

## Q. Can a morning routine make you healthier?

A. If you wake up in the morning, grab your smartphone, and start scrolling through messages, you're not the only one.

Maybe you get dressed, grab a cup of coffee, and dash out the door. Or maybe you feel stressed out, like every day is a battle to tick things off your to-do list.

That might be your morning routine. But it's not the kind of morning routine that helps you be healthy, happy, and productive.

Take a different approach to the first few minutes of your day. Slowing down long enough to "smell the roses" can have a positive impact on your life in more ways than one.<sup>1</sup>

How? Meditation helps lower anxiety and stress, according to a study by the U.S. Army Research Laboratory.<sup>2</sup>

Research also shows that being mindful can:<sup>3</sup>

- Lower blood pressure
- Improve mood
- Help you relax
- Improve sleep quality
- Reduce pain
- Promote creativity
- Improve memory & thinking
- Help you focus



Start Your Day with a Morning Routine

If you want to do more than just react to the events of the day, a well-planned morning routine can help. And it doesn't have to take long.

With just 10 minutes a day, you can change the way you think and feel to be happier, healthier, and more productive. Here's how:

**1. Read.** Take a couple minutes to read about something that interests you. A book, article, or blog post, for example.

**2. Be active.** Go outside, weather permitting. Take a brisk walk. Bike around the block. Jump rope. Or stretch your muscles. This isn't your 30-minute workout. Just be active for a couple of minutes.

**3. Meditate.** Sit in a quiet and comfortable place. Some people use this time to pray. Others simply focus on breathing for a few minutes.

**4. Be mindful.** Now focus on what you want to accomplish and habits you want to form. (Start with a small goal you can track and measure. For example:

- "I will eat more fruits and vegetables for a week."

## ASK THE *Wellness* DOCTOR

- "I will exercise at least 30 minutes a day."
- "I will manage stress in healthy ways."

**5. Visualize.** Now imagine yourself making these decisions throughout your day. For example, picture yourself eating a leafy-green salad, going for a walk, and calmly handling a stressful situation at home or work.

**6. Write.** Wrap up your morning routine by writing. Create an action plan for things you will do. Write down lessons you have learned. Or keep a list of things you're grateful for. But keep it simple. This should only take a few minutes.

### What do you get out of a morning routine like this?

You get a framework to improve your health, break bad habits, and create healthier ones. That's the real benefit of a well-planned morning routine.

### References

1. Passmore, H.A., et al. (2016). Noticing nature: Individual and social benefits of a two-week intervention. *Journal of Positive Psychology*, 12(6): 537-546. From: <https://tinyurl.com/55yinhzj>
2. Tuladhar, R., et al. (2018). Meditation-induced coherence and crucial events. *Frontiers in Physiology*. From: <https://tinyurl.com/ny5267t8>
3. Budson, A. (2021). Can mindfulness change your brain? Harvard Health Publishing. From: <https://tinyurl.com/5ypdtjmt>