

# We choose whether wellness is affordable or not

[Nutrition](#), [Healthy Food](#)



In the past decade, the wellness movement has become a widely pursued way of life for many people. The main goal of this pursuit is to be in good health and feel “ well. ” However, despite the seemingly good intentions of the movement, questions have arisen regarding the affordability and accessibility of what is generally perceived to be wellness. Many of us have seen stores such as Whole Foods, Trader Joe’s, and Sprouts become increasingly popular with health and wellness becoming a fad. Others may be familiar with the popularity of physical activity classes and memberships. What the stores and activities listed prior have in common is that they are promoted toward clients who not only seek a healthy lifestyle but also have enough funds to seek out such a lifestyle. Health and wellness are thus falsely seen as a luxury that now only the rich can afford. But is this truly the case?

An idea of wellness elitism, the common societal concept that health is a luxury few can afford, has been implemented into the minds of those who feel uncomfortable buying overpriced products with the “ organic” or “ gluten-free” labels on them or signing up for yoga classes or a gym membership. This causes many to give up on wellness before even starting, due to a false idea that has taken over — one that makes high costs correlate with better health. In her article “ Has Wellness Become a Luxury Good?” Pooja R Mottl argues that eating healthy is, in fact, quite pricey. She states that fresh food is often absent from certain areas in the country — for instance, in food deserts — so locals opt in for fast food instead. And those who can even get their hands on fresh foods will not buy it because they are most likely tight on money. They would much rather buy a whole meal from

a fast food restaurant which would cost less than “ a head of organic broccoli. ” In short, Mottl states that as the prices of fattening, unhealthy fast foods go up, the availability and promotion of unhealthiness to the poor also increases. The high prices that many traditionally healthy foods hold — vegetables, fruits, etc. — have contributed towards a society where health is a luxury few can obtain. This, in turn, makes wellness inaccessible for many people. The reason Mottl’s stance is problematic is because it sets up a barrier between lower-income populations and the healthy lifestyles that they can achieve, even without buying the “ organic broccoli. ”

The healthiness of the food that one purchases depends solely on what they buy, and the way we purchase food is a much greater issue in of itself. In his article “ Is eating out cheaper than cooking at home?”, Jane Dornbusch explains how a study done by reporter Nick Bhardwaj of the Fiscal Times attempted to compare the price of eating at a Restaurant versus cooking the same meal at home. It turns out that not only did cooking the meal at home cost around \$2 less, but he also admitted that he “ had to buy a whole head of romaine and a whole head of iceberg for the salad, but that gave him enough lettuce for a week’s worth of salad, not just one meal. Cost per serving of salad: \$1. 66. ” Of course, buying a combo meal from McDonalds is going to be the fastest and easiest way to get a drink, side and juicy burger for only around \$6. But how long does that meal last? It is only one meal, small in size yet extremely high in calories, and will most likely leave you craving for more once it gets quickly digested. This, consequently, leads to buying yet another unhealthy meal that will not keep you full for long and will have negative health effects. Therefore, by considering what we are

getting in the long run for the amount we pay, healthy and home-made foods are more affordable than fast food, and this makes good food—an important factor of health and wellness — accessible to a wider range of people.

Mottl's argument about the scarcity of fresh foods in low-income urban areas being pertinent within this country and being a cause of unhealthiness among low-income populations is also refutable, as research has shown that this does not cause unhealthiness amongst residents in such areas. In 2012, researchers from the USDA found that low-income neighborhoods had more grocery stores than high-income neighborhoods. This means that healthier options are, in fact, available and accessible even to lower-income consumers, and it is up to them to decide whether they use that to their advantage or not. Whether one chooses to visit a fast food restaurant or make a longer-lasting home-made meal is, therefore, not a matter of cost, but rather one of convenience, habit, and in some cases, preference. This is true because considering the lower cost of healthier foods and the availability of both options — short-lasting and unhealthy or long-lasting and healthy — it is left to the consumer to choose how they will spend their money and whether it will benefit their health or not. It is up to the consumer to work toward a wellness-centered lifestyle by bettering themselves through this step towards better health, or to stick with the flawed notion of “ not being rich enough. ” Another misinterpretation of wellness that deters certain individuals is the costliness of obtaining physical health. “ We have this idea that we must join a gym to get fit. That's incorrect. You are your own gym, ” says Dr. Sean Hashmi of Southern California's Kaiser Permanente Weight Management Program. The increasingly sedentary lifestyle of the

average American continues to put people at risk for certain types of cancer, obesity, heart diseases, and more on. However, will working towards a healthy lifestyle through the means of physical fitness happen at the expense of one's pockets? Not necessarily, because once again, we have so many different options when it comes to how we achieve physical health. Little changes to our daily tasks can make the difference we need. For instance, taking the stairs instead of an elevator or escalator; walking or biking to work, the store, school, and anywhere you go that is within a reasonable distance; and even something as little as getting up to stretch and walk around occasionally brings more activity and exercise to our daily routines.

Running is also considered a great workout to improve cardiovascular health and burn fat. Especially for those who have a time constraint, it is even possible to combine chores that will already be taking time out of their day with exercise. For instance, the National Academy of Sports Medicine states that "Cleaning the house is an example of moderate intensity activity the kind the NASM and health experts recommend that you perform daily to maximize health and fitness." So, although treadmills, expensive workout apparel and equipment may be out of reach for many people, movement is almost an inevitable part of our daily actions, and even this can be a way to exercise and get in shape. With this being the case, it is safe to say that physical activity and fitness — another important aspect of wellness — is achievable without reaching into our pockets, and, as mentioned previously, may even save our time by being efficiently combined with certain tasks that we already have to do anyway. With wellness proven to be affordable and

accessible, why do some people still argue that the movement is only a good fit for the wealthy? Despite the availability of multiple routes to wellness, many still find it difficult to be “well” when on a tight budget.

In his article, “Fight Poverty, Not Cooking,” Mark Bittman argues that “There are tedious bus rides, long days of sometimes grueling work, perhaps second and even third jobs, and neither time to shop nor money to use delivery services. All of this may make cooking near-impossible.” Cooking a meal does take time, of course, and with it comes the necessity to shop for ingredients, which might not fit into the schedule of someone working long or even multiple shifts. However, buying fast food requires a daily trip to the restaurant and takes time from one’s day, as well. It also means paying for food that can only be consumed once, after which several more trips are needed. Meanwhile, cooking at home means paying once to prepare a meal that lasts several days, is healthy, and does not require leaving the house or workplace every day to satisfy hunger. Even if one absolutely cannot find the time to prepare their own meals, many fast food restaurants offer healthier options that cost the same, if not less, than their more high-calorie and less filling counterparts. For instance, as stated by Lucy Turner, author of the article “Sorry Vox, But Eating Healthy Is Not Expensive,” restaurants such as Taco Bell, Burger King, and Subway have vegetarian options that cost the same and sometimes even less than their unhealthier menu items. Hence, the healthy and unhealthy options are available for us to choose, whether we are shopping for produce or standing in line for a quick meal.

Convenience and preference may influence our decision in what we choose to eat, but these factors are not equivalent to lack of accessibility, and wellness does not come with a price tag. We are given the freedom to eat what we please, and whether we follow “wellness” depends not on its price, but on the decisions that we make that lead us to it. In the end, wellness is an everyday practice of habits that reflect positively on our health, not an industry that is only for the rich or created to steal money from us.

Wellness is about changing certain aspects in our life to bring ourselves closer to health and well-being. How much one person decides to spend on their journey to wellness is not a set standard for everyone else, but merely another example of the many ways that wellness can be achieved.

Fortunately, the methods are countless, and the cost is flexible, making wellness not a pursuit that is only accessible for the wealthy, but for all people who decide to take steps towards the betterment of their health.

Wellness is for everyone, attainable for all, and what’s holding us back from it is whether we make it affordable and doable for ourselves.