

Exercise for a Happier, Healthier Life



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We all know we should be exercising, but the reasons why go beyond burning calories. Check out these seven functions that occur in your body when you are physically active.

“Lack of activity destroys the good condition of every human being, while movement and methodical physical exercise save it

and preserve it.”

-Plato

We all know the importance of exercise and keeping physically fit, but have you ever stopped to consider just what happens to your body when you get out and move? In a recently posted article, TIME magazine listed and described the following seven functions that occur in the body during physical activity:

1. Exercise helps new blood vessels develop in the brain, and triggers the release of chemicals that dull pain and lighten mood.

When thinking about physical activity, we often focus solely on the physiological benefits it offers – weight loss, muscle gain, metabolic boost, etc. However, it is important to remember that participating in regular exercise has been associated with decreased levels of stress, depression, and anxiety. The mental health benefits of exercise are equally as important as the physical changes that occur.

2. Moving quickly makes the heart pump more blood around the body. That oxygen helps muscles withstand fatigue.

The best way to prevent fatigue is to build up endurance by increasing aerobic exercise and interval training. As your endurance increases, your muscles will receive extra oxygen,

which will allow you to exercise for longer periods of time and prevent lactic acid buildup.

3. Weight-bearing contractions make muscles grow and put pressure on the bones, increasing density.

Bones are critical to being physically healthy as they allow the body to move. They protect our most vital organs – most notably the brain and the heart. Regular exercise allows bones to become denser and can help to prevent osteoporosis or other bone damage.

4. The body is better able to burn fat for energy instead of carbs, causing fat cells to shrink.

The average human has between 10 billion to 30 billion fat cells, while those who are obese can have up to 100 billion. Although it is true that fat cells cannot naturally be removed, they can shrink overtime with exercise and a balanced diet. However, fat cells can always grow in size, so once you find a routine that works for you, stick with it!

5. Exercise revs up blood flow to the skin, delivering nutrients and helping wounds heal faster.

As you train on a regular basis, more capillaries and blood vessels will appear near the surface of your skin. This will undoubtedly help the skin appear clearer and more radiant as

skin-improving nutrients are pumped throughout the body. Sweating is like a mini facial for the skin as pores temporarily expand and are cleared of built-up gunk. Follow your workout with a face wash to wipe away the excess dirt and ensure your healthiest and most luminous skin yet!

6. Exercise may protect telomeres, the tiny caps on the end of chromosomes. This appears to slow the aging of cells.

Think of telomeres as little caps that protect the chromosomes or cells in our body. Having short telomeres means that there is less protection of cells occurring. This has been associated with the onset of age-related diseases and muscle atrophy. Exercise leads to telomeres growing in length, which can help prevent diseases and the effects of aging, meaning that regular exercise can extend your life!

7. Exercise acts as a miracle drug.

Exercise – or any form of physical activity that gets your heart rate up, can lead to improvements in the body's reaction to everything from chronic diseases and major illnesses to the common cold. Exercise can raise energy levels, allowing you to experience more stamina to enjoy all the things you love in life. Become regularly physically active to live life as your best self!

This article was written by Meredith Meppen, EFNEP Staff Assistant with USU Extension

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