2018) studied greenhouse gas emissions of various food products across 38,700 farms in 119 countries. These studies considered factors such as land-use, production (fertilizers, manure), animal feed, processing, transport, and packaging. Poore and Nemecek (2018) estimated the CO₂ equivalent (CO₂ eq.) emissions for various commodities during their study. The results indicated beef cattle had the highest at 99.48 CO₂ eq. of food. Lamb/mutton was next at 39.72 CO₂ eq. Root vegetables measured the lowest at 0.43 CO₂ eq., and others measured 0.53 CO₂ eq. per kg of product. Producing fruits tended to emit slightly more CO₂ eq than vegetables

but were still considerably lower than meat products. The results of this study indicate that eating a plant-forward diet produces less greenhouse gas emissions than a meat-centric diet, which increases them.

Conclusion

It is clear. What is good for your health is good for the planet. As nurses, we can practice these health behaviors ourselves, share them with our friends, families, and patients, and reap the rewards. Many healthy behaviors are also interventions that nurses can use to improve their health, capitalizing on the nurse's ability to multitask. Nurses *can* improve the health of the entire planet while benefiting themselves simultaneously! ■

References online:
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Social Media in Healthcare: Opportunities and Obstacles

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The increasing prevalence of social media in healthcare has significantly changed how individuals acquire and understand health-related information. Unfortunately it also becomes a frequent source of misinformation. Within this rapidly evolving digital landscape, our comprehension of health literacy often struggles to keep pace with the immense volume of information circulating throughout society (Multas, 2024). Social media has broadened the definition of health literacy beyond simply understanding and utilizing health information and services; it now encompasses how individuals engage with health information in their daily lives (Multas, 2024). The traditional definition has expanded to include engagement with social media videos, podcasts, and influencers, thereby redefining how people experience health. Consequently, society now actively contributes to the collective construction of health knowledge, often influencing changes people make to their everyday routines. This article examines the op-

portunities and challenges that social media presents within the healthcare environment.

Health Information Exchange on Social Media

Social media offers a powerful opportunity for delivering health interventions, information, and education, and often provides a convenient and low-cost manner to obtain healthcare services. Personal accounts of healthcare experiences tend to attract more attention and are often seen as more engaging compared to platforms offering general health information or emotional support (Wu et al., 2024). While a wealth of general healthcare information is easily accessible online, it is important to remember that the majority of social media users are individuals without extensive healthcare backgrounds. When it comes to sharing health information, older adults show a greater tendency to engage than younger individuals, possibly due to more frequent encounters with health issues.

Furthermore, men generally exhibit less willingness to participate in health information exchange compared to women (Wu et al., 2024).

Social media platforms provide a valuable space for patients with shared health conditions to connect, support each other's self-care, exchange advice, and influence each other's healthcare decisions through suggestions and recommendations. Online forums and health groups, particularly for those with chronic diseases, have emerged as communities where people share knowledge, personal experiences, and offer healthcare tips (Lin & Kishore, 2021). Healthcare professionals have also recognized the usefulness of these discussion forums for patient education and self-management of chronic conditions. By engaging with clinicians on social media, patients can enhance their ability to manage chronic illnesses and ultimately improve their health outcomes (Lin & Kishore, 2021).