MOH/S/IPTK/38.23(PT)-E

MINISTRY OF HEALTH MALAYSIA

KEY FINDINGS

Health Behaviour Changes and Psychological Impact

among Malaysian Adults during COVID-19 Pandemic



Institute for Health Behavioural Research, National Institutes of Health

HEALTH BEHAVIOUR CHANGES AND PSYCHOLOGICAL IMPACT AMONG MALAYSIAN ADULTS DURING COVID-19 PANDEMIC – KEY FINDINGS

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Institute for Health Behavioural Research
National Institutes of Health, Ministry of Health Malaysia

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HEALTH BEHAVIOUR CHANGES AND PSYCHOLOGICAL IMPACT AMONG MALAYSIAN ADULTS DURING COVID-19 PANDEMIC – KEY FINDINGS

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OVERVIEW

Health Behaviour Change & Psychological Impact during COVID-19

The COVID-19 pandemic has had a profound impact on public health globally, leading to millions of deaths. In addition, this unprecedented event has also led to significant changes in various health behaviours, some of which can predispose the population to a greater risk of severe COVID-19 outcomes, not to mention the development of chronic diseases.

Studies have shown that certain health behaviours, such as physical inactivity, smoking, and obesity, can increase the odds of experiencing severe COVID-19 symptoms (Hamer et al., 2020). Apart from making individuals more vulnerable to the virus, these behaviours also increased the likelihood of developing chronic diseases that can further complicate COVID-19 outcomes.

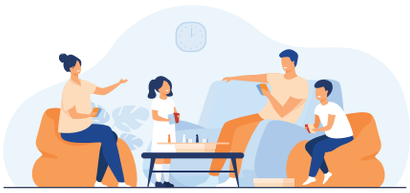
Numerous studies across different countries have highlighted the changes in health behaviours as a result of the pandemic. For example Rossinot et al., (2020), Ashkanani (2020), Wang et al., (2021), and Watson et al., (2021) examined the impact of the pandemic on health behaviours such as physical activity, smoking, alcohol consumption, and mental health. These studies reported a shift in various health behaviours, with some individuals adopting healthier habits while others underwent negative changes in their health behaviours.



OBJECTIVE



a) To investigate any changes in health behaviours, namely eating behaviours, physical activity, smoking, alcohol consumption, and sleep pattern among Malaysian adults before and during the COVID-19 pandemic.



b) To investigate any changes in the family relationship among Malaysian adults before and during the COVID-19 pandemic.



c) To identify the current psychological health status of Malaysian adults.

METHODS

Study design:
Online cross-sectional study

Population:
Malaysian citizens, 18 years above, and residing in Malaysia

Sampling technique:
Convenience sampling, distributed using a Google Form. Link shared via email and other social media platforms

Instrument:
Self-reported questionnaire

Data collection period:
January to March 2022

Total respondents:
1004 respondents

Limitation of the study:
We used a convenience sampling strategy rather than random selection to recruit respondents via an online survey. The findings are not intended to generalize to the Malaysian population



DEMOGRAPHY OF THE RESPONDENTS

Total respondents: 1004

STATE



Johor
3.8%
(38)



Kedah
6.7%
(67)



Kelantan
4.0%
(40)



Melaka
2.7%
(27)



Negeri Sembilan
2.7%
(27)



Pahang
5.3%
(53)



Perak
8.8%
(88)



Perlis
4.0%
(40)



Pulau Pinang
6.1%
(61)



Sabah
10.6%
(106)



Sarawak
11.2%
(112)



Selangor
19.9%
(200)



Terengganu
1.8%
(18)



Wilayah KL
5.3%
(53)



Wilayah Labuan
0.1%
(1)



Wilayah Putrajaya
6.6%
(66)

GENDER

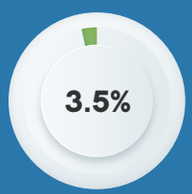


Male
31.0%
(311)



Female
69.0%
(693)

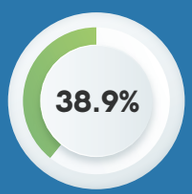
AGE



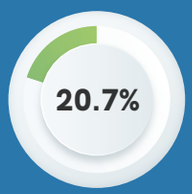
18-25
n: 35



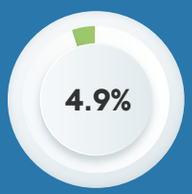
26-35
n: 301



36-45
n: 391



46-55
n: 208



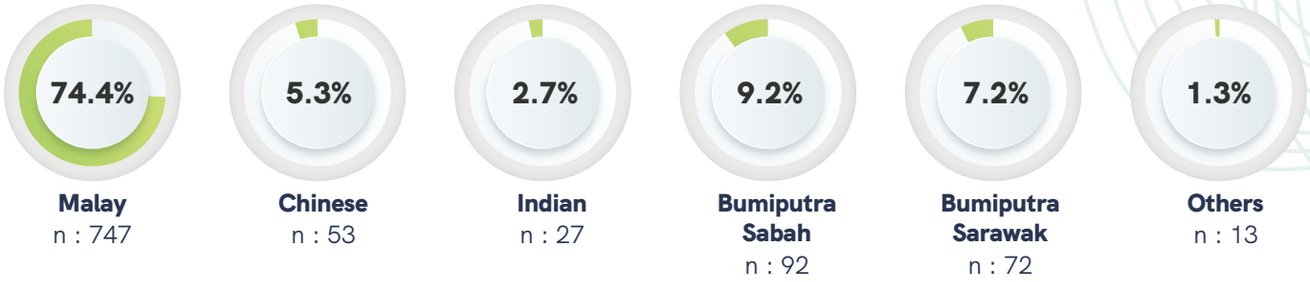
56-59
n: 49



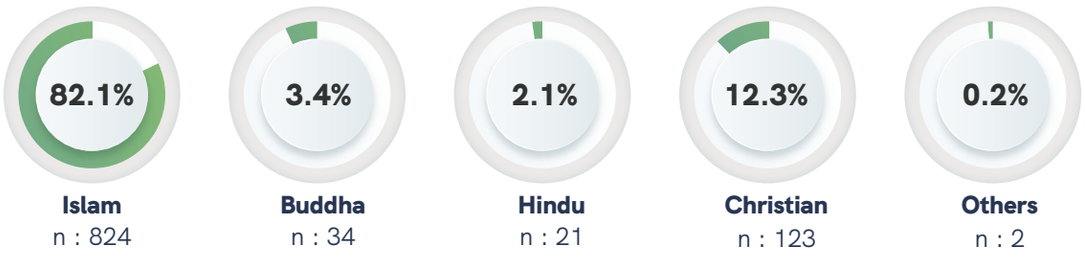
60 and above
n: 20



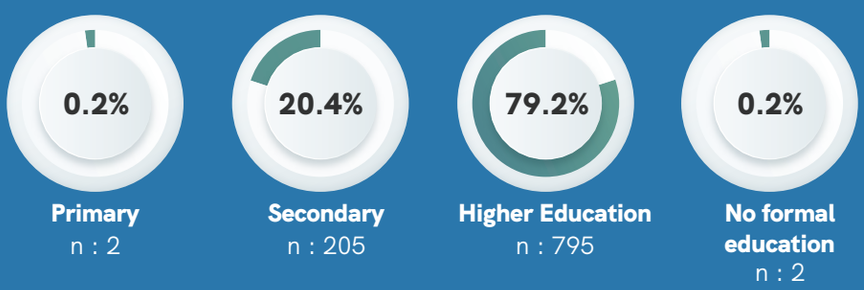
RACE



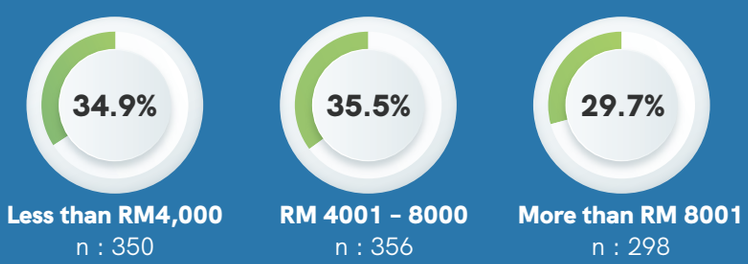
RELIGION



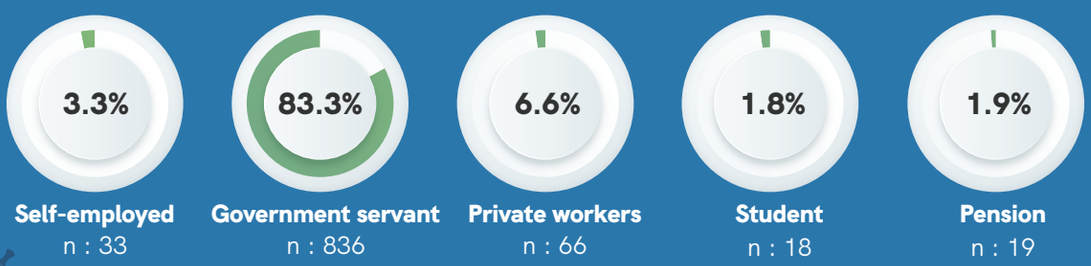
EDUCATION LEVEL



HOUSEHOLD INCOME



OCCUPATION



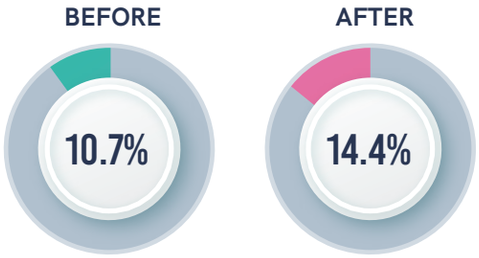
HAS COVID-19 CHANGE HEALTH BEHAVIOURS?

Self-perceived changes on health behaviours before and during COVID-19

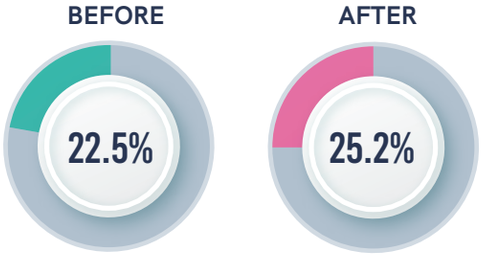
HOW HAS COVID-19 AFFECTED EATING BEHAVIOURS?

Health requires healthy food

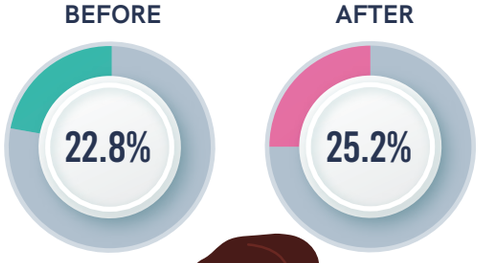
Fast food consumption (3 to 6 times a week)



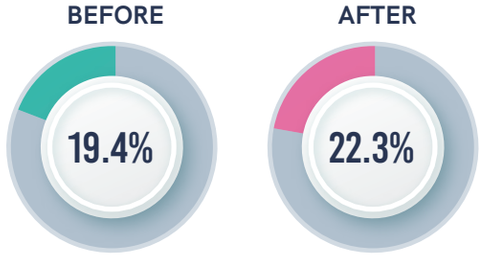
Regular snack consumption



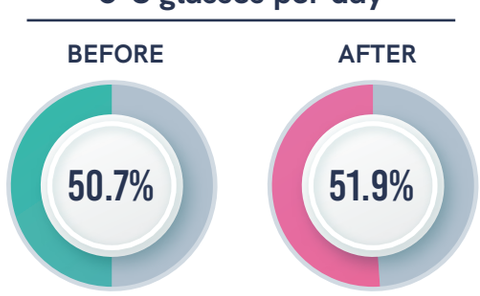
Daily consumption of home-cooked food (Everyday)



Meeting the recommended daily intake of two servings of fruit



Adequate water consumption 6-8 glasses per day

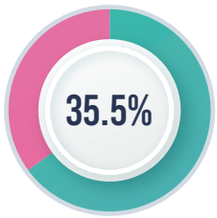


56.9% consumed additional food such as vitamins, "sunnah food", herbs, and others to improve their body immunity during the COVID-19



SELF-PERCEIVED CHANGES IN PHYSICAL ACTIVITY

Move more and sit less



35.5% (356) reported a decrease in physical activity compared to before COVID-19

Top three reasons for a decrease in physical activity

- **38.5% (137)** worried about the risk of getting infected with COVID-19
- **20.5% (73)** had to work overtime
- **17.4% (62)** were busy handling family/ kids



14.0% (141) increase in physical activity compared to before COVID-19



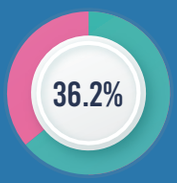
50.5% (507) reported no changes in physical activity compared to before COVID-19 whereby:

- **23.0% (231)** reported having less physical activity and this proportion remained unchanged during the pandemic.
- **24.1% (242)** reported having moderate physical activity and this percentage also remained the same during the pandemic.
- **3.4% (34)** reported having high physical activity and this proportion remained unchanged during the pandemic.

The amount of time spent sitting or lying down



- **53.0% (532)** spent more time sitting/ lying down during COVID-19



- **36.2% (364)** no changes

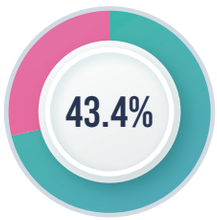


- **10.8% (108)** spent less time sitting/ lying down during COVID-19



SELF-PERCEIVED CHANGES IN SCREEN TIME

Limit and manage the screen time



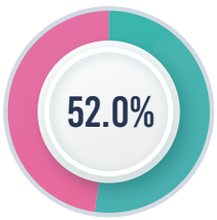
43.4% (436) reported an increased in screen time compared to before COVID-19

Top 3 reasons why screen time increase

- **41.3% (180)** work
- **21.6% (94)** boredom
- **18.1% (79)** entertainment



4.6% (46) reported a decreased in screen time compared to before COVID-19



52.0% (522) reported no changes in screen time compared to before COVID-19 with:

- **12.5%** (125) reported having a high screen time and this proportion remained unchanged during the pandemic.
- **29.1%** (292) reported having a moderate screen time and this percentage remained the same during the pandemic.
- **10.4%** (105) reported having less screen time and this proportion remained unchanged during the pandemic.

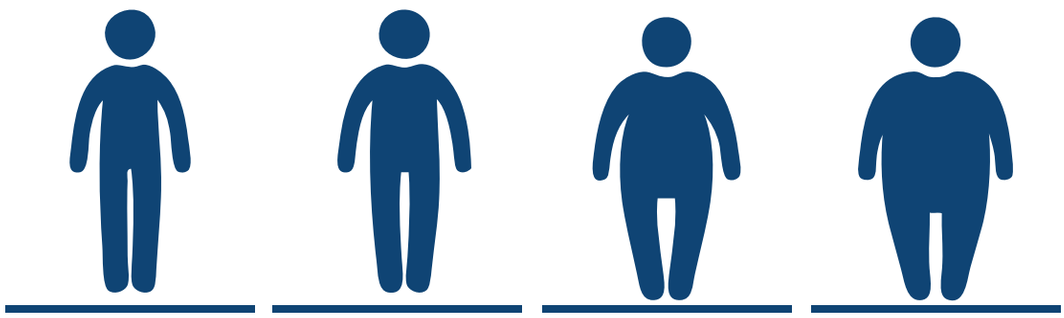


GAIN WEIGHT DURING PANDEMIC?

It is time to exercise and diet

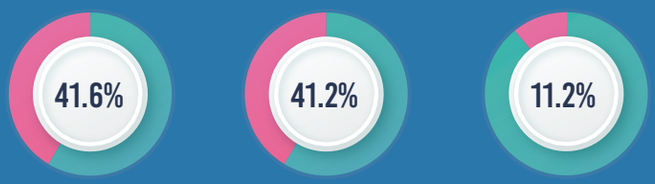
Body Mass Index (BMI) status

Category



Underweight (<18.5)	Normal (18.5-24.9)	Overweight (25-29.9)	Obese (>30)
4.2% (42)	35.0% (351)	31.6% (318)	29.2% (293)

Self-reported on gain weight, no changes or loss weight during COVID-19 compared to before



(418) gained weight

(414) no changes

(112) lost weight

Based on BMI,

- **9.5% (4)** of underweight adults,
- **34.5% (121)** of adults with normal BMI,
- **43.1% (137)** of overweight adults and
- **53.2% (156)** of obese adults

perceived their body weight increased during COVID-19 as compared to before.

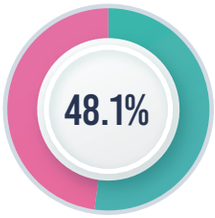


SLEEP CHANGES BEFORE AND DURING COVID-19

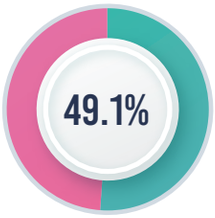
Sleep well, be well

SLEEP DURATION

Before COVID-19



(483)
Less than 7 hours

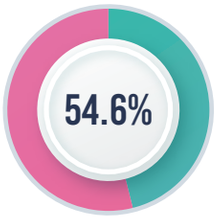


(493)
7 - 9 hours

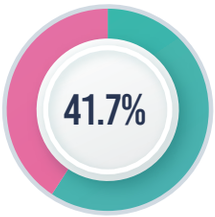


(28)
More than 9 hours

During COVID-19



(548)
Less than 7 hours



(419)
7 - 9 hours



(37)
More than 9 hours

Bedtime and wake up time changes



(186)
Went to bed later during COVID-19 than before



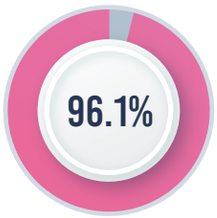
(103)
Woke up later during COVID-19 than before

COVID-19 AND SMOKING
Another reason to quit smoking

7.7% (77) out of 1004 respondents were smokers



(3) start smoking since COVID-19



(74) smoked even before COVID-19

Among people who smoked even before COVID-19 (n=74), did COVID-19 change their smoking habits?



(16) smoked less

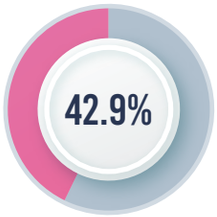


(16) smoked more

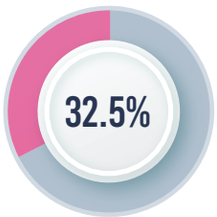


(42) remained unchanged

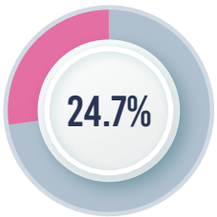
Did COVID-19 lead them to quit smoking? (n-77)



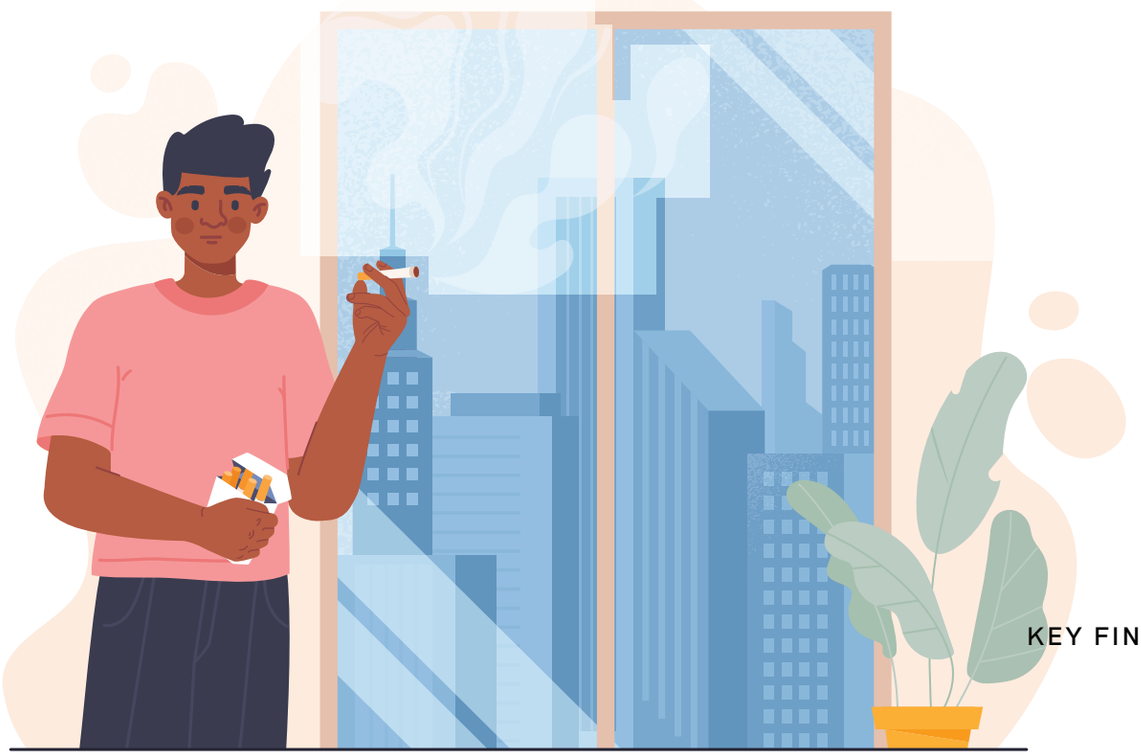
(33) had the intention and tried to quit during COVID-19



(25) had the intention



(19) did not have any intention to quit



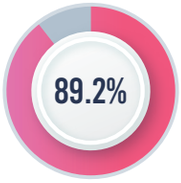
COVID-19 AND ALCOHOL CONSUMPTION

Reduce the harms & make a change

9.3% (93) out of 1004 respondents who drank alcohol



(10) started drinking since COVID-19



(83) drank even before COVID-19

Does COVID-19 affect the alcohol consumption of the 83 individuals who drank even before COVID-19 (n = 83)?



(29) drank less

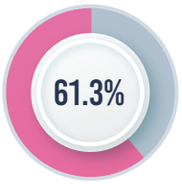


(6) drank more

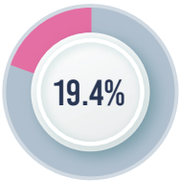


(48) remained unchanged

Did COVID-19 lead them to quit drinking (n = 93)



(57) did not have the intention to quit



(18) had the intention and tried to quit during COVID-19



(18) had the intention only



CHANGES IN FAMILY RELATIONSHIPS BEFORE AND DURING COVID-19

Challenges and Opportunities

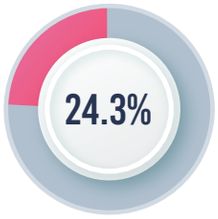
CHALLENGES

Never fighting/ arguing

BEFORE



DURING



Always fighting/ arguing

BEFORE



DURING



The findings demonstrate that during COVID-19. 1.1% of invividuals, previously nor engaged in fights or arguements, while those consistently involved in fighting or arguing before increased to 0.8%.

OPPORTUNITIES

Always have time to spend together

BEFORE



DURING

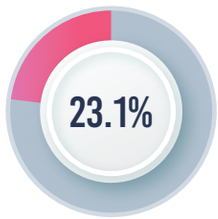


Always interact and communicate with family members

BEFORE



DURING



The findings demonstrate an increase in the number of individuals who consistenly spend time together (3.4%) and engage in interaction and communication with family members (3.1%) during COVID-19 compared to before.



DOES COVID-19 IMPACT PSYCHOLOGICAL HEALTH?

Happy mind, happy live

Level of psychological distress (K-10)



Likely to be well



Mild disorder

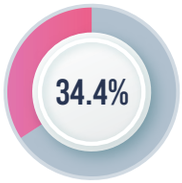


Moderate disorder



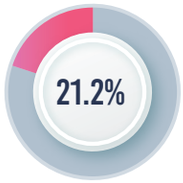
Severe disorder

Impact of COVID-19 on mental health



34.4% (345) felt that their mental health was affected by COVID-19

- Top three reasons are **workload, financial issues, and family-related problems**
- **9.3% (32)** were referred to psychiatrists for mental health issues



21.2% (73) required counselling support

- **74.0% (54)** Get face-to-face counselling
- **15.1% (11)** Psychosocial support hotlines
- **11.0% (8)** Others

Does COVID-19 lead to suicidal ideation?



8.2% (82) had been bothered by thoughts that they would be "better off dead"

- **57.3% (47)** of them experienced a severe disorder level



6.6% (66) had thoughts of hurting themselves

- **62.1% (41)** of them experienced a severe disorder level



TAKE HOME MESSAGES

Although COVID-19 over as a global health emergency, it does not mean COVID-19 is over as a global health threat. Let's maintain a healthy lifestyle to prevent disease and any future outbreak.

Healthy body, healthy mind & healthy relationship.

Healthy Body

Diet

Eating a balanced diet, rich in nutrients, can increase energy levels, improve mood and help to think more clearly. Staying hydrated is also essential to maintain good brain function, and mental health.

Tips: Maintain a balanced diet that includes at least three servings of vegetables and two servings of fruits daily.

Exercise

The body will release endorphins, which will make you feel happy. As a result, regular exercise can help to reduce stress, improve memory, and enhance mood.

Tips: Aim for at least 150 minutes weekly of moderate-intensity movements, such as brisk walking.

Sleep

Sleep deprivation can exacerbate mental health issues and contribute to anger and low mood. A healthy sleep time heals the brain and promotes mental health.

Tips: Try to get 8-10 hours of sleep every night.



Healthy Mind

Relaxation and mindfulness exercises
Breathing and grounding techniques can help you focus on the present moment and minimize tension and anxiety.

Seek help if you are having difficulty
If you are experiencing emotional distress, talk to your parents, family members, or friends, or seek professional help online, by phone, or in person.

Limit your screen time
Excessive screen time on electronics and social media can result in depression, poor concentration, and social isolation.

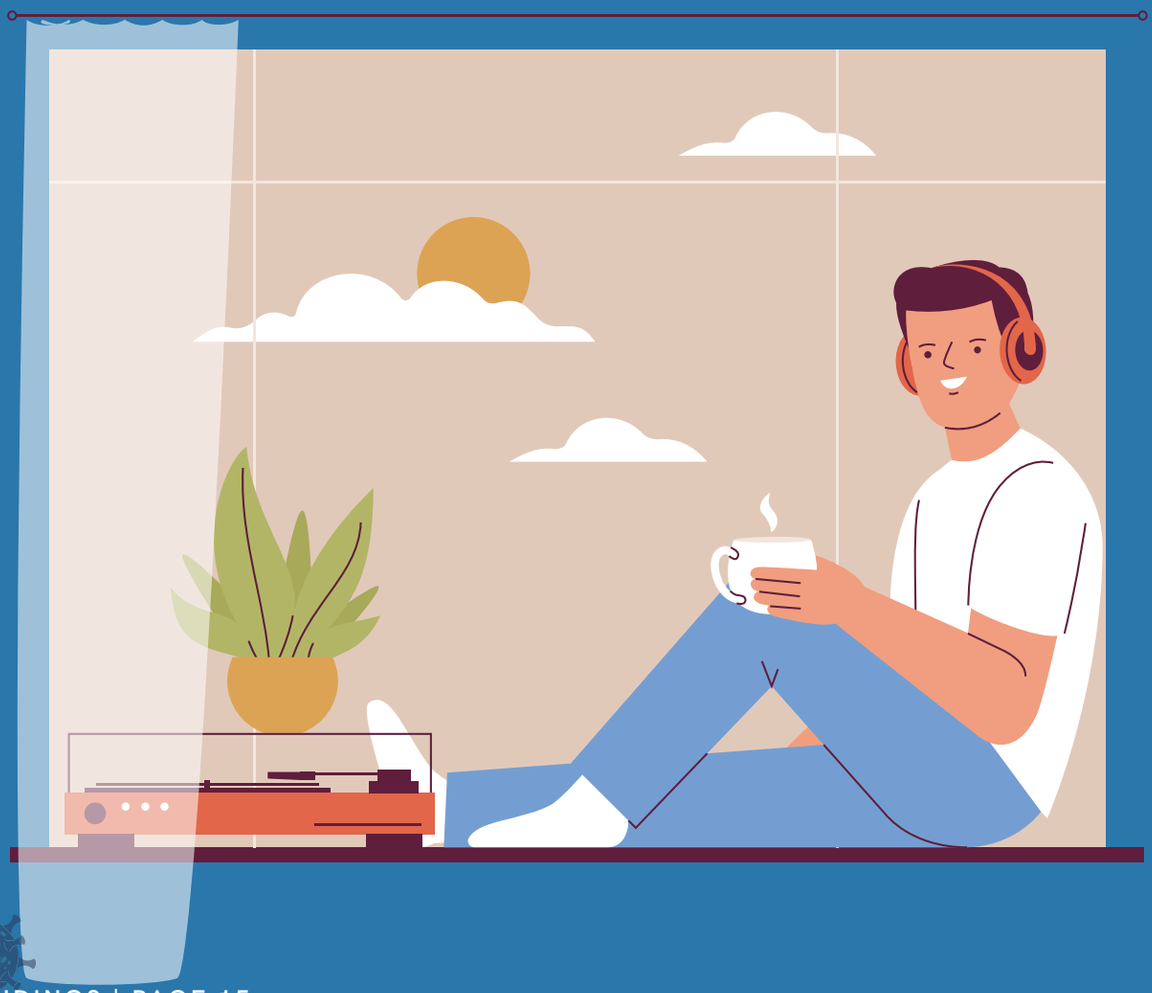
Focus on your strengths
Take time out regularly to practice and think about what you are good at and proud of.

Tips: As a coping strategy for mental health challenges, avoid smoking and alcohol. It worsens mental health issues and creates additional problems like addiction or financial concerns.

Healthy Relationships

Positive relationships are an essential component of good mental health. These can be family relationships, sexual relationships, or even friendships or work relationships.

Remember!
The healthier habits we can develop, the more likely we are to have positive mental health



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