

Exercise: A Prescription for Feeling Good

Research shows that regular physical exercise has all sorts of positive physical and psychological effects.

Regular exercise helps us all:

- Feel more energized
- Sleep better
- Experience optimism
- Feel happier
- Feel less stressed
- Experience higher self-esteem

The physical benefits of regular exercise are substantial, including:

- Helps weight loss or management
- Improves heart health, and decreases vulnerability to heart attack or other cardiovascular problems
- Improves digestion and decreases gastrointestinal disorders
- Helps with managing chronic pain, like back pain
- Improves lung capacity and helps with breathing problems, such as asthma
- Improves muscle tone and physical strength and stamina
- Helps protect you from disease

A Daily Workout is Good, But Don't Overdo It

When you get started, exercise has the effect of making your body feel stiff and sore or if you over do it, you risk muscle strain or other injury. It's tempting to try to make up for lost time—the weekend warrior comes to mind, but consistency is the way to achieving the health benefit of regular exercise.

Some folks believe they do not have enough time in their busy day to work on more thing on their “to do” list, or they believe that they are not athletic and physically strong enough. And then there are some folks who just don't feel motivated. The good news for everyone is that you can get positive benefits from moderate forms of exercise. For example, a brisk 20 minute walk, three times a week provides significant health benefits! The pay off continues as you notice the changes in how you look and feel, because this becomes a powerful motivator. When you include a buddy in your exercise routine, watch your motivation and success skyrocket.

Developing a daily exercise habit increases good health and happiness. Your challenge is working exercise into your busy schedule. Look for creative ways to make everyday activities more active. Mowing the lawn, playing with the kids, parking your car in a far corner of the parking lot, to encourage some extra walking, and don't forget that taking the stairs counts as exercise. The goal is 30 minutes of activity most days of the week. If you've only got 15, that's good too. If it's easier to break exercise time into smaller

chunks, that's a great solution for busy people, or when getting started feels overwhelming. Start slow and build up to what feels right for you to keep exercise fun and motivation positive.

Get the Kids Moving

Exercise is important for kids' health and happiness. Television viewing and video game time is a passive form of relaxation that can stretch into hours of sitting and passively overeating snacks. By adding physical activity to your family routine, everyone benefits from the time together and the healthy pay off. Try an evening walk, or bike ride. Play a game of tag or teach a kid how to play hopscotch, jump rope or tennis. Healthy kids benefit the same emotionally and physically from a regular exercise routine. They need a bit more than adults, 60 minutes most days of the week is optimal!

Resource Links

[A walking program with good supporting resources](#)

[Check out the U.S. Army physical fitness site](#)

[A good exercise overview, including tips for working it into your routine and keep the healthy habit going](#)

[A short list of moderate and fun physical activities](#)