

# Health Benefits of Exercise



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## AEROBIC EXERCISE CAN IMPROVE FITNESS FOLLOWING STROKE



After suffering a stroke, many people experience declines in their physical, social, and cognitive health. Since a good deal of evidence supports the beneficial effects of exercise on several chronic diseases, researchers conducted a review to see if

exercise is also beneficial for stroke survivors.

The review, published in the journal *Cerebrovascular Disease*, looked at 25 studies in which participants exercised for 21-40 minutes per day 3-5 days per week for durations spanning 3 weeks to 6 months. Many of the studies included exercise at high intensity, meaning participants exercised at 60-80% of their maximal heart rate. The analysis showed that aerobic exercise had a significant effect on aerobic fitness, walking speed, and walking endurance. Thus, aerobic exercise is recommended for people who have had mild or moderate stroke and are cleared by their physician to exercise. Health clubs can provide a safe, supportive environment for stroke survivors to work towards recommended physical activity and fitness levels.

## HEALTHY HABITS REDUCE THE RISK OF TYPE 2 DIABETES IN WOMEN WITH GESTATIONAL DIABETES

Gestational diabetes is a type of diabetes characterized by high blood sugar that starts or is diagnosed during pregnancy. Typically gestational diabetes increases a mother's risk for developing type 2 diabetes later on. However, new research published in *Applied Nutrition, Physiology, and Metabolism* found that adopting certain healthy habits can significantly reduce the risk.



The three healthy habits studied were regular exercise (at least 15 minutes per week), healthful diet, and breastfeeding for at least 6 months. The results showed that for each healthy behavior adopted, women were 30% less likely to be overweight, 34% less likely to show abdominal obesity and 33% less likely to experience lowered insulin sensitivity, meaning their risk factors for developing type 2 diabetes are reduced.



## EXERCISE COULD REDUCE THE RISK OF A KEY TYPE OF COLON CANCER

There may be a relationship between weight, exercise and a certain type of colon cancer, according to a new study published in *Cancer Research*.

Researchers looked at data from two long-term studies of U.S. men and women, the Nurses' Health Study and the Health Professionals Study, to determine if exercise and weight influenced the risk for two types of colon cancer. The results showed that obesity increased the risk for one type of colon cancer called CTNNB1-negative cancer, and conversely, that greater physical activity reduced the risk. Weight and activity levels were not associated with risk for the other subtype, CTNNB1-positive colon cancer. These findings add to the existing research in support of regular physical activity as a potential preventative measure against some cancers.

## BRITISH STUDY SHOWS MORE SCREEN TIME MEANS LESS FIT KIDS



Previous research has indicated that the more time kids spend in front of a screen (computer, television, etc.), the less time they spend physically active. Now, a British study published in the journal *Pediatric*

*Research* looked at the association between screen time and fitness. The study found that both boys and girls who reported high levels of screen time – greater than 4 hours per day – also had poor fitness levels. Some of the association between fitness and screen time was mediated by physical activity levels in kids who spent a lot of time in front of a screen. The authors concluded that these findings support the international recommendations that screen time be limited to less than 2 hours per day in children. Both UK and US governments recommend children get at least 60 minutes of moderate to vigorous physical activity every day to remain fit and healthy.

## MEDITERRANEAN STYLE DIET SHOWN TO LOWER RISK OF HEART DISEASE



The Mediterranean diet, which emphasizes eating whole grains, lean protein, plenty of fruits and vegetables, and healthy fats like olive oil and nuts, has previously been shown to reduce heart disease risk. A recent study at the Hospital Clinic of Barcelona compared the Mediterranean diet to another popular diet to reduce heart disease risk – the low fat diet. According to the research published online in the *New England Journal of Medicine*, the benefits of the Mediterranean diet were so compelling that researchers stopped the study early.

According to the findings, those eating a Mediterranean diet higher in extra-virgin-olive-oil group showed a 30% lower risk of having a heart attack, stroke or dying of heart disease after five years, while those eating the Mediterranean diet with more nuts showed a 28% lower risk of these outcomes compared to their counterparts eating a low fat diet. This study differed from previous studies in that it measured outcomes like disease incidence and premature death instead of risk factors like cholesterol and blood pressure. This research adds to the existing body of evidence suggesting that healthy behaviors – which include healthful food choices and regular physical activity – can help reduce the impact of heart disease.

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