

Health Benefits of Exercise

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WALKING: GOOD FOR PHYSICAL AND MENTAL HEALTH



Numerous studies have shown that regular exercise in the form of walking can produce beneficial health outcomes such as reducing risk for heart disease and improving blood glucose. In addition, walking is often a recommended starting point for non-

exercisers. Now, a study in Japan shows that walking can improve several mental health outcomes among healthy Japanese workers.

The study followed 606 healthy people, separated into walking and non-walking groups, and assessed changes in reported depression symptoms and social adaptation (a measure of how well a person adapts to and engages with their community). At the end of the program, the walking group reported less depression and better social adaptation than their non-exercising counterparts. This suggests that people who exercise regularly are less likely to be depressed and more likely to adapt to their work environment than those who do not. Health clubs provide a wide range of exercise opportunities, from walking to high intensity training and are a safe, supportive environment in which to start exercising.

HIGH INTENSITY EXERCISE AND BLOOD SUGAR

Moderate exercise has been shown to improve blood glucose levels, but many people do not get the amount of physical activity needed to effect a change. A review in the recent issue of *Diabetes, Metabolic Syndrome, and Obesity Targets and Therapy* reviewed 14 studies of diabetics and non-diabetics and the impact of high intensity exercise at increments of 15 minutes or less per session on blood glucose levels.



The findings showed that brief, high intensity bouts of exercise could reduce blood glucose levels for 1-3 days post exercise in both diabetic and non-diabetic people. Also, high intensity exercise was not likely to cause hypoglycemia (low blood sugar) during or after a workout. While more studies are needed to determine long-term efficacy, optimal intensity and duration, swapping longer, moderate intensity sessions for shorter bouts of high intensity exercise may be a solution for those who have trouble fitting in a workout.

HIGHER INTENSITY EXERCISE MAY BE BETTER FOR TEENS' HEARTS



Earlier research has shown that aerobic exercise can reduce the risk for cardiovascular disease in obese adolescents, but little is known about the intensity of exercise needed for beneficial changes in blood pressure and heart rate. Now, a new study assessed the benefits of higher versus lower intensity exercise programs for obese teens.

The study, published in the journal *Pediatric Obesity*, followed a group of 13-18 year olds for 12 weeks and found that both low and high intensity exercise helped reduce blood pressure levels, but only high intensity exercise resulted in lower waist circumference and a healthier heart rate. This means that more vigorous exercise can have additional benefits for managing one's weight and cardiovascular health.

STUDY SAYS OBESITY AND CANCER MAY BE PREVENTABLE WITH HEALTHY LIFESTYLE

Obesity has been associated with a range of chronic diseases including cancer, heart disease, and diabetes in multitude of studies. A review recently published in *Nutrition Review* looked at the links between obesity and overweight and metabolic syndrome, cardiovascular disease, and cancer in South America. Based on data from over 6,000 people, researchers found that obesity and other risk factors for cardiovascular disease are related mainly to aging,



genetics, and lifestyle choices like exercise. The findings showed that obesity and cancer may be at least partly preventable by choosing healthy behaviors. These behaviors include regular exercise, weight control, and healthy eating, and are important to reducing the risk of these major chronic diseases.

TAI CHI CAN REDUCE ANXIETY AND LOWER HEART DISEASE RISK

Tai Chi is a form of Chinese martial arts practiced by many for both defensive training and for health. Now, a study published in the *American Journal of Health Promotion* is adding more evidence to support the health benefits of Tai Chi, showing that it may help reduce heart disease risk.

The study was conducted in Taiwan and compared two groups of adults: one group attended three Tai Chi classes per week for 12 weeks, and the other group continued their normal activities. After 12 weeks, the Tai Chi participants showed a greater drop in anxiety, blood pressure, and body mass index (BMI), and waist circumference than their peers who did not do Tai Chi. These results suggest that Tai Chi can have long term health benefits and is a good way to reach recommended levels of physical activity levels.

SOURCES

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