

The Truth about Exercise

"Get moving!" all the fitness experts tell us. Exercise has benefits beyond what is obvious. Even a little physical activity will not leave us without its rewards.

What is physical activity and what is exercise? Exercise is a type of physical activity. Walking, running errands, housework, and gardening, all involve some exertion and are forms of physical activity.

But exercise is a more structured form of physical activity, sometimes undertaken for the express purpose of increasing your calorie burn. At other times, with activities like competitive sport, or swimming, cycling, or just plain walking, you might do it because you enjoy it.

There are three main types of exercise:

- Aerobic exercise: uses large muscle groups and increases your body's use of oxygen compared to its state of rest. This type of exercise is also often called "cardio", from cardiovascular. Examples are walking, running, cycling.
- Anaerobic exercise, (also called strength, or resistance training) concentrates on the short explosive use of muscles, and is used to build up muscle and bone strength. There are many variations, such as weight training, interval training. Examples are push-ups, lunges, bicep curls and so on.
- Flexibility exercise stretches and lengthens your muscles. The objective is to increase the range of movement and reduce the chance of injury.

Exercise has some benefits that are not immediately obvious.

The most immediate reward of exercise is of course improved physical condition: better weight regulation, a healthy heart, lower BMI, and so on. But it goes far beyond that.

- Exercise benefits the brain in many ways. It protects nerve tissue, which reduces the chance of such illnesses as Alzheimer's.
- Exercise boosts the immune system, and people who exercise moderately are seen to have greater resistance to illness.
- Exercise also has beneficial psychological effects; it increases the circulation of serotonin and endorphins which are a natural anti-depressant, and exercise alone may be used as a preventive or treatment measure in depression.
- Exercise is a safe and inexpensive treatment for sleep problems - a good alternative to sleeping pills.

With so much to gain, the question is why isn't everyone exercising?