

HEALTH BENEFITS OF REGULAR EXERCISE

WHY EXERCISE?

Everybody always tells us that exercise is good for you, but do you know why it is good for you?

Let us talk about just a few of the many reasons why exercise is good for us.

WHY SHOULD WE EXERCISE?

• Mood improvement

Exercise has an immediate effect on your mood, in fact most people will find that they are happier directly after exercise. During exercise, your body releases chemicals that can improve your mood and make you feel more relaxed. It is therefore a great antidote for stress and depression.

• Weight control

During exercise the body needs energy and this energy is obtained from breaking down food that you have eaten. If your stomach is empty, it will break down stored fat for energy.

To maintain your weight, the calories you eat and drink must be equal to the energy you burn. To lose weight, you must use more calories than you eat and drink. The body will then break down stored energy sources and which will result in weight loss.

• Muscle strength and bone health

The more you move, the more you use your muscles. Moving muscles get stronger.

The bigger the muscle, the more energy it will use to move. So, not only do you get stronger, but it will help you with your weight control.

Weight-bearing exercises also make bones stronger.

This is very important, to prevent loss of bone density (thickness) when we get older. If bones are strong, it will take much longer to develop diseases like osteoporosis (brittle bone).

• Activate brain and memory

Exercise stimulates the body to release proteins and other chemicals that improve the structure and function of your brain.

• Control sugar levels and help insulin to work better

Exercise can lower blood sugar levels and help insulin work better. This can reduce the risk of developing diabetes and other chronic diseases. Even if you have diabetes or metabolic syndrome (underactive insulin), exercise can help you to manage it better.

• Reduce the risk of developing chronic heart disease

Exercise strengthens the heart and improves the circulation. The increased blood flow increases the oxygen levels in the body. Regular exercise can also lower the blood pressure and triglyceride (fats) levels.

• Sleep better

Regular exercise, at least two to three hours before bedtime, helps the body to relax and improves sleep quality.

• Reduce the risk of falls

Increased muscle strength, posture and balance will reduce the risk of falls.

Doing balance and muscle-strengthening activities in addition to moderate-intensity aerobic activity can help reduce risk of falling in older people and thereby reduce their chances of bone fractures.

HOW CAN YOU ENJOY EXERCISE?

• Make your daily routine more active

Even small changes can help.

Take the stairs instead of the elevator.

Walk down the hall to a co-worker's office instead of sending an email.

Wash your car yourself.

Instead of parking in front of the shop, park a little bit away and enjoy the walk while shopping.

• Ask a friend or family member to join you

Having a partner is a great motivator to get up in the morning to exercise, because you have committed to meet the other person. If you exercise by yourself, finding excuses not to get up to go for a walk is much easier.

A friend also makes exercise more fun. Talking and suffering together is much nicer than being by yourself. You can also celebrate your achievements together, which will give you even greater motivation to keep going. You might also consider joining an exercise group or class, such as a dance class, hiking club or volleyball team.

• Track progress

Positive feedback gives us motivation to keep going. Doing one more sit up, walking for five more minutes or doing a lap a few minutes faster are great motivators to keep up the good work!

• Focus on something else to ease the effort

Try listening to music or watching television while you exercise, especially when on the stationary bicycle, because five minutes can feel like an hour!

Also, mix things up a little bit - if you do just one type of exercise, you might get bored. Try doing a combination of activities.

• Find bad weather activities

You can walk in a mall, climb stairs, or work out in a gym even if the weather stops you from exercising outside.

CONCLUSION

Exercise should be part of all our lives.

Being active will help us function better, move easier, be happier, sleep better and stay healthy for longer.

Exercise is not only about going to gym or playing a sport.

By just being more aware of the importance of exercise, we can change our daily routines to enhance our activity level. It is the best gift you can give yourself!

DISCLAIMER

TAKE NOTE

The information provided in this article is for education purposes only and does not serve as a medical diagnosis. Members should always consult their healthcare provider with serious symptoms.

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