



# 2021 Consumer Wellness Watch

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## Watching what's next in consumer wellness

In a year plagued by a pandemic, economic doubt, social unrest and climate change impacts, health and wellness vaulted to the top of our collective psyche. Bombarded by stressors at seemingly every turn in 2020, consumers turned to experts and brands for guidance in managing the responses of their minds and bodies to a difficult and anxiety-inducing situation. The world isn't out of the woods yet, and the burgeoning health and wellness movement will be challenged on many fronts.

As we look ahead to 2021, Finn Partners talked to 12 global experts to get their thoughts on what lies ahead and where they think the industry will focus. From unproven products and fads taking a backseat to those grounded in research and verifiable results, to a greater emphasis on our immune systems, mental health and sleep habits, this group shares some interesting perspectives. Will they be right? We'll have to 'watch' and see.





## Danny Seo

Danny Seo is the editor-in-chief of “Naturally, Danny Seo” magazine and the Emmy Award-winning host of the NBC TV show of the same name. He is the designer of the Danny Seo line of eco-friendly home products sold in over 4,000 stores, a syndicated columnist and the author of 13 books.

**Current obsession:** MegaFood Vitamins

**Can't wait to try:** Online grocer LOOP'd

**Thinks next big buzzword is:** Transparency

**Can't go a day without:**

Reading WWD for fashion and beauty news

## Less will be more

Expect an emphasis on fewer, but better choices, such as from taking several supplements daily to just a few tailored to your body's needs. The same could be said for cleaning products — all-in-one products without harsh chemicals — or a superhero ingredient that delivers plant-based protein, is a regenerative crop, and can be made into something sweet or savory.

Along with less is more, the CBD hype should diminish. Demand may exist, but too many brands and products flooding the market have little oversight. Consumers don't want 1,000 choices; they want vetted products that do more than drain your wallet.

## Investing in better health

COVID-19 has amplified the importance of health and wellness: strong immunity can mean a better life. With usual pastimes curtailed, some consumers may have more disposable income to invest in themselves and loved ones, such as on supplements, workout gear and smart technology.

Overall, pet care, water and accountability will be top of mind. Pets are considered part of the family, so watch for products that help aging pets and hero ingredients like probiotics. Water is life, and access to a clean, trusted source is in demand. One of the biggest water filtration makers in the U.S., Pentair, is moving into the residential market with its time-tested, commercial-grade filtration. Finally, consumers want accountability, from where their collagen is sourced to how their tuna is caught.



## Dr. Chris Winter

Dr. Chris Winter has spent over half of his life involved in the study of sleep and the treatment of sleep disorders. As a board-certified neurologist and a board-certified sleep specialist, Dr. Winter brings a tremendous amount of scientific knowledge to his book, “The Sleep Solution.”

**Current obsession:** Murph workout

**Can't wait to try:** A 24-hour race

**Thinks next big buzzword is:** Home gym

**Can't go a day without:** Alie Ward's insights

## Outdoor fitness opportunities expanding

In 2021, I expect we'll see outdoor fitness opportunities growing, such as Spartan Races. They're fun, outside — important in our COVID-19 reality — and supportive. Personally, I can't wait to try some kind of 24-hour race, and I've been obsessed with the Murph workout in preparation. Named for Navy Seal Michael Murphy, the workout is a one-mile run, 100 pull-ups, 200 push-ups, 300 squats and another one-mile run... all while wearing a 20-pound vest. As outdoor fitness ramps up, we'll see some tapering off of activities like indoor yoga.

## Exploring new ways to deliver care

Considering the past year, health and wellness experts will likely focus on inflammation, immunity and sleep in 2021. Sleep is integral to mental and physical health, and I can see napping at work gaining some traction. As working from home remains in place, it may be easier for people to grab a quick power nap to recharge.

Healthcare providers, fitness instructors, and others in the health and wellness field have had to pivot during the pandemic, and they will need to keep finding other ways of interacting and delivering their care and messages. Consumer wellness technology may play a bigger role than ever as the wellness movement continues to evolve.



## Dr. Connie Guttersen

Connie Guttersen, R.D., Ph.D., is a renowned registered dietitian, culinary professional and New York Times bestselling author. She is a nutrition instructor at the Culinary Institute of America, a founding nutrition advisor to the Goldsbury Foundation's Culinary Medicine program in San Antonio, Texas, and a recognized public speaker.

**Current obsession:**

Olive oil flavors and health benefits

**Can't wait to try:**

New and interesting global cuisines

**Thinks next big buzzword is:** Eating to nourish

**Can't go a day without:** CHEF of San Antonio

## Eating for nourishment and resilience

In the coming year, I think we'll see more attention on eating for nourishment. The conversation will be more about strengthening immunity overall as opposed to targeting a single disease. I, for one, am obsessed with the health benefits associated with olive oils as well as the medicinal properties of various herbs. Crash diets don't have much of a place in such discussions and should fall out of favor.

## Attention on reducing risk factors

COVID-19 has raised the issue of underlying health issues in fending off disease. I expect greater appreciation for reducing risk factors related to obesity and heart disease as a way to improve the body's immune response as well as its stress response, both physical and mental. Immunity and inflammation will likely be two of the most significant influencers on the wellness movement in 2021, but obesity and anti-aging are also likely to take up space in the industry's conversations.



## Neil B. Jacobs

Neil Jacobs is CEO of Six Senses Hotels Resorts Spas, where his passion for wellness, sustainability and making travel purposeful led him in 2012. While focusing on responsible design, green initiatives, and wellness programming that is meaningful for each guest, Neil seeks to operate in harmony with local communities and the natural world.

**Current obsession is:** Cycling

**Can't wait to try:** More work around energy healing

**Thinks next big buzzword is:** Brain health

**Can't go a day without:**

Following Sting for musical and spiritual inspiration

## Wellness and sustainability are interconnected

COVID-19 has taught us that humans are not in control, and there is renewed interest in the power of the universe. Humans and nature are not separate, and the state of the world and our discomfort forces us to evaluate which functions of nature and humanity to perpetuate. Sustainability and wellness are no longer distinct; you can't have one without the other.

Additionally, COVID-19 has made wellness more relevant, but not necessarily more accessible — a challenge that should provoke a meaningful industry response. Wellness should not be a luxury. My hope is to see more clubs that provide platforms and well environments that are meaningful, affordable and inspiring.

Going forward, we should reconsider how we live, work out and work. First, I would like more focus on loneliness and mental health. Second, the traditional fitness industry must continue diversifying, with technology, virtual communities and the outdoors playing larger roles. Finally, the wellness industry has a place in “workplace” wellness, and all employers have a responsibility to rethink caring for employees.

## Cognitive health and plant medicine

Traditional views on diet and food — especially fad diets — will taper off. We have more knowledge, and new science is taking a more considered view. Cognitive health is getting deserved airtime, along with the gut-brain connection and how its manipulation could change our stress levels or lifespan. The future is about integrative, whole-body approaches.

I'm also seeing more interest in alternatives to big pharma, especially in terms of mental health and how nature's pharmacy may be used as a catalyst or adjunct to psychotherapeutic processes or mindfulness meditation. “Plant medicine” is a thorny subject, due to legalities and risks as well as the commercialization and appropriation of culture. However, people are seeking it so there's an opportunity for the industry to respond.



## Sandrine Sylva

Sandrine Sylva is head of products at Brand Architekts, a British beauty company with a portfolio of innovate brands such as Super Facialist and The Solution. Her passion lies in creating inspiring, efficacious products that enhance an individual's beauty regime. Residing in the U.K., Sandrine is always on the go —playing a sport, running or socializing.

**Current obsession is:** Mindful running

**Can't wait to try:** Wild Beauty from Rhug Estate

**Thinks next big buzzword is:** Adaptogens

**Can't go a day without:** Reading Well + Good

## Growing interest in wellness and environmental self connection

Even before the pandemic, workplace stress cost businesses billions every year. I see corporate wellness becoming a business necessity and, to some extent, a corporate social responsibility, with more companies offering in-house mindfulness sessions or developing technological solutions to limit excessive screen time and promote healthier work habits.

The pandemic has provided an opportunity to create more meaningful interactions with people, our community, our families and not least our bodies. Consumers are seeking more authentic, meaningful experiences and re-thinking their values. The craze for expensive training equipment and high-impact exercises will make way for outdoor activities that offset the rise of the home office. Watch for the likes of tree workouts or dance-focused classes, which help lift spirits and enhance body awareness to make you feel more connected with yourself. Interesting conversations are happening around air quality and how to emulate, in the home, the effects of fresh air on your mind to trigger a range of emotions — happiness, energy, peace.

## Topics at the forefront in 2021

Health and wellness experts will be talking about self-care, underpinned by the desire to create emotional and personal connections; building a more desirable and sustainable future through greater authenticity and transparency from brands; and the obsession with adaptogens, which should spike as we see progress in how to promote better sleep and relaxation.

Additionally, I'm intrigued by data-driven beauty. Intuitive, skin-sensing wearable devices will get smarter and act as a personal skin, health or mental "advisor." Such devices will read and analyze data to new levels, from tracking UV exposure and alerting users to get out of the sun or apply SPF protection to tracking moisture levels in the skin and alerting users to re-hydrate.



## Anika Christ

Anika Christ is a registered dietitian, sports nutritionist and personal trainer at Life Time, where she has spent the last 12 years building and managing nutrition and weight loss programming and content, including the 60day Challenge. She enjoys reading and writing, coffee, lifting weights and playing with her two daughters.

**Current obsession:**

Video group training with a personal trainer

**Can't wait to try:** Red light therapy

**Thinks next big buzzword is:** (Building) Resilience

**Can't go a day without:** Max Lugavere's Instagram feed

## Accessing greater accountability and results

One of my current obsessions is video group training with a personal trainer, a trend I expect will grow. It's a way to stay accountable with a "real" person and have personalized, not canned, programming. And it's a unique way to keep up with fitness and health goals from anywhere.

It also ties into what I think will be big influencers on the wellness movement in 2021: fear and technology. Fear is a powerful motivator for people, and COVID-19 is spurring them to action — keeping fitness facilities clean and tidy, taking more care about hygiene, being more intentional about relationships and interactions, and going beyond canned fitness programs for better accountability and results.

## Hot (or not) topics for 2021

Health and wellness experts are likely to talk about stress management and sleep support following the year we've had. In nutrition and supplements, there should be a focus on what supports the immune system and what supports overall mood to combat depression. In fitness, building muscle should be a hot topic, so expect buzzwords like resilience and durability. While CBD came out of the gates hot, I anticipate it will fizzle due to other priorities and more states legalizing THC-containing cannabis.



## Jennifer Walsh

Jennifer Walsh is a lifestyle-based health and nutrition coach certified through the Institute for Integrative Nutrition. Fascinated by the connections between food and physical performance, community and culture, and the environment, Jennifer raises awareness of the influence food and lifestyle have on the body and the impact food production has on the planet.

**Current obsession:** Coaching virtually and working out from home

**Can't wait to try:** Essential amino acid supplement

**Thinks next big buzzword is:** Intuitive eating

**Can't go a day without:** Following the hashtags #regenerativefarming; #regenerativeagriculture; #sustainablelifestyle

## Revival of outdoor fitness activities

In a COVID-19 world, the outdoors is a safe place and one of the only open resources for everyone. People are spending more time outdoors, getting introduced to new activities — often something they haven't explored before — and planning to stick with it in 2021.

What people won't be sticking with are trendy diet programs. Such diets change behavior in the short-term, and people are realizing they need more individualization. The idea of personalized nutrition based on gut health (your own gut microbiomes and flora) and genetics should gain momentum.

Given the year we've had, we'll see more attention on mental health and sleep. I also hope we'll see more awareness around eating in a local and sustainable manner, with more focus on regenerative farming.

## Health and social issues make lasting impact

COVID-19 will make a lasting impact on our industry. It has created broader awareness of our public health crisis and the need for preventable action and personal responsibility. Many Americans are sedentary, dependent on pharmaceuticals and suffering from chronic illness, such as obesity, diabetes and hypertension — all of which can be prevented through lifestyle changes.

Additionally, COVID-19 has forced reinvention. Those in the wellness industry need to be virtual, otherwise survival will be very difficult. I train with people all over the world now; initially, it was forced, but now I really enjoy the connections.

Finally, along with the pandemic, social justice issues have prompted change, such as in a huge push to improve our industry's track record with diversity. People across wellness and outdoor industries are waking up to the need for diversity and inclusion. 2021 should be the year equity is finally prioritized.



## Chris Tattersall

Chris Tattersall is the managing director and owner of Woolroom, a brand he developed as the most recognized destination for natural, healthy sleep in the U.K. In 2019, he launched Woolroom in North America and Iceland, taking the brand to markets with an appreciation for the benefits of natural sleep.

**Current obsession:** Smart watch

**Can't wait to try:** Nutri Ninja

**Thinks next big buzzword is:** Sleep

**Can't go a day without:**

@thesleepdiplomat's Instagram feed

## Connecting sleep and wellbeing

In 2021, the connection between sleep and wellbeing will be well documented, especially when it comes to mental health. [Mentalhealth.org.uk](https://www.mentalhealth.org.uk) research shows sleep is as vital as eating, drinking and breathing. Getting enough good quality sleep is critical to supporting mental wellbeing, and difficulty sleeping can sometimes signal mental health problems.

We are confident sleep awareness will continue rising in 2021, but so will increased messaging from a crowded market about things that can help. The simple answer is to review your overall sleep environment and what you sleep in and under. Plus, ditching devices may be the way forward, despite the many apps that claim to help. Scrolling on your phone before bed tricks the body into thinking it should be awake and alert. The National Sleep Foundation recommends putting down electronic devices at least 30 minutes before bedtime. Instead, grab a book and read; you'll be impressed with how much more quickly you fall asleep and how much better you'll feel the next day.

## Consumers are taking control

We believe the importance of a good night's sleep will have the biggest impact on the wellness movement. Sleep, particularly stage four regenerative sleep, is when the body is thought to do the most repair and regeneration of cells, helping you awake refreshed, revitalized and ready to face the day.

In addition to sleep, food and fitness round out the three essentials of wellness. Food is fundamental to healthy living, and more people are considering food as medicine. As a result, the wellness industry is no longer a niche, and companies should be readying for the next phase. Consumers are taking more control of their health at home, and brands that can differentiate themselves quickly through market trends should become industry leaders.



## David Stewart

David Stewart is the founder and face of the Ageist — a digital media platform, community and consultancy — and the host of the SuperAge podcast. He is a passionate champion and leading authority on the modern 50+ lifestyle and on the mindset and aspirations that drive this influential underserved demographic.

**Current obsession:** The Equinox Variis app

**Can't wait to try:** New skincare products

**Thinks next big buzzword is:** Individualization

**Can't go a day without:**

David Sinclair's Twitter feed

## Science, facts and empowering individuals

COVID-19 has become the super catalyst for the re-examination of not just wellness, but all our values and behaviors. It is a massive reset moment on personal and societal levels. Science matters! All the woo-woo is over; we need facts and the natural, transparent sourcing of ingredients. What is in a product? What does it do? How will it interact with me? We are not all the same. It's about customization based on genomics and epigenetics — part of a macro trend toward personal responsibility in health and wellness.

We'll see more focus on individual empowerment through self-knowledge, such as by tracking a huge range of bio markers. But knowledge is not enough. Everyone knows obesity is a huge morbidity factor, yet 40% of Americans are overweight. What counts is how to change behaviors and habits to move the societal needle.

## What's in, what's out in wellness

I'm seeing more talk about adaptogens in functional foods, which could gain traction in 2021 (though I believe they're ancient Chinese medicine repackaged for today's consumer). Gluten-free diets — the pet rock of their time — should fade somewhat. Unless consumers have a disorder like celiac disease, the issue is less about gluten and more about glycemic load.

Finally, COVID-19 has underscored the contradictions of wellness travel. Travel has a number of benefits — it's stimulating, knowledge-expanding, great to do — but wellness is not one of them, no matter which wellness center is on the other end. Traveling by plane for 12 hours, spewing carbon in the air and exposing oneself to a range of epigenetic risk factors is anti-wellness. Look for wellness to be more home and locally centered.



## Sue Harmsworth

Sue Harmsworth shaped the spa industry as we know it. She founded the global brand ESPA and is responsible for the design of 500+ award-winning spas and for creating groundbreaking products, treatments and wellbeing programs. She advises on concepts for wellness and medical destinations, aesthetics and skincare standards.

**Current obsession:** Infusions/supplements for immune system strength

**Can't wait to try:** The latest cognitive testing equipment to determine brain health

**Thinks next big buzzword is:** Prevention

**Can't go a day without:** Well+Good daily tips

## The direction of discussions

Much discussion has focused on the microbiome of the gut, then the brain and lately the skin. The science is very strong, and I think in 2021 it will come into its own, especially with the awareness of the importance of the provenance and nutrient density value of our food on our health.

We need more discussion around everything coming into our homes to keep us healthy on a day-to-day basis in a safe environment. Physical therapists are still working and coming into the home virtually, produce is growing in good soil in home gardens, and home infrared saunas have had a sales boom. In the U.K. and Europe, the movement from cities to larger homes with gardens is indicative of such developments, underscoring the need to consider socio-economic and space implications.

## Science and facts rule the day

Going forward, we want facts, science, results and integrity – not marketing hype and waffly words! The need for long treatment menus has gone, while the need to understand wellness has grown. Individuals recognise they must take more ownership of their health and will seek places to learn, practice good habits, and improve upon weaknesses to keep healthy and age well.

Experts will likely focus on the immune system – personally, I'm obsessed with infusions and supplements supporting its strength – and the respiratory system. Sleep is also at the top of the list. Neuroscience and brain health will come into play, as it will be important to distinguish between mindfulness and more serious psychological issues. COVID-19 may challenge good therapists and related professionals to continue practicing at a time when the world desperately needs them. Finally, we can't neglect obesity, particularly because of its dangers with COVID-19.



## Neila Choukri

Neila Choukri is chief operating officer of Supermood, a premium quality Finnish natural beauty brand. Based in Paris, she has worked in mid-sized ventures and entrepreneurial technology startups, from seed to international growth. She derives satisfaction from empowering individuals to be engaged in their lives and work.

**Current obsession:** Exercise

**Can't wait to try:**

Augmented reality for virtual sports

**Thinks next big buzzword is:** Telemedicine

**Can't go a day without:**

Following the latest news on COVID-19

## Trust in technology will sway trends

COVID-19 should continue to influence the wellness movement in 2021. With the pandemic, the need for a worldwide health care and data system has become paramount. We should also see increasing partnerships to accelerate innovation in the space, but the timing of this trend — as well as many others — will depend on the level of trust in technology. Along with fostering partnerships, technology will impact emerging wellness-related trends in AI and data analytics, mainstream telemedicine, delivery health kits for testing, a connected supply chain, and the use of augmented reality for sports and therapy.

## Innovating for a more robust medical workforce

As we move forward, COVID-19 will still be at the forefront of health and wellness discussions. Expect considerable attention on the supply chain for approved vaccines, remote testing, and innovation for a medical workforce that has been stretched thin.

Additionally, I think we'll start to hear more about quantum medicine and have more conversations about the role of robotics to fill gaps in the medical workforce. At the same time, the heightened focus on cybersecurity for health data should decline.



## Anna Victoria

Anna Victoria is the creator of the Fit Body app, a certified personal trainer (NASM) and a fitness influencer. Through her Fit Body community, she encourages women to take control of their health and wellness.

**Current obsession is:**

Pelvic floor health and awareness

**Can't wait to try:** Red light therapy

**Thinks next big buzzword is:** Digital detoxing

**Can't go a day without:**

Reading my #fbgirls Instagram posts

## Emerging focus on pelvic floor health

I hope pelvic floor health will be an emerging trend in 2021! Going through pregnancy and childbirth, I learned so much about pelvic floor health and how it affects even non-pregnant woman, AND MEN! Many women are told that pelvic floor issues are “just a part of life,” which is absolutely not true. I highly recommend every single woman seek out a pelvic floor physical therapist, pregnant or not.

I think health and wellness experts will also focus on digital detoxing and low impact, at-home workouts. Diaphragmatic breathing should get some attention, too. Many women spend countless hours working out, but they don't know how to truly engage their core because they aren't breathing effectively during workouts – and possibly in their day-to-day life. Just say “no” to chest breathing!

## New appreciation for health and wellness

The impacts of COVID-19 on a variety of things – finances, home and work-from-home life, and taking care of one's physical health – will have a big effect on the wellness movement. It is likely people will not take health and wellness for granted and will focus on preventive, rather than reactive, measures. Even what is considered “self-care” may change, as many things touted as self-care can be destructive and not serve our wellbeing.



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FINN's Consumer Practice is part of the agency's Wellness Collaborative, a global offering dedicated to elevating brands that support consumer health, wellness and longevity. The Collaborative is led by practice and regional leaders within the Consumer, Health, Technology and Travel and Lifestyle Practices across FINN Asia, Europe, Middle East and North America.

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