



Exercise and Mood



Why is diet alone not enough?

One of the issues with dieting alone is that you can often just lose water and muscle fluid. You need to exercise to remove the loose body fat. This is why you might see skinny people with flabby bodies and cellulite. They still may have body fat, but simply appear thin on the outside. Remember - being thin does not necessarily = being healthy.



How does exercise improve mood?

Exercise is said to assist in maintaining a good feeling and avoiding bad feelings associated with inactivity. Although there remains some debate as to how exactly mood is improved via exercise, a number of theories have been presented to-date:

- Exercise releases serotonin (a feel good neurotransmitter)
- Exercise releases endorphins (a feel good hormone)
- Exercise reduced cortisol (releases when stressed - this hormone makes you hungry when you're stressed)
- Exercise increases core body temperature which in turn improves mood
- Exercise can distract you from your worries and remove you from a stressful situation
- Through Exercising, you lose weight, which results in improved appearance and increased confidence.

How much exercise do we need to improve our mood?

1. To feel good after exercise, you only need to do about 10-15 minutes of walking
2. To feel good during exercise, you need to do about 45 minutes of walking
3. Either way, you'll feel the most benefit when you feel the least positive to begin with

KEY: In order to really feel the positive mood, it's also important to walk at a moderate pace (between about 60% - 80% of your maximum heart rate) - see page 164 of the *Refresh Your Life* program for how to calculate your maximum heart rate.

What part of mood is affected by exercise?

Reduced:

- tension, anger, depression, fatigue, confusion

Improved:

- vigor, energy, happiness, sleep (fall asleep faster, sleep longer, sleep deeper)

Exercise has also been shown to increase self-esteem (most likely as a result of increased perceptions of our physical appearance). Self-esteem encompasses the physical, social and academic perceptions of ourselves.

The reaction to exercise is similar in males and females, in all age groups and fitness levels.

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Why is it important for elderly people to exercise?

As people get older it's particularly important for them to be active to prevent muscle deterioration and to maintain bone mass. This prevents serious injury as a result of falls. If an elderly person has a chronic illness (and this applies to people of any age), exercise should be discussed with his/her GP or specialist at their regular meetings. Exercise can be beneficial for some conditions, such as diabetes, however the recommendations tends to be only when the individual has the illness in a stable condition. Once again, this should always be discussed with a medical professional, prior and during the exercise program.



How does exercise improve pregnancy?

Being active can assist women before and after pregnancy to help them prepare for the physical and emotional demands of childbirth and the transition to parenthood. As exercise has been shown to prevent and treat depression, there is a strong suggestions that it may also act as a preventative for women for Post Natal Depression (some studies suggest approximately 13% of women worldwide suffer from Post Natal Depression).

Source

1. Biddle, J.H., & Mutrie, N. (2008). Psychology of Physical Activity. Determinants, well-being and interventions (2nd Ed). Routledge, New York.