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Top 10 Fitness Facts

Some things you should know about exercise

By Barbara Russi Sarnataro

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Reviewed by Kathleen M. Zelman, MPH

1. Exercise Boosts Brainpower

Exercise increases energy levels and increases serotonin in the brain, which leads to improved mental clarity. It is clear that those who are active and who exercise are much more productive at work.

2. Movement Melts Away Stress

As much as it may stress you out just to think about exercising, once you actually start working out, you'll experience less stress in every part of your life. Exercise produces a relaxation response that serves as a positive distraction; it also helps elevate your mood and keep depression at bay.

3. Exercise Gives You Energy

When endorphins are released into your bloodstream during exercise, you feel much more energized the rest of the day. The physical tiredness you feel after working out isn't the same as everyday fatigue, he says. Besides, once your body adjusts to exercise, you'll have more energy than ever.

4. It's Not That Hard to Find Time for Fitness

The key is to use your time more wisely. Think about killing two birds with one stone. Take your kids to the park or ride bikes together, and you're getting physical activity while enjoying family time. At work, schedule a meeting on the jogging track or on the golf course.

Forget the idea that you have to trudge to the gym and spend an hour or more doing a formal workout. Instead, you can work short spurts of physical activity into your day.

5. Fitness Can Help Build Relationships

Think of what exercising with a partner can do for a relationship, whether it's with a spouse, a sibling, or a friend you used to go to lunch with once a week. People who have exercise partners stay with their programs and reach their goals more often than those who try to go it alone.

6. Exercise Helps Ward off Disease

Research has shown that exercise can slow or help prevent heart disease, stroke, high blood pressure, high cholesterol, type 2 diabetes, arthritis, osteoporosis (bone loss), and loss of muscle mass. Exercise can boost immune function -- so you spend less time down with a cold or flu.

7. Fitness Pumps Up Your Heart

Not only does exercise help fight disease, says Bryant, it creates a stronger heart -- the most important muscle in the body.

8. Exercise Lets You Eat More

Pound for pound, muscle burns more calories at rest than body fat. So the more muscle you have, the higher your resting metabolic rate. You can better get away with [eating sweets or other treats] in moderation than you can when you're not working out."

9. Exercise Boosts Performance

After a few weeks of consistent exercise, you may feel your clothes fitting differently and see that your muscle tone has improved. Exercising consistently will strengthen your muscles, increase flexibility, and improve your overall performance.

10. Weight Loss Is Not the Most Important Goal

Weight loss is the reason many people exercise in the first place. But it's certainly not the sole benefit of an exercise program. People have trouble sticking with something if they don't see results quickly, [which can be discouraging].

So whatever weight loss goal you have when starting a fitness program, don't make it your only goal. Strive to feel better, to have more energy, to be less stressed. Notice the small things that exercise does for you quickly, rather than getting hung up on the narrow goal of the number on a scale.