



Benefits of Exercise

“Did you know? Regular exercise can improve mental health and reduce depression. Exercise can also reduce stress and daily tension, making you one relaxed person.”

If you've ever suffered from a lack of energy, you'll know how good it is to have a healthy body. Feeling fit, energetic, strong and healthy can make you feel positive about life.

Some of the benefits of regular exercise include increased muscle strength and bone density, better sleep and more energy. Physical activity releases endorphins - these are the body's natural "feel good" chemicals.

Some other benefits of regular exercise include maintaining a strong heart and lungs, increasing "good" cholesterol, promoting healthy blood sugar levels to prevent or control diabetes, boosting the immune system and promoting bone density to protect against osteoporosis so you'll stay healthier in later years.

Health experts recommend 30 minutes of moderate exercise on most days of the week. This can include walking, swimming, dancing, yoga or classes at your local gym or community centre.

A misconception about regular exercise is that it must be strenuous to reap the benefits. It is far more important that you do something you like and make it enjoyable. This means you are more likely to make exercise a part of your life, sustainable and ongoing throughout your life instead of a quick fix to loose weight or a health kick when you get the time.

You can use physical activity as an effective way of reducing your anger. Try boxing or martial arts. This stress-busting action gets the heart racing and involves punches, kicks and shadow moves, not to mention loads of fun.

Exercise can make you feel better about yourself. It can give your mind a break if you are worried about something. You can do it alone or with friends.

When exercising for the first time, you may have aching muscles and feel tired afterwards. Depending on how regular you exercise, this should reduce after about six weeks and you will start to see the physical benefits of exercise. You may even have more energy than before and feel stronger. Exercising just gets easier and more fun!

Re Balance Your Lifestyle

Excessive Exercise

It's important to remember that exercise is great for your physical health and wellbeing. However people who exercise too much can suffer withdrawal symptoms including sleep disturbances, depression, anxiety, confusion, and difficulty concentrating when they miss a day of exercise. Instead of building muscle, too much exercise can destroy muscle mass, especially if the body is not getting enough nutrition, forcing it to break down muscle for energy.

Talk to a personal trainer at your local gym to find out more about other classes to incorporate into your fitness program such as yoga, meditation, Pilates, Tai chi or seek out a team sport. This way, efforts are limited and training is done at set times as a team. This is also good for your social life.

Choosing The Best Exercise For You

A good exercise program includes 3 types of exercise:

- Stretching such as yoga, tai chi to improve flexibility
- Endurance (aerobic) to improve cardio fitness
- Strength training (weight training)

Cardiovascular/Aerobic Exercise

The Australian National Physical Activity Guidelines, (VicHealth) recommends that the daily requirement of physical activity is 30 minutes of moderate intensity between three and five times a week. If you do the same exercise every week as a test, your heart rate should reduce progressively from week to week as your fitness levels increase.

Aerobic exercise strengthens the heart, blood vessels and lung capacity. You can build endurance through exercises such as walking, jogging, dancing, swimming, bike riding, netball, soccer and karate.

Strengthening (Resistance) Exercises

Resistance exercise is excellent for building strength and creating muscle mass. Ideally, you should do strength exercises that use several muscle groups of your body, rather than just isolating one muscle group. As this could place stress on one area, it's best to work two muscle groups alternatively within the training schedule. It is recommended that you do resistance training two or three times per week for 45 minutes.

There are a number of ways to perform resistance exercises. These include resistance/strengthening exercises using weight machines, free hand weights, resistance bands, tubes and your own body weight, stability/swiss balls can be used for abdominal exercises, legs, buttocks and upper body. Medicine balls can add resistance to your workouts.

Re Balance Your Lifestyle

Flexibility

Flexibility is the ability to move and stretch your muscles to their full extent. You should be able to move, bend, stretch and twist fairly easily. For flexibility, try stretching before and after exercise and incorporate some yoga into your lifestyle.

If you are suffering from stress, avoid competitive types of exercise as this can be stressful instead of relaxing. Walking, swimming, cycling are great. To get the maximum benefits of stress reduction it should be used along with relaxation, nutrition, tai chi, meditation, yoga.

Assess your progress every six to twelve weeks. You may need to increase the amount of time you exercise in order to continue improving. On the other hand, you may be pleasantly surprised to find that you're exercising just the right amount to meet your fitness goals.

If you lose motivation, set new goals or try a new activity. Exercise with a friend or try a new class at your local gym.

Useful Links

www.betterhealthchannel.vic.gov.au

www.fitness.org.au