

5 Physical and Mental Benefits of Exercising Regularly

We all know that exercise is good for us, but how many of us know the actual mental and physiological benefits? According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), adults who perform 150-300 minutes (2.5 -5 hours) of moderate-intensity physical activity each week reap numerous physical, mental, and personal rewards. Don't believe us, check out this list from the CDC.

Exercise can reduce your risk of disease: According to the CDC, "Adults who are physically active are ... less likely to develop many chronic diseases...." This is true for a number of reasons, beginning with the fact that exercise works to strengthen your immune system, making you less likely to contract illness and more able to fight it off if you do. Regular exercise is good for the heart and assists circulation, which decreases your risk of heart diseases such as high cholesterol and coronary artery disease. Exercise can also lower blood sugar and regulate insulin production, which lessens your risk of getting type 2 diabetes. Finally, physical activity has been found to lower risks of certain [cancers](#), such as colon, breast, uterine, and lung.

Exercise can be a great tool for your mental health and well-being: Regular physical activity can aid immensely in dealing with anxiety and depression. The proteins and chemicals released by the body during exercise can improve the structure and function of the brain, which help your learning and judgement abilities stay sharp. These chemicals also encourage the brain to relax and improve your mood. Exercise can also assist in [overcoming addiction](#), as it has been shown to reduce withdrawal symptoms, give the body a natural high, and offer structure and routine.

Exercise helps to strengthen your bones and muscles: Regular physical activity builds up strong bones in kids and young adults, and can slow the loss of bone later in life. Routine exercise, especially the kind that specifically targets the muscles, can build muscle mass and increase physical strength. These effects come together to make you a stronger and healthier person.

Exercise can improve your [sleep](#): Exercise can help you fall asleep faster, as well as increase the amount of time you spend in deep sleep- the restorative sleep phase that boosts your immune system and cardiac health. The stress-reducing properties of exercise can also improve symptoms of sleep disorders. [Research](#) has shown that exercise can be an effective long-term therapy for insomnia, as well as lower the severity of disordered breathing caused by sleep apnea. Just be cautious about working out too close to bedtime- exercise elevates your body's temperature and temporarily raises your energy levels, which may make it harder to fall asleep for the following few hours.

Exercise may improve your sexual health: Exercise has been shown to [lower the risk of erectile dysfunction and other sexual disorders](#) in males, and offset symptoms in those who already have them. It has also been found to increase blood flow and sexual arousal in females. In all sexes, it can boost fitness and mental confidence, which can lead to a more all-around fulfilling sex life.

It's easier to incorporate exercise and enjoy these benefits than you think! To start, you can work to make your routine activities more active by walking to class instead of taking the bus, using the stairs instead of the elevator, and parking further away from your destinations. You can also check out this [article](#) to learn easy ways to increase your steps every day. Find things you can do even on days you're tempted to take off, such as indoor workouts for rainy days, or lower-difficulty workouts for times when your energy is low. Mix up the type of exercises you do to avoid getting bored, and try to make it fun by listening to music or watching tv while you do it.

The Campus Recreation Center (CRC) offers a number of resources to aid in your fitness journey. If you're a solo exerciser, you can check out the CRC's fitness machines, indoor and outdoor tracks, or [pools](#). If you like your activities to be fun and social, there are many [intramural and club sports](#) on campus. For adventurous types, check out one of the many [outdoor recreation](#) programs. If you're not sure where to begin, consider getting a [personal trainer](#) or joining a [group fitness](#) course. Most importantly remember your fitness journey is a marathon not a sprint and don't give up. You've got this! For more information, visit <http://crc.gatech.edu>.

Sources:

<https://www.cdc.gov/physicalactivity/basics/index.htm>

<https://medlineplus.gov/benefitsofexercise.html>

<https://www.cdc.gov/healthypplaces/healthtopics/physactivity.htm>