

# Benefits of Exercise Beyond Weight Loss

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We're all body conscious on some level and our reasons behind wanting to be more physically active is an individual process. We may begin a workout routine for the purpose of building more muscle, improving cardiovascular health and increasing stamina, or because we've put on some weight as we've gotten older and want to bring our body back to where it was in the prime of our youth.

Whether you're inspired to get moving to shed unwanted pounds or to improve other aspects of your health so you can feel better from the inside out—exercise can deliver results that reach further than achieving the ideal “bikini body”.

Making exercise a priority on a regular basis gives the body all kinds of advantages, but understand that it can't make up for a poor diet. Proper nutrition goes hand in hand with consistent exercise and must be a complement to your regimen—or you may find yourself getting adverse results.

Let's review some of the benefits of exercise that will not only keep your body trim, but create balance simultaneously in the body and mind so you experience optimal health and live a longer, more fulfilling life.

## **1. Cognitive Enhancement**

Exercise can help you to transform your body, but it can do wonders for transforming the structure of your brain as well. Getting your heart rate up encourages the flow of blood and oxygen within the body which can improve brain function, enhance the growth of brain cells, prevent memory decline, and strengthen thinking skills. Moving your body has also been shown to stimulate creativity for up to 2 hours afterwards, so it can be an effective remedy to induce flow states if you're experiencing “artist's block”.

## **2. Boost Energy Levels**

If you've been looking for ways to combat fatigue that don't involve caffeine and other stimulants, exercise is the healthiest option to boost slumping energy levels. Physical exertion creates an increased need for oxygen, which in turn expands lung capacity. This allows blood to circulate through the body more efficiently and delivers more oxygen to the muscles—heightening energy production and helping you to feel more energetic and alert throughout the day.

## **3. Support Emotional Health**

One of the best benefits of exercise is its ability to make us feel good. Endorphins are chemicals produced within the brain and nervous system that contain enkephalins and dynorphins, substances connected with feelings of pleasure, sexuality/sensuality and euphoria. When you're engaged in any kind of physical activity, endorphins are released and this can cause a shift in your mood. If depression, anxiety, and stress has you feeling down, use exercise as a natural remedy to support your emotional health and lift your spirits.

## **4. Reduce Inflammation**

Inflammation is the body's defense mechanism against injury, foreign viruses and bacteria, and damaged tissue—but disease and other “wear and tear” conditions can ensue if inflammation becomes chronic. Physical activity produces TNF (an essential regulator of local and systemic inflammation that also helps boost immune responses), so just 20 minutes of moderate exercise can reduce excessive production and slow the progression of inflammation.

## **5. Increase Metabolism**

Metabolism assists the body in digesting food, keeping energy levels balanced, and delivering nutrients to our cells through the blood, but metabolism can slow as we age and as a result—our body's ability to burn fat can slow as well. Although several factors play a role your metabolic rate, physically challenging your body can help burn more calories and keep metabolism revved up. Muscles tends

to burn more calories than fat, so try incorporating strength training exercises to build muscle. This will keep your body burning calories even when it's resting.

## **6. Promote Quality Sleep**

A good workout has a calming effect on the body and may promote quality sleep. Physical activity causes energy depletion and elevates the body temperature, which can help strengthen circadian rhythms and reset the sleep-wake cycle. Exercise too close to bedtime can have a stimulating effect on the body, so if you fall into that category—try working out earlier in the day if you're experiencing sleep disruption..

## **7. Slow Aging Process**

Making exercise a habitual habit increases vitality and can slow down the aging process. Cellular structure gets significantly shorter as we age and even more so when the body is sedentary. Studies have shown that keeping the body moving decreases muscle mass deterioration and keeps the immune system youthful. Exercise can also stimulate blood flow and promote skin cell reconstructions that help delay the appearance of aging skin.

## **8. Cultivate Healthy Body Image**

When you begin to engage in physical activity on a regular basis—change not only occurs physically, but mentally as well. Observing the strength, speed, and increased skill that your body develops over time causes a shift in the way you view yourself. You begin to truly appreciate your body for all it can do and it becomes less about what your body looks like and more about simply enjoying the art of movement. Setting small goals and watching yourself achieve them builds the foundation for a healthier body image and will help you to love your body at all its stages—whether weight loss is the result or not.