



The Benefits of Exercise

Research has shown that the holidays are a high risk time for gaining weight. The typically joyous season does bring stress along with it. Increased shopping, food preparation, house guests, demands on our time and financial stress, and simply a change in schedule, can all amount to increased stress. Exercise reduces stress by releasing endorphins or "feel good" hormones. In addition, it provides an outlet to release built-up stress that, if not addressed, can often lead to overeating. This time of year is a great time to remember that exercise and physical activity are a great way to maintain your weight, feel better, gain health benefits and have fun. If you want to lose weight or meet specific fitness goals, you may need to exercise more. Remember to check with your doctor before starting a new exercise program, especially if you haven't exercised for a long time, have chronic health problems, such as heart disease, diabetes or arthritis, or you have any other concerns.

Six Benefits of Regular Physical Activity

1 Exercise controls weight - Exercise can help prevent excess weight gain or help you lose weight. When you engage in physical activity, you burn calories. The more intense the activity, the more calories you burn. If you can't do an actual workout, get more active throughout the day in simple ways — by taking the stairs instead of the elevator or revving up your household chores.

#2 Exercise can prevent/improve health conditions and diseases - regular physical activity can help you prevent or manage a wide range of health problems and concerns including strokes, high blood pressure or hypertension, metabolic syndrome, type 2 diabetes, depression, certain types of cancer, arthritis, and falls.

3 Exercise improves mood - Physical activity stimulates various brain chemicals that may leave you feeling happier and more relaxed. You may also feel better about your appearance and yourself when you exercise regularly, which can boost your confidence and improve your self-esteem.

#4 Exercise boosts energy - Regular physical activity can improve your muscle strength and boost your endurance. Exercise and physical activity deliver oxygen and nutrients to your tissues and help your cardiovascular system work more efficiently.

#5 Exercise promotes better sleep - Struggling to fall or stay asleep? Regular physical activity can help you fall asleep faster and deepen your sleep. Just don't exercise too close to bedtime, or you may be too energized to fall asleep.

#6 Exercise can be fun - Exercise and physical activity can be a fun way to spend some time. It gives you a chance to unwind, enjoy the outdoors or simply engage in activities that make you happy. Physical activity can also help you connect with family or friends in a fun social setting. So, take a dance class, walk or do chair exercises. Find a physical activity you enjoy, and just do it. If you get bored, try something new.

**If you have additional questions, contact the dietitian at 707.525.0143 x130

Source: <http://www.mayoclinic.org/>

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