

Health Benefits of Exercise

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HITTING THE GYM MIGHT MAKE THE FLU VACCINE WORK BETTER

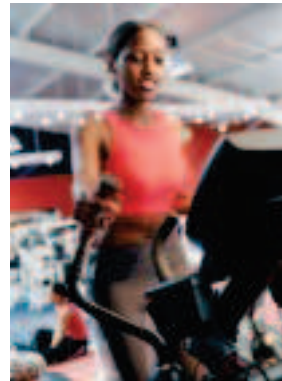


Vaccination programs have proved very successful over the years, helping to greatly reduce the occurrence of once common diseases and reducing the occurrence of infectious disease like the flu. Exercise has been shown to

improve immune system health among some groups, and research published in *Brain, Behavior, and Immunity* looked at the effect of acute and long-term exercise on the effect of vaccines.

The review looked at 20 studies (9 of them assessed acute exercise and 11 assessed long term exercise). Overall, the literature suggests that both acute and long-term exercise increases the immune system's response to the vaccine, thus making it work better. While more research is needed on this topic, living an active lifestyle has many other health benefits. Health clubs are a great place to workout during the winter months, when the weather tends to be unpleasant in many places.

LEAST FIT TEENS HAVE HIGHEST RISK FACTORS FOR HEART DISEASE



A recent study in the *American Journal of Human Biology* looked at the independent associations between body mass index (BMI), cardiorespiratory fitness, and heart disease risk factors in adolescents. The

study involved 209 teens ages 15 – 17 and was conducted at the University of West Scotland.

The results showed that a higher BMI was associated with higher heart disease risk factors (such as higher blood pressure or insulin resistance). In addition, the least physically active teens were at a significantly greater risk of heart disease than their more active counterparts.

Reducing BMI appears to be essential in reducing heart disease risk in adolescence. Kids and teens should get at least an hour of moderate exercise every day to reap heart health benefits.

EXERCISE CAN PRESERVE SENSE OF SMELL INTO OLD AGE



As we age, people tend to see a decline in olfactory function (sense of smell), which can negatively impact health and food safety, nutrition, and

quality of life. A study in the *Journal of the American Medical Association Otolaryngology – Head & Neck Surgery* looked at the impact of regular exercise on olfactory impairment over a 10-year period.

The results showed that being male or of older age increased the odds of impaired sense of smell. People who exercised once a week long enough to work up a sweat had significantly lower risk of olfactory impairment, and as exercise increased, risk of olfactory impairment decreased.

These findings suggest that middle and older aged people may be able to retain their sense of smell longer by remaining active and exercising weekly. Health clubs provide a safe, supportive environment for older adults to remain active.

ELEMENTARY-AGED KIDS WITH BETTER FITNESS, BALANCE DO BETTER IN SCHOOL

A new study published in *Medicine and Science in Sports and Exercise* looked at the impact of fitness and motor skills on academic performance in first, second and third graders. The kids performed a shuttle run test to assess cardiorespiratory fitness, in addition to other tests for balance and motor skills.

The results showed that poorer motor skills, balance, and fitness levels were associated with poorer performance in reading, reading comprehension, and arithmetic, in boys and girls. However, the trend was more pronounced in boys. It is recommended that children get at least an hour of physical activity every day.

ACTIVE VIDEO GAMES ANOTHER EXERCISE OPTION FOR NEW MOMS



Keeping baby weight following pregnancy increases a woman's chances of becoming obese. While exercise after childbirth can help promote weight loss,

many of the typical physical activities may be incompatible with a new mother's schedule. A study in *Medicine and Science in Sports and Exercise* assessed whether active video games could provide a good alternative form of exercise for new moms.

The study separated 37 new mothers into two groups. One group received a Nintendo Wii and the Wii Fit game for 40 days, while the other group received no intervention. After 40 days, the women who played Wii Fit lost more weight than the control group, and also saw greater reductions in BMI, waist circumference, and body fat. Women who played the video games also ate around 200 fewer calories than the non-exercisers. In addition, greater frequency and longer duration of play were associated with lower energy intake and weight loss.

These findings suggest that active video games can provide an alternative to help busy, new moms stay active in the days following delivery. However, active gaming does not provide the same supportive, community atmosphere found at your local health club, and many clubs offer child care services.

SOURCES

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