



ADULT

HEALTH BULLETIN



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THIS MONTH'S TOPIC:

THE POWER OF KINDNESS



Did you know that there are actual health benefits to being kind? Research shows that kindness not only makes you feel good, but actually makes you healthier, both physically and mentally. People who perform acts of kindness would agree that being kind to someone else simply makes them “feel good.”

Kindness increases:

- Oxytocin (a.k.a. “The love hormone”)
- Energy
- Happiness
- Lifespan
- Optimism
- Serotonin
- Self-esteem

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Kindness may be the secret sauce to a healthy, happy life. Share it and pay it forward!

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Kindness decreases:

- Pain
- Stress
- Anxiety
- Depression
- Blood pressure
- Signs of aging
- Risk of illness

Here are three science-backed ways kindness improves your health and boosts your physical and mental well-being.

Kindness decreases stress

Stress-related health problems improve after performing kind acts. Helping reverses feelings of depression, supplies social contact and decreases feelings of hostility and isolation that can cause stress, overeating, ulcers, etc. A drop in stress may, for some people, decrease the constriction within the lungs that can lead to asthma or panic attacks.

Kindness improves heart health

Acts of kindness strengthens your heart physically and emotionally. When you do something kind for someone else, it can warm your heart. This emotional warmth produces the hormone oxytocin in the brain and throughout the body. According to research, oxytocin causes the release of a chemical called nitric oxide in blood vessels which expands the blood vessels. This expansion reduces blood pressure and therefore oxytocin is known as a “cardio protective” or “love hormone” because it protects the heart by lowering blood pressure.

Kindness makes you happy

When you do something kind, it makes you feel better by boosting your serotonin. This is the pleasure center of your brain releasing feelings of satisfaction and well-being. Like exercise, kindness also releases endorphins — good hormones that can give you a “helper’s high.” So start small. You can get that helper’s high by volunteering at a local



agency, helping someone in need, buying someone coffee or lunch or simply complimenting a stranger.

So give back. Kindness may be the secret sauce to a healthy, happy life. So share it and pay it forward. Kindness is contagious! The positive effects of kindness are experienced in the brain of everyone who witnessed the act, improving their mood and making them significantly more likely to share a smile, make a donation or help others. This means one good deed in a crowded area can create a domino effect and improve the lives of numerous people.

SOURCES:

- <https://www.dartmouth.edu/wellness/emotional/rakhealthfacts.pdf>
- <http://pathwaystofamilywellness.org/Inspirational/health-benefits-of-kindness.html>
- Pace TWW, Negi LT, Adame DD, et al. Effect of Compassion Meditation on Neuroendocrine, Innate Immune and Behavioral Responses to Psychosocial Stress. *Psychoneuroendocrinology*. 2009;34(1):87-98. doi:10.1016/j.psyneuen.2008.08.011.

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