



# REFRESHING MONDAY: A FRESH START TO THE WEEK

## STILL MONDAY

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This *Monday Refresh* brief follows up on findings from the 2010 *Healthy Monday* literature review and continues to explore reasons for using Monday for health promotion interventions. The goal was to assess if the previous findings continue to be applicable to the Meatless Monday campaign, as well as organizations and individuals promoting it.

Meatless Monday is a global movement that encourages people to reduce meat in their diet for their health and the health of the planet, leveraging Monday as a day to promote a new health behavior. Since its

launch in 2003, the goal of this campaign has been to reduce meat consumption by encouraging individuals to eat meatless meals one day a week. It is based on the premise that Monday is the day of the week when people are most likely to start or resume a new health behavior.

Ultimately, the findings from the original literature review are still relevant. Additional insights add consideration for cultural differences in Monday experiences are also provided and confirm the use of this first day of each week as a frequent prompt for behavior change.

## WHY MONDAY?

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Monday is a day when people are more likely to think about healthy behaviors and start new habits. A *Healthy Monday* literature review was conducted in 2010 to explore the effectiveness of periodic prompts and the cultural significance of Monday, focusing on health promotion interventions. In this review, researchers found that frequent periodic prompts and personal interaction, through telephone calls, in-person meetings, or direct feedback, can be effective for increasing positive behavior change and health improvements<sup>1</sup>. Based on these

findings, recommendations included positively framing Monday as a fresh start for behavior change and a weekly cue to action. The researchers also suggest a “Monday component” for behavior change initiatives in which Monday becomes a specific day to prompt uptake of the desired behavior. This brief report presents updated findings that can be used for guidance on current and future Meatless Monday initiatives and similar campaigns.

## METHODS

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Findings from the *Healthy Monday* literature review were used as a starting point for this brief. Electronic searches were conducted between August and September of 2024 for articles published between 2010 and 2024. The databases used were PubMed and Google Scholar. Articles were included if Monday was used as a day to encourage health behavior change and/

or there was exploration on experiences or perspectives of Monday, compared to other days of the week. Once selected, findings from the articles were compared to those from the original literature review, to determine components that have been updated or changed over time. See Table 1 for a summary of the articles that were identified and included.

## SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

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### Prompts for Health Behavior Change

Frequent prompts can be used in interventions as reminders for individuals to adopt new health behaviors. These prompts can be defined as messages or reminders communicated multiple times to participants throughout the course of an intervention<sup>1</sup>.

However, for some circumstances, another weekday is a better fit to promote reduction of meat consumption, such as if the workweek starts on a Sunday or based on the preferences of participants. Meatless Monday can still be successful on other days if prompts for behavior change are repeated weekly. For example, Donderdag Veggiedag, or Thursday Veggie Day, is a campaign started in Ghent, Belgium, in 2009 to encourage people to eat vegetarian or vegan food once a week on Thursdays<sup>2-4</sup>. Another example is New York City Public Schools, which began serving vegan meals on Fridays to introduce healthy food choices to their students<sup>5</sup>. While both campaigns promote behavior change on different weekdays, they utilize weekly prompts to encourage reduction of meat consumption. The practice of using a certain day of the week to encourage behavior change contributes to the success of Meatless Monday and similar campaigns, since it serves as a frequent prompt for individuals.

### Monday Experiences

Individual attitudes and experiences on Mondays tend to be negative in Western cultures but are heavily influenced by cultural norms. In Western culture, perspectives and attitudes toward Monday are heavily associated with its relationship to the workweek<sup>6</sup>. This common experience is known as “Monday blues” or “Blue Monday,” where individuals are likely to have a more negative attitude or mood on Mondays, compared to other weekdays. This mood pattern begins on Monday and improves throughout the week, peaking on the weekends before decreasing before the start of the week<sup>7</sup>. Researchers suggest that the contrast between weekday work and weekend leisure experiences is distinct, leading to strong pessimistic feelings on Monday, which is referred to as the day-of-the-week (DOW) effect<sup>6</sup>. Theories or cultural beliefs about the DOW effect may influence actual mood patterns, indicating the cultural influence on Monday experiences.

As stated in the previous section, some cultures have a different start of the work week, making the Monday experience different. For example, Israel and Nepal are countries where Sunday marks the beginning of the workweek<sup>8-11</sup>. However, despite differences in attitudes and experiences, the pattern of having negative attitudes or

feelings toward the beginning of the week is likely similar<sup>6</sup>.

### **Opportunity to Reframe Monday**

Popular culture often references views of Monday, as seen through the variety of experiences shared in blog posts, articles, and other forms of media. For example, “Sunday scaries” is a common term used to refer to feelings of anxiety and stress that individuals may feel on Sundays, as they are anticipating the start of the workweek on Mondays. However, there are also messages promoting the adoption of a more positive perspective toward the beginning of the

week. A recent social media movement called “Bare Minimum Mondays” encourages people to focus on completing only necessary or important tasks on Mondays<sup>12</sup>. The goal behind using this approach is that shifting personal mindsets about Mondays would reduce the amount of stress felt at the beginning of the week, leading to overall better experiences and improved wellness during the week<sup>12</sup>. Such efforts to reframe Monday can perhaps be seen as the result of a shifting cultural and societal focus to redirect and transform attitudes about the beginning of the workweek to be more positive.

## **MONDAY REFRESH SUMMARY**

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Monday presents the opportunity to begin the week with a fresh start. Reframing the Monday experience can help redirect negative attitudes and experiences on this day to be more positive and health focused. Encouraging individuals to take a first step toward healthy behavior change at the be-

ginning of the week can help them continue the momentum during the rest of the week. Approaches to reframe Monday, like Meatless Monday, continue to present opportunities for new healthy behavior change and health promotion initiatives.

## **TAKEAWAYS FOR MEATLESS MONDAY**

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The following components are takeaways for Meatless Monday and other initiatives that leverage Monday to spark behavior changes:

### **Monday as First Day of the Week— We Think Differently**

Attitudes and experiences regarding Monday as the beginning of the week vary and are influenced by cultural norms and beliefs. To deliver messaging that resonates, it is crucial to be conscious of the perspectives held by the community you are implementing in.

### **Monday as a Prompt**

Monday is a day when people are more likely to think about healthy behaviors and start new habits, which lends itself to being leveraged as a prompt for eating less meat.

For cultures or situations where Monday does not have the same connotation or is not feasible for a program, another day of the week can be used similarly to promote behavior change.

### **Monday as a Cyclical Occurrence**

The cyclical nature of weekly prompts contributes to the successful promotion of healthy behaviors. Regardless of the setting, initiatives like Meatless Monday benefit from including messaging at regular intervals over time to remind participants about the campaign and reinforce the behavior.

## CONCLUSION

The findings from the original *Healthy Monday* literature review are still relevant and applicable. They support the inclusion of a Monday component in health promotion interventions. Recent studies have explored cultural differences relating to Monday ex-

periences and the effectiveness of using Monday as a periodic prompt. Findings from this literature search also expand our understanding of the Meatless Monday campaign as we continue to explore how temporal cycles relate to health behavior change.

**Table 1** Summary of literature findings

Search Term(s)	Article Year	Article Author(s)	Article Title	Article Source	Summary Study Design	Summary Population	Summary Location	Findings
Monday, Monday health behavior	2024	Apata et al. <sup>13</sup>	Monday-enhanced CEASE program for underserved ethnic minorities: A mixed-methods study	Journal of Racial and Ethnic Health Disparities	Mixed methods; random assignment to Monday-enhanced or standard CEASE smoking cessation program	N=77	Affordable housing complex and church in low-income ethnic minority community	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Motivation for quitting was higher for Monday group</li> <li>■ Monday-enhanced programming may enhance engagement and willingness to quit smoking</li> </ul>
Monday	2017	De Leon et al. <sup>14</sup>	'Quit and Stay Quit Monday' as a novel approach to smoking cessation: A pilot experimental study	Journal of Smoking Cessation	Quasi-experimental, pre-post study; assessing comparative effectiveness of smoking cessation intervention	N=78	Group smoking cessation programs administered in Harford County, Maryland	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Participants receiving Monday messages were more confident in ability to quit and rated program more highly</li> <li>■ Greater information-seeking and interest in early week quitting</li> <li>■ Cessation behaviors may have weekly rhythm</li> </ul>
Monday	2020	Ali et al. <sup>15</sup>	Healthy Mondays or Sundays? Weekday preferences for healthy eating and cooking among a food insecure population in a U.S. urban environment	Journal of Hunger & Environmental Nutrition	Cross-sectional survey examining preferences in healthy eating and cooking	N=74	Food pantry clients in Baltimore City, Maryland	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Clients were more likely to eat healthy on Friday, Thursday, and Saturday</li> <li>■ Clients were more likely to cook on Sunday</li> <li>■ Future interventions should consider weekday preferences for campaigns among food insecure populations</li> </ul>

Search Term(s)	Article Year	Article Author(s)	Article Title	Article Source	Summary Study Design	Summary Population	Summary Location	Findings
Monday, day-of-the-week	2023	Petsas, I., Li, F., Cai, J. <sup>6</sup>	Work, leisure, and the Monday Blue: Does culture matter?	Economics and Business Letters	Literature review exploring relationship between culture and day-of-the-week (DOW) effect	N=52	Data from benchmark indices of 26 countries' markets	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Cross-cultural differences can explain variation of DOW from different countries</li> <li>■ Distinction between weekend leisure and weekday work leads to more pessimistic feelings on Monday, creating a stronger DOW effect</li> <li>■ Results support "Monday Blues" hypothesis</li> </ul>
Day-of-week, Blue Monday	2012	Stone, A., Schneider, S., Harter, J. <sup>7</sup>	Day-of-week mood patterns in the United States: On the existence of 'Blue Monday', 'Thank God it's Friday' and weekend effects	The Journal of Positive Psychology	Analysis of data; Examining DOW differences in positive and negative moods	N=340,000	Nationally representative sample from U.S. population	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Commonly held beliefs about DOW mood patterns suggest mood is worst on Monday</li> <li>■ Mood improves over course of the week with peak on weekends before dropping from Sunday to Monday</li> </ul>
Monday	2020	Elfering et al. <sup>16</sup>	The Monday Effect revisited: A diary and sleep actigraphy study	Sleep and Vigilance	Actigraphy study exploring Monday effect and regressed daily self-reported workplace cognitive failure on weekdays	N=40	Full-time employees in Germany	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Universal experience of lower mood on Mondays that is different from what is expected</li> <li>■ Monday significantly explained variations in workplace cognitive failure</li> </ul>
Monday, workweek	2024	Volker et al. <sup>17</sup>	It is Monday again: Weekend sleep differentially relates to the workweek via reattachment on Monday	Journal of Organizational Behavior	Weekly diary study over four workweeks	N=310	Employees	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Weekend sleep is a core recovery process</li> <li>■ Monday reattachment can set the tone for the entire workweek</li> </ul>
Monday health behavior	2014	Ayers et al. <sup>18</sup>	What's the healthiest day?	American Journal of Preventive Medicine	Monitoring Google search queries and wavelet analysis		Google public database from 2005–2012	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Healthy searches peaked on Monday and Tuesday</li> <li>■ Healthy considerations have a weekly clock, which has potential for use in health promotion campaigns</li> </ul>

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