

Why Exercise?

The question “why exercise?” is a common one among people of all ages, particularly amongst those that do not exercise. Here are a few of the reasons that have strong clinical and research outcomes to back them up.

- **Longevity and quality of Life** – for people that are looking to live longer and better, exercise appears to be a significant part of the “fountain of youth”.
- **New brain cell development, improved cognition and memory** – often as we age, our ability to learn new things, and retain, remember, and recall information slows or becomes compromised. Exercise has been shown to improve these functions and actually cause the formation of new brain cells and brain cell interconnections.
- **Improved sexual function and better sex life** – this has been shown to improve as a result of regular exercise. Most likely it is a combination of physiological and psychological improvements that occur as a result of increased physical fitness.
- **Less depression** – this has strong links to regular physical activity. It may act as a strong stress management method as well as cause changes in the neurotransmitters and receptors in the brain and central nervous system, which act to influence mood.
- **Cardiovascular health** – the effect of exercise has significant potential impact on this component of health. Predominately by its ability to influence the following:
 - **Cholesterol lowering effect** – exercise has been shown to lower the LDL (low density lipoprotein) and raise the HDL (high density lipoprotein) cholesterol levels. The LDL’s generally are thought to increase heart disease risk while the HDL’s are thought to decrease heart disease risk. Exercise influences their levels in a positive way.
 - **Prevention and control of diabetes** – exercise can lower blood sugar levels in part by influencing the insulin receptors located on cells. Exercise increases insulin receptor number and sensitivity, which then

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- allows the insulin present to have greater action, thus lowering blood sugar levels. It also makes it easier on the pancreas, because as the activity of the insulin improves, it does not have to produce as much to get the job done. Basically, in someone with insulin resistance or diabetes, the nutrients (sugars, proteins, fats) are elevated in the blood stream because they are not able to be transported into the cells. Insulin is a key that helps to unlock the cells and allows the nutrients to enter. Improving the action of insulin allows the cells to obtain the nutrients from the blood, thereby lowering the blood levels and decreasing the damaging effects of diabetes.
- **Blood pressure lowering** – exercise can help to lower elevated blood pressure. This is thought to occur in part due to changes in the ability of blood vessels to dilate related to chemicals mediated by exercise as well as mechanical and autonomic nervous system changes.
 - **Reduced risk of stroke** – exercise can help reduce the risk of stroke by many factors including decreasing blood pressure, improving blood sugar levels, and preventing clot formation.
 - **Weight control – increases LBM (Lean Body Mass), decreases FM (Fat Mass)** – exercise improves body weight proportions in part by increasing the number of calories being expended – contributing to fat loss, changes the hormonal environment and increases protein synthesis to favor muscle gain and promote fat loss, and increases the number and activity of sub-cellular organelles called *mitochondria*, which is where fat metabolism occurs. So, the more aerobically fit you are, the easier it is for you to use your fat stores for energy.
 - **Muscle strength and balance** – exercise improves how the nervous system recruits and uses your muscles, and over time this allows strength and balance to be improved.
 - **Bone density and strength** – exercise can help prevent or slow the development of osteopenia and osteoporosis. It does this in part by causing

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mechanical forces and hormonal changes to positively influence the formation and retention of bone mass and its strength.

- **Better night sleep, less anxiety** – exercise has been shown to improve sleep patterns and lower anxiety levels in part by regulating brain wave activity and by changing neurotransmitter levels. Once sleep improves and anxiety lessens, tremendous positive changes may occur throughout your body as recovery and restoration are markedly improved.

So, if you are posing the question, “why exercise?” the best answer just may be, “For the health of it!”