

10 Reasons Why Vacations Matter

Vacations are not a luxury; they are a necessity for a well-balanced, healthy life – as important as eating well and getting exercise. Here are 10 reasons to make them a priority in your life!

1. **Vacations Relieve Stress**---Stress is a true physiological response originally meant to help us and keep us safe. It releases hormones such as cortisol and epinephrine for the fight or flight response that was necessary for early man. However, in modern society, chronic stress can be destructive to our bodies. Getting away for regular vacations and leaving our every day stresses give us a break from the constant high levels of these hormones and a chance to repair some of the damage.
2. **Vacations Help Prevent Heart Disease**---Stress is one of the major contributors to heart disease and high blood pressure. Long-term studies in both men and women have shown that vacations can reduce the risk of heart disease and heart attack. Men who vacationed regularly were more than 32% less likely to die from a heart attack. For women who vacation regularly, that figure jumps to 50% less likely to die from a heart attack. (2010 Framingham Heart Study)
3. **Vacations Help Maintain Focus**---Studies find chronic stress can affect the part of the brain that inhibits goal-directed activities and causes problems with memory. Continuous work with no breaks or vacations can make people feel blocked and distracted, and have problems concentrating. Surveys show almost three-quarters of people who vacation regularly feel energized and more ready to tackle the tasks at hand.
4. **Vacations Help Prevent Illness**---There is a whole field of research called psychoneuroimmunology that finds stress and its adrenal dysfunction can alter your immune system and make you susceptible to numerous illnesses. It can increase your chance of getting infections like colds and the flu, as well as more serious conditions such as irritable bowel syndrome. Some researchers even believe that long-term stress may partially contribute to cancer. A recent survey found that people who take regular vacations report being and feeling healthier.
5. **Vacations Improve Your Sex Life**---There really is such a thing as “vacation sex!” Studies have shown that high cortisol levels associated with stress create a negative feedback loop in the brain and lower levels of sex hormones like testosterone, contributing to loss of libido. Surveys indicate people who vacation regularly reported feeling sexier, with greater romance in their relationships – which equates to better sex!
6. **Vacations Make You Happier**---Neuroscientists have found that brain structure can actually be altered by chronic exposure to stress hormones contributing to depression and anxiety. Research shows that women who do not take regular vacations were three times more likely to be depressed and anxious. This

corroborates a survey that found people who take regular vacations reported feeling extremely happy with an overall feeling of well-being compared to those who did not vacation. And many reported these effects lasting beyond their actual vacation.

7. **Vacations Strengthen Relationships**---Vacationing with your family or loved ones help forge closer bonds. Studies have found women who take vacations with spouses report feeling more satisfied with their marriages. Research has also uncovered a correlation between children's academic achievement and summer family vacations. These shared experiences promote family bonding, which is priceless. Family vacations create more memories than any other activity. In fact, other studies have found people place a higher value on the shared experiences they have on vacations than the material goods they have acquired during their lifetime.
8. **Vacations Make You More Productive At Work**---Contrary to what it may seem, studies show that more vacation time for workers actually increases company productivity, and has been found to decrease the number of sick days taken off. Liberal vacation policies create improved quality of life for employees, which translates into increased work quality. Workers also report feeling more creative after taking time off, and more than 70% of them reported feeling more satisfied with their jobs when they took regular vacations.
9. **Vacations Improve Your Sleep Quality** ---Studies have shown that people who take vacations and travel regularly reported an almost 20% improvement in their sleep. While on vacation, they averaged an hour more of quality sleep, which even carried over to when they returned home.
10. **Vacations Help You Get Thinner**---A majority of overweight individuals admit to mindless eating as a response to stress. Stress hormones such as cortisol are linked to increased belly fat and weight gain, which is linked to heart disease. Studies have shown that even when indulging a little more on vacation, people who regularly vacation feel more energized and are often more active on vacation. They were also found to have improved glucose levels and even had some weight loss around their waists.

And last, but not least, taking vacations can keep you young! Chronic stress is believed to accelerate biologic aging and the aging process. Why not do yourself a big favor? Make yourself a priority and take some time off. Medically speaking, taking regular vacations is one of the most rewarding prescriptions I can recommend for staying healthy!

Stay happy, stay healthy and Stay Vacationed.™!
Dr. Leigh Vinocur
Diamond Resorts Vacation Doctor