

The Benefits of Exercise

When you are feeling sad, stressed or in a generally bad mood, exercising might be the last thing you feel like doing. Instead, you may decide to reach for snacks, turn on the television or curl up with your favorite book. While each of these activities may provide you with temporary relief, none can provide you with the same benefits as exercise.

Doctors and fitness experts recommend regular physical activity as a way to burn calories and fat, lower blood pressure and increase muscle strength. However, did you know that regular exercise not only gets our bodies into shape but also has a similar effect on our minds? A good exercise program will combine

aerobic, strength and flexibility training. Consider the following physical and mental benefits of a well-crafted exercise program.

Physical Benefits

The physical benefits of exercise are numerous. The following are just some of the benefits that exercise can have on your physical health:

- Reduced risk of many diseases, including heart disease, stroke, high blood pressure, osteoporosis, diabetes, heart attack and certain types of cancer
- Increased flexibility and range of motion
- Diminished signs of aging
- Increased metabolism, which helps you maintain a healthy weight
- Strengthened immune system
- Reduced cholesterol levels
- Increased endurance
- Reduced pain and swelling associated with certain chronic conditions, such as arthritis

Mental Benefits

Along with the physical benefits of exercise come a number of mental benefits:

- Lower levels of stress and anxiety
- Elevated mood with a lower risk of depression
- Increased self-esteem
- Increased energy levels
- Regulated sleep patterns

Exercise can also help you to develop a more positive outlook on life as well as help you look and feel good about yourself.

Resources

- President's Council on Physical Fitness and Sports: www.fitness.gov
- American Heart Association: www.americanheart.org
- National Institutes of Health: www.nih.gov

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