



# Benefits of Exercise

Most people know that exercise is an important component of a healthy lifestyle, but may not be familiar with some of the specific health benefits.



The following benefits come from doing some type of regular moderate-intensity aerobic activity at least three or four days a week for 30 minutes, along with strength training exercises a few days a week.

- **Improves cardiovascular and respiratory systems**

Exercising regularly strengthens your heart and lungs; lowers the buildup of plaques in arteries by increasing the 'good' cholesterol (HDL) and decreasing the 'bad' cholesterol (LDL); aids in preventing and lowering high blood pressure; and promotes greater lung capacity which means that your cells receive more oxygen.

- **Reduces risk of certain types of cancer**

Studies show that if you exercise regularly, you have a lower risk of developing cancer of the colon, prostate, breast and uterine lining. While researchers are still trying to understand how exercise lowers the risk of prostate cancer, it is thought that exercise lowers the risk of the colon by helping food move through the body faster. In addition, exercise lowers the risk of breast and uterine cancers by reducing body fat and estrogen production.

- **Improves mental health**

Exercise reduces stress and anxiety by stimulating endorphins, which are known as the body's natural pain relievers. Exercise has also been shown to promote feelings of well-being, prevent depression and boost self-esteem.

- **Helps maintain a healthy body weight and strong bones**

Obesity is a major risk factor for many diseases, such as diabetes. Regular exercise, combined with healthy eating habits, helps control weight by improving the body's ability to metabolize calories, reducing body fat, and preserving muscle mass. In addition, weight-bearing activities contribute to healthy bones, muscles, and joints which may prevent osteoporosis.

- **Helps maintain quality of life**

Regular exercise has been shown to increase a person's life expectancy by an average of two years, and perhaps more importantly, increases the likelihood of more years living able-bodied and independently.

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