



Health is a treasure

Exercise Part 1 of 3

by Donald R. Hall, DrPH, CHES

A simple slogan for good health is to “Eat Right and Exercise.” Like two oars on a boat, eating and exercise work together to keep us healthy. Let’s consider the counterpart of a good diet—Exercise!

Here is a list of well-researched reasons why you will want to be physically active!^{1,2}

1. Improves the heart and arteries. The heart and arteries are largely muscle. Regular physical activity strengthens the heart and arteries.

- Lower blood pressure. Physical activity trains the arteries to expand to let more blood through. This relaxes the artery, decreasing resistance and blood pressure.
- Muscles will have more capillaries (the smallest arteries) improving oxygen delivery as well as other nutrients to all cells, thus lowering the work of the heart.

2. Helps prevent and control major diseases.

- Helps control blood pressure. If you have high blood pressure but exercise regularly, you cut your risk of a heart attack in half.
- Strengthens the bones decreasing the risk for osteoporosis and fractures later in life.
- Lowers risk of diabetes. One study showed that sedentary people were four times as likely to develop diabetes compared to active people. Regular physical activity reduces the body’s insulin needs and improves the way the body handles blood sugar.
- Helps control/prevent obesity. Physical activity helps burn excess calories to control weight and reduces the risks associated with obesity even if weight does not decrease. Exercise also builds muscle (your lean body weight) which increases metabolism so you burn more calories all day long, even when sleeping.
- Physical activity improves the way the body handles blood fats (increasing HDL cholesterol which protects the arteries from a cholesterol buildup, and lowers

Of all temporal possessions health is the most precious. Wealth, learning, and honor are dearly purchased at the loss of health. None of these can secure happiness if health is lacking. CDF 20

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blood triglycerides, blood fats that increase risk of clotting when high).

- Decreases your chance of dying early from heart attack, diabetes, breast cancer, colon cancer, and stroke.



3. Enhances your quality of life.

- Regular activity decreases feelings of anxiety and depression. It also enhances mood and helps you feel happier. This may be due partly to the affect of endorphins released in the brain due to exercise. Runners often talk about the natural “runners high” a feeling of euphoria following physical activity.

- Boosts self-esteem and feelings of well being. Accomplishing goals and meeting physical challenges seems to carry over into mental health, helping you feel more confident.

- Improves muscle strength, tone, and body shape. Exercise helps you look and feel your best. It also helps prevent injury to muscles, ligaments, and joints by keeping them stronger.

4. Decreases risk of early death and increases longevity.

Many studies show that active people have lower rates of early death. They live significantly longer. One study of over half a million people showed that sedentary women were 43% more likely to die mid-life than active women and sedentary men were twice as likely to die mid-life compared to active men.

Invest in your health. Plan for an active lifestyle. Shoot for at least 30 minutes of physical activity on most days, daily when possible. You are worth it!

1. American College of Sports Medicine, Guidelines for Exercise Testing and Prescription, Sixth Edition, 2000, Lippencott Williams and Wilkens, Philadelphia
2. Dietary Guidelines for Americans, 2000.

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