

NATIONAL WELLNESS MONTH • AUGUST 2026

Your 31-Day Wellness Challenge

A research-backed, day-by-day plan to help you slow down, build healthier habits, and feel better — one small step at a time. No total life makeover required.

AUGUST 1 - AUGUST 31, 2026

Backed by guidance from the CDC, the National Institutes of Health, and peer-reviewed habit-formation research • #NationalWellnessMonth

Make August Your Month to Feel Better

National Wellness Month takes place every August. It began in 2018, created by Live Love Spa founder Lisa Michaelis, to shift the wellness conversation from an occasional luxury to an everyday, accessible lifestyle. Since then it has grown into a nationwide movement supported by hotel groups, airlines, and wellness brands, all encouraging the same simple idea: small, consistent habits beat drastic overhauls.

Chronic stress is one of the most common health complaints of modern life, and researchers have linked it to poor sleep, a weakened immune system, and increased risk of heart disease. The encouraging news is that the research also points the other way: small, sustainable changes — drinking more water, moving your body regularly, sleeping well, and taking real time to switch off — have a measurable, positive effect on long-term health. That's the whole idea behind this challenge: 31 small prompts, one per day, rather than one big resolution you're likely to abandon by day three.

WHY A DAILY CHALLENGE WORKS

A 2009 University College London study followed 96 people as they each tried to build one new daily habit, such as drinking a glass of water or eating a piece of fruit with lunch. On average it took 66 days for the behavior to feel automatic — but simpler habits (like hydration) clicked into place faster than harder ones (like a new exercise routine). A more recent 2025 systematic review of 20 studies confirmed the pattern: most healthy habits take somewhere between 59 and 66 days on average to stick, with a wide range depending on the person and the habit. The takeaway for this challenge: August is your on-ramp, not your finish line. Missing an occasional day will not derail you — what matters most is picking the habits back up.

66 days

Average time for a new daily habit to start feeling automatic (UCL habit-formation study)

150 min

Moderate-intensity movement recommended weekly for adults by the CDC — about 30 minutes, 5 days a week

7-9 hrs

Nightly sleep range recommended for most adults by sleep researchers and the CDC

This guide translates that research into one simple prompt per day, organized into four weekly themes so your habits build on each other instead of competing for your attention.

How to Use This Challenge

- **Do one day at a time.** Each prompt takes 5-30 minutes. You don't need to prepare — just read the day's task and go.
- **Stack, don't replace.** Each week's habits are designed to build on the week before. By week four you may naturally be doing several at once.
- **Missing a day is fine.** Research on habit formation found that skipping a single day did not meaningfully reduce a person's ability to eventually form the habit — consistency over time matters more than a perfect streak.
- **Make it visible.** Print this guide, pin it up, or check off each day as you go. Visual tracking is one of the simplest ways to stay accountable.
- **Share it.** Post your progress with #NationalWellnessMonth and #IChooseWellness to connect with others doing the challenge alongside you.

THE FOUR PILLARS

What Each Week Focuses On

Week 1 — Move Your Body

Gentle, low-barrier movement. The CDC recommends 150 minutes of moderate activity a week, but any movement — even a 10-minute walk — has an immediate, measurable effect on mood and energy.

Week 2 — Calm Your Mind

Stress-reduction practices like deep breathing, journaling, and short digital breaks, which research links to lower cortisol levels and improved focus.

Week 3 — Nourish Your Body

Hydration and simple nutrition swaps. Even mild dehydration has been shown to affect concentration and mood, and small dietary changes compound over time.

Week 4 — Rest & Recharge

Sleep hygiene and recovery. Consistent, quality sleep supports immune function, memory, and emotional regulation more than almost any other single habit.

Move Your Body

Small movement wins compound fast. The CDC's guideline of 150 minutes a week breaks down to just over 20 minutes a day — this week eases you in.

DAY	CHALLENGE	WHY IT WORKS
1	Take a 20-minute walk outside — no phone needed.	Outdoor walking lowers stress hormones and counts toward your weekly activity goal.
2	Do 10 minutes of stretching before bed.	Improves flexibility and helps signal your body it's time to wind down.
3	Take the stairs instead of the elevator all day.	Small bouts of activity add up — every bit of movement counts.
4	Try a new workout: yoga, dance, or a strength class.	Novelty boosts motivation and helps you discover movement you'll actually enjoy.
5	Stand up and move for 5 minutes every hour.	Breaks up sedentary time, which is linked to better energy and focus.
6	Go for a hike or walk somewhere in nature.	Time in green space is linked to lower anxiety and improved mood.
7	Active rest day — gentle stretching or a slow walk.	Recovery is part of a sustainable routine, not a break from it.

Calm Your Mind

Chronic stress is linked to poor sleep, weakened immunity, and heart disease. This week's habits target stress at its source: your nervous system and your attention.

DAY	CHALLENGE	WHY IT WORKS
8	Practice 5 minutes of deep breathing or meditation.	Slow breathing activates the body's relaxation response almost immediately.
9	Write down three things you're grateful for.	Gratitude journaling is linked in research to improved mood and lower stress.
10	Unplug from screens for one hour before bed.	Reduces mental stimulation and blue-light exposure that can delay sleep.
11	Declutter one small space — a desk, drawer, or inbox.	A tidier environment is linked to lower reported stress and better focus.
12	Practice saying "no" to one thing that drains you.	Protecting your time and energy is a core, often-overlooked form of self-care.
13	Spend 10 minutes journaling your thoughts, no filter.	Expressive writing helps process emotions and reduce rumination.
14	Take a half-day (or full-day) digital detox.	A longer break from notifications gives your attention real time to reset.

Nourish Your Body

You don't need a diet overhaul. Small, repeatable swaps around hydration and food are some of the fastest habits to stick, according to habit-formation research.

DAY	CHALLENGE	WHY IT WORKS
15	Drink at least 8 glasses of water today.	Even mild dehydration can affect concentration, mood, and energy levels.
16	Add an extra serving of vegetables to one meal.	Small additions are easier to sustain than a full diet rewrite.
17	Cook a homemade meal instead of ordering out.	Home cooking generally means more control over ingredients and portions.
18	Swap one sugary drink for water or herbal tea.	Cutting added sugar even once a day adds up over the month.
19	Eat one meal with no phone or TV — just the food.	Mindful eating is linked to better digestion and satisfaction with meals.
20	Try one new healthy recipe you've never made before.	Trying new foods keeps healthy eating interesting instead of restrictive.
21	Spend 30 minutes meal-prepping for the week ahead.	Prepping removes decision fatigue, making the healthy choice the easy one.

Rest & Recharge

Sleep researchers and the CDC recommend 7-9 hours a night for most adults. This week is about protecting that time and using it well.

DAY	CHALLENGE	WHY IT WORKS
22	Go to bed 30 minutes earlier than usual.	Small, gradual shifts are easier to sustain than sudden schedule changes.
23	Create a calming bedtime routine and follow it tonight.	A consistent wind-down cue helps train your body to expect sleep.
24	Take a 15-minute power nap or quiet rest break.	Short naps can restore alertness without disrupting nighttime sleep.
25	Limit caffeine after 2 p.m. today.	Caffeine can stay in your system for hours and delay deep sleep.
26	Spend real time with a loved one, in person or by call.	Social connection is consistently linked to lower stress and better resilience.
27	Spend 20+ minutes on a hobby purely for enjoyment.	Unstructured, enjoyable time supports mental recovery, not just physical rest.
28	Do a full "digital sunset" — no screens for 1 hour before bed.	Reinforces the habit from Day 10, now as a repeatable routine.

DAYS 29-31

Reflect & Sustain

The month isn't the goal — the habit is. These final days turn the challenge into something that lasts past August 31.

DAY	CHALLENGE	WHY IT WORKS
29	Write down which 2-3 habits from this month you want to keep.	Narrowing your focus makes long-term follow-through far more realistic.
30	Share your wellness journey with a friend, or post using #NationalWellnessMonth.	Public or social commitment is linked to stronger habit follow-through.
31	Take the "I Choose Wellness" pledge and set one goal for September.	Turning the month into a written commitment carries momentum forward.

My "I Choose Wellness" Pledge

The one habit from this challenge I'm committing to keep beyond August is:

Signed:

Ready to start? Begin the 31-Day Wellness Challenge today at
[the National Wellness Month challenge page](#)