

### Attitude, Cortisol & Health

*[Ed: Anyone not using anxiety reduction methods should really consider it. It's great that awareness of anxiety damage is growing, especially where the influence of attitude is recognized. Here they get as far as the link with the immune system and the influence of mood. Developmental and societal limiting factors aren't included in the question of what helps us to achieve healthy moods (although social relationships are recommended, which is great).*

*How long will it take for public awareness of what's preventing happiness to catch up? That depends on whether the facts are accepted or repressed, because if they're accepted Kansas is going bye bye. It would be so impossibly expensive to adequately reform society to enable healthy development that it would be easier to just pull it apart, recycle the bits and start again...*

*j..But maybe that's the true meaning of 're-form' 🐼*

### Happiness Is Good for Your Health

A happy mind is a healthier body as well, new research suggests.

In a study of nearly 3,000 healthy adults, lead by Dr. Andrew Steptoe of University College London UK, found that those who reported upbeat moods had lower levels of cortisol -- a hormone that, when chronically elevated, contributes to high blood pressure, abdominal obesity and dampened immune function, among other problems.

In the study, published in the American Journal of Epidemiology, those who reported more positive emotions had lower blood levels of two proteins that indicate widespread inflammation in the body. Chronic inflammation is believed to contribute to a range of ills over time, including heart disease and cancer.

Researchers have long noted that happier people tend to be in better health than those who are persistently stressed, hostile or pessimistic.

One possibility is that happier people lead more healthful lifestyles, but not all studies have found this to be the case, explained Steptoe.

“We have therefore been searching for more direct biological links between positive states and health,” he told Reuters Health.

The current findings, according to Steptoe, add to evidence that happiness and other positive emotions are “associated with biological responses that are health-protective.”

The study, published in the American Journal, included 2,873 healthy men and women between the ages of 50 and 74. Over the course of one day, participants collected six samples of their saliva so that the researchers could measure their cortisol levels; after taking each sample, participants recorded their current mood -- the extent to which they felt “happy, excited or content.”

On a separate day, the researchers measured participant' s levels of C-reactive protein and interleukin 6, two markers of inflammation in the body.

They found that men and women who reported happier moods had lower average cortisol levels over the course of the day -- even when factors such as age, weight, smoking and income were taken into account.

Steptoe said the findings on cortisol confirm the results of earlier, smaller studies; the results on C reactive protein and interleukin 6, however, are new.

"These findings suggest another biological process linking happiness with reduced biological vulnerability, " he said.

But if happier people are healthier people, the more difficult question remains: How do you become happier?

"What we do know," Steptoe noted, "is that people's mood states are not just a matter of heredity, but depend on our social relationships and fulfillment in life."

"We need to help people to recognize the things that make them feel good and truly satisfied with their lives, so that they spend more time doing these things."

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Sources

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American Journal of Epidemiology, January 1, 2008.

Thu Jan 3, 20By Amy Norton

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