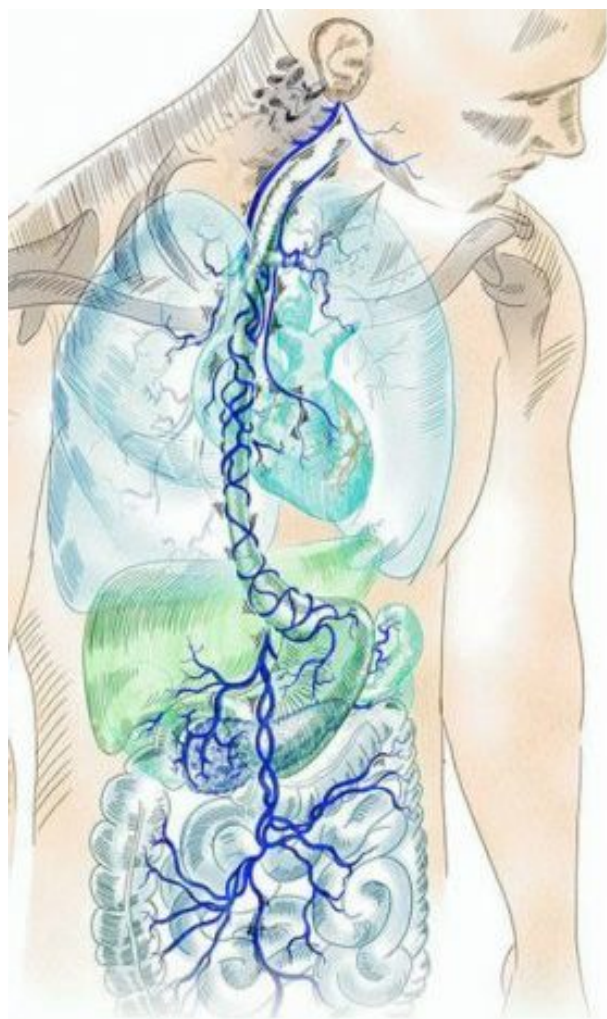


10 Ways To Instantly Stimulate Your Vagus Nerve and Relieve Inflammation, Depression + More

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STIMULATE YOUR VAGUS NERVE

AND

why this massive pathway controls everything from inflammation to anxiety & depression





10 WAYS TO STIMULATE YOUR VAGUS NERVE

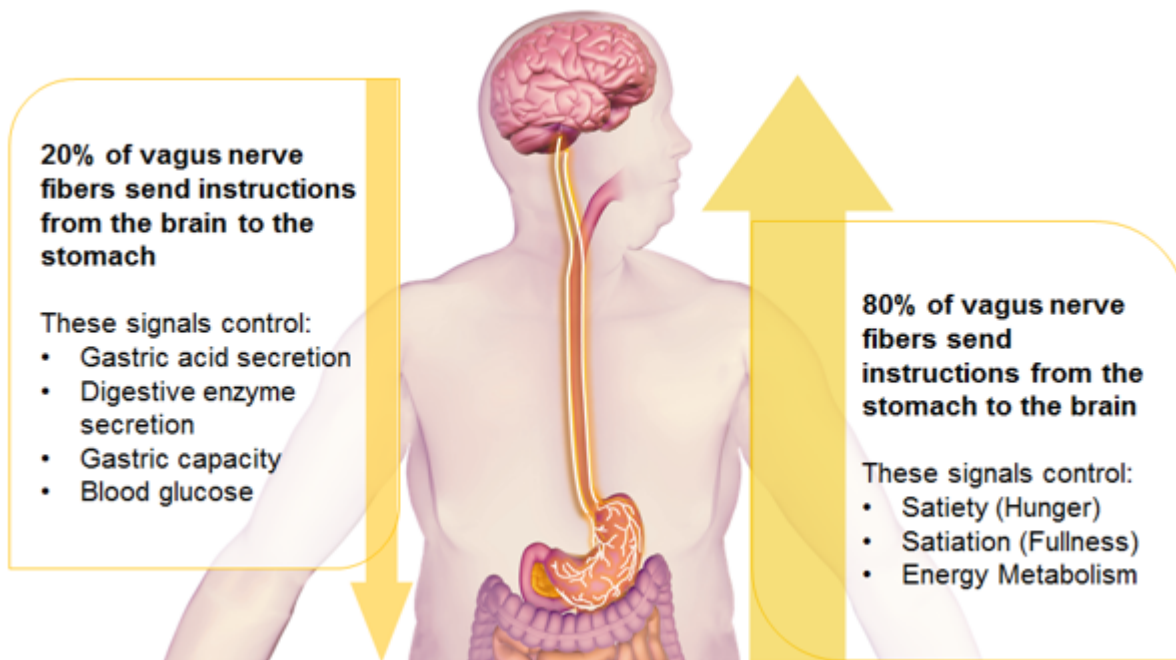
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Did you know that your vagus nerve is the longest nerve in your body? It starts in the brain, circles your digestive system, and connects directly to every organ. Did you also know that hospitals are already tracking “vagal tone” – your vagus nerve’s ability to activate – in patients that have had a heart attack because it is a known risk factor for recurring episodes? I read an article yesterday that has me extremely excited about this subject. It was called “Hacking The Nervous System” on mosaicscience.com, and the author described the experience of a woman who suffered debilitating rheumatoid arthritis for almost 20 years until she was given treatment involving a device that stimulates the VN for 3 minutes per day. Lucky for us, there are MANY simple things we can do at home without resorting to a device! If you suffer from digestive complaints, high blood pressure, anxiety, depression, addiction or ANY inflammatory condition, please read on.

What is the Vagus Nerve?



The vagus nerve is part of the parasympathetic nervous system, or the “rest and digest” system. (Most people are constantly engaging their sympathetic nervous system – fight or flight mode! No wonder we’re having an adrenal fatigue epidemic in this country; we’re always on high alert. [Red Light Therapy](#), which I wrote about last week, is one of the few ways you can instantly calm the sympathetic and switch to parasympathetic).

The vagus nerve not the only nerve in the parasympathetic system, but it’s by far the most important because it has the most far-reaching effects. After all, it connects everything from your brain, to your fertility organs, to your gut!

- In the brain, the vagus helps control anxiety and depression.
- In the gut, it increases stomach acidity, digestive juices, and gut flow.
- In the heart, it controls heart rate variability, heart rate, and blood pressure. Vagus activation will lower the risk for heart disease and stroke.
- In the liver and pancreas, it helps controls glucose store and balance.
- In the gallbladder, it helps release bile, which can help you get rid of toxins and break down fat.

When it’s not working right, it can cause brain fog, neurotransmitter imbalances, digestive disorders, and more.

What is Vagal Tone?

The tone of the vagus nerve is key to activating the parasympathetic nervous system. Vagal tone is measured by tracking your heart-rate alongside your breathing rate. Your heart-rate speeds up a little when your breathe in, and slows down a little when you breathe out. The bigger the difference between your inhalation heart-rate and your exhalation heart-rate, the higher your vagal tone. Higher vagal tone means that your body can relax faster after stress.



Vagal Tone



Good Vagal Tone

Highly responsive:

- Respond **quicker**, process information **faster**, concentrate **better**
- **More** appropriate and effective responses to stimuli
- **Return faster** to a normal 'resting state'

Poor Vagal Tone

Low responsiveness:

- Responds and process information **not as quickly**, **less able** to concentrate.
- **Less** appropriate and effective responses to stimuli
- **Difficulty** returning to normal 'resting state'

High Vagal Tone -

- Research shows that a **high vagal tone** makes your body better at regulating blood glucose levels, reducing the likelihood of diabetes, stroke and cardiovascular disease.
- Higher vagal tone is also associated with better mood, less anxiety and more stress resilience.
- Studies have found that higher vagal tone is associated with greater closeness to others and more altruistic behavior.

Low Vagal Tone

- Low vagal tone is associated with cardiovascular conditions and strokes, depression, diabetes, chronic fatigue syndrome, cognitive impairment, and much higher rates of inflammatory conditions. Inflammatory conditions include all autoimmune diseases (rheumatoid arthritis, inflammatory bowel disease, endometriosis, autoimmune thyroid conditions, lupus and more).
- People with fatigue, food sensitivities, anxiety, gut problems, etc. usually have **lower vagal tone**, which means a lower ability of the nerve to activate or perform its functions.

In other words, low vagal tone = inflammation!

10 Ways to Activate Your Vagus Nerve + Increase Tone

1) Meditation

In 2010, Barbara Fredrickson and Bethany Kok recruited around 70 university staff members for an experiment. Each volunteer was asked to record the strength of emotions they felt every day. Vagal tone was measured at the beginning of the experiment and at the end, nine

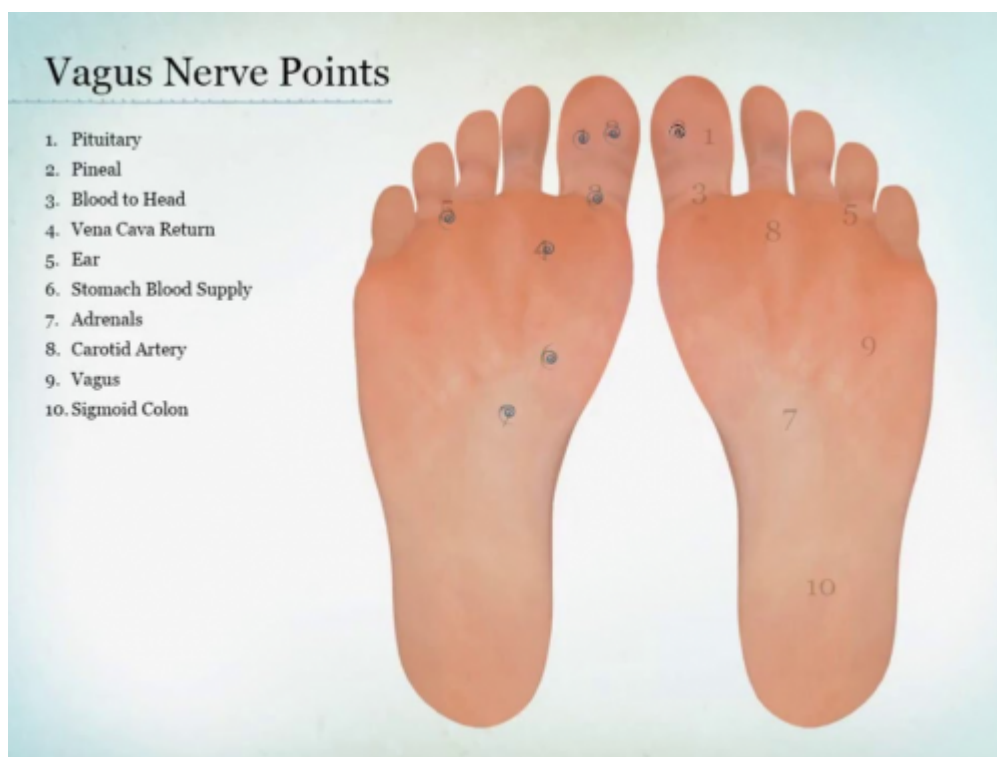
weeks later. As part of the experiment, half of the participants were taught a meditation technique to promote feelings of goodwill towards themselves and others.

Those who meditated showed a significant rise in vagal tone, which was associated with reported increases in positive emotions. “That was the first experimental evidence that if you increased positive emotions and that led to increased social closeness, then vagal tone changed,” Kok says.

Also, “Om” chanting during such meditation stimulates the vagus nerve.

2) Massage

You can manually stimulate your vagus nerve by massaging several areas. A foot massage can stimulate vagus nerve activity, as can massaging your neck. A neck massage along the carotid sinus (the right side of your throat near where you check your pulse) can also stimulate the vagus nerve.



3) My favorite – singing and chanting!

Singing at the top of your lungs not only increases oxytocin, it also works the muscles in the back of the throat to activate the vagus nerve! Singing in unison, which is often done in churches and synagogues, also increases HRV and vagus function.

All different forms of engaging your vocal chords (humming, mantra chanting, hymn singing and upbeat energetic singing) increase vagal tone in slightly different ways. Even chanting a single syllable (such as Om mentioned in #1) creates an internal vibration in our throat that stimulates our organs and the vagus nerve.

Similarly, speaking is helpful for vagal tone, due to the connection to the vocal cords

4) Cold

Studies show that when your body adjusts to cold, your fight or flight (sympathetic) system declines and your rest and digest (parasympathetic) system increases – and this is all mediated by the vagus nerve.

In fact, drinking cold water or splashing cold water on your face may be enough to stimulate your vagus nerve. You can also take cold showers, take a swim in an unheated pool or try cryotherapy.

5) Yoga

Yoga increases vagus nerve activity and your parasympathetic system in general.

A 12-week yoga intervention was associated with greater improvements in mood and anxiety than a control group who just did walking exercises. The study found increased thalamic GABA levels, which were associated with improved mood and decreased anxiety.

6) Breathing Techniques

Deep breathing is always relaxing to your body, but you can use other breathing techniques to stimulate your vagus nerve. Alternate nostril breathing or yogic breathing is a great way to stimulate the vagus nerve.

Another breathing technique that you may never have tried is inhaling deeply and then closing your airway while pushing your breath against the inside of your chest and bearing down with your abdominal muscles (like you are trying to pass gas). This method of applying internal pressure from the lungs out to the surrounding organs stimulates the vagus nerve as it connects your heart, spleen, lungs, stomach, and small intestines.

7) Laughter with Friends

Researchers in the Journal of Psychological Science found that more social connections led to more opportunities for positive emotions, which also increased stimulation of the vagus nerve. The researchers say, “This experimental evidence identifies one mechanism – perceptions of social connections – through which positive emotions build physical health.” Laughter makes you feel good and stimulates your vagus nerve, which helps produce overall good health and well-being.

8) Prayer

Studies have shown that reciting the rosary prayer increases vagus activation. Studies also find that the reading of one cycle of the rosary takes approximately 10 seconds and thus causes readers to breathe at 10-second intervals (includes both in and out breath), which increases HRV and therefore vagus function.



9) Probiotics

The presence of healthy bacteria in the gut creates a positive feedback loop through the vagus nerve, increasing its tone. [Studies show](#) that animals supplemented with *L. rhamnosus* experienced various positive changes in GABA (calming) receptors that were mediated by the vagus nerve.

10) Fasting/reducing calorie intake (therapeutically)

The vagus nerve is responsible for digestion – when your brain says that you are in a safe environment (again, that parasympathetic nervous system). Otherwise, digestion is shut down due to stress. When you're fasting, an empty stomach sends signals back to the brain that digestion is unnecessary so energy resources can be used for relaxation instead.

Intermittent fasting, or reducing calories/the time frame in which you eat them, [increases the high-frequency heart rate variability](#), which as I explained is how we measure vagal tone.

Conclusion

What I find amazing is that there's so much alternative health information out there — it's almost overwhelming! In an age where people are looking to heal naturally, we are constantly being taught new modalities and tools to reach that pinnacle of optimal health. While the vagus nerve may be a brand new topic for you, don't think that it's another drastic change you have to make to your lifestyle. Most of the things you have been doing already are working BECAUSE of the fact that they indirectly or directly work with this nerve! Meditation, prayer/gratitude, positive social relationships, yoga, and more. Don't feel overwhelmed that you need to do all 10 things in this list, but rather take this as confirmation that you're on the right track and science/anatomy supports you. Lots of love, and keep on healing! x
