

Benefits of Exercise

Every year, 1.9 million deaths (globally) are caused by physical inactivity. According to the CDC, more than 60 percent of Americans do not get regular exercise.

Most Americans are not physically active enough to gain any health benefits. Physical fitness involves the performance of the heart, lungs, and muscles of the body. According to the latest joint American Heart Association/American College of Sports Medicine guidelines on physical activity, all healthy adults ages 18 to 65 should be getting at least 30 minutes of moderate intensity activity five days a week. There are additional guidelines for those 65 and older or for those 50 to 64 with chronic conditions or physical limitations.

* Exercise helps maintain a normal weight by increasing metabolism - the rate you burn calories. During your 30s, metabolism starts slowing down by about five percent every decade due to muscle loss. Every pound of muscle lost decreases the number of calories burned by 30 per day.

* Exercise lowers cortisol levels. Also, it leads to the release of endorphins - a natural and effective treatment for depression and anxiety.

* Exercise lowers the risk for high blood pressure and heart disease, controls blood sugar, lowers cholesterol, and protects the immune system.

* The more active you are physically, the less age-related damage there is to your brain tissue. One study reports that older men and women who exercise even moderately three times a week or more reduce their risk of developing dementia, including Alzheimers.

* Exercise keeps joints, tendons and ligaments flexible. It strengthens bones, tones muscles, increases energy, and improves endurance.

* Exercise makes you feel better about yourself and those who exercise regularly tend to eat more nutritious food. High levels of self-esteem/self-efficacy are correlated with an increased ability to cope with high stress levels and good nutrition helps the body manage stress better.

* Exercise reduces muscle tension. It alleviates further stress that is precipitated by pain and discomfort associated with arthritic joints, backache, tension headaches, and TMJ. One session of exercise generates 90 to 120 minutes of relaxation response.

* Exercise improves sleep. Exercise has been shown to be very effective in helping people fall asleep and sleep more soundly. A good nights sleep improves concentration and productivity.

There are 1,440 minutes in a day; take at least 30 minutes for moderate physical activity.

Those under 35 and in good health do not need to see a doctor before beginning an exercise program. To stay with a program, choose something you like to do, get a partner, vary your routine, and choose a comfortable time of day. Put exercise appointments on your calendar, keep a daily log of your activities, and check your progress.

* If you consume 100 calories a day more than your body needs, you will gain approximately 10 pounds in a year. Doing 30 minutes of moderate exercise daily will keep the weight off.

* An eight-year study showed that people who walked 30 minutes daily had a significantly reduced chance of premature death compared with those who rarely exercised, reports the American Council on Exercise. Every 20 steps you take is one calorie burned.

Sources: World Health Organization, CDC, American Council on Exercise, American Medical Association, NIH, U.S. National Library of Medicine, American Psychological Association, HealthDay, Reuters Health Information, American Heart Association, Mayo Clinic, American Academy of Family Physicians, American Diabetes Association, USA Today, MedicineNet, The Presidents Council on Physical Fitness & Sports, and Washington and Shady Grove Adventist Hospitals. This Health Bulletin is for educational purposes only. For additional information, consult your physician. Please feel free to copy and distribute this health resource.