The Benefits of Exercise

Exercise is good for your physical and mental health. It can help you build a lean body, strong muscles, and a strong heart. It can also enhance your mental health.

Before you begin a new exercise program you should check with your doctor to make sure it is safe for you to do so. If you have chronic problems like back pain, falls or osteoporosis, a physical therapist (PT) can help you get into a good routine.

For the most health benefits, you should do 20-30 minutes of aerobics (running, swimming, or biking) three or more times a week. You should also do some kind of muscle strength training and stretching at least twice a week. If you can't do that, doing a half hour or more of moderate activity at least five times a week is still helpful.

You can begin by doing light stretches and taking a walk around the block. Try parking farther from the door. Hide the remote control and get up to change the channel. Take the stairs instead of the elevator. Even small changes can be helpful.

Physical Benefits of Exercise

- **Heart disease and stroke.** Daily exercise can help prevent heart disease and stroke. It can strengthen your heart, lower blood pressure, raise HDL (good cholesterol) levels, lower LDL (bad cholesterol) levels, improve blood flow.
- **Blood pressure.** It can lower blood pressure. It also reduces body fat, which is linked with high blood pressure.
- **Type 2 diabetes.** It can help prevent this type of diabetes by keeping your weight under control. It may also improve your blood sugars.
- **Obesity.** It helps to reduce body fat, build or preserve muscle mass, and improve how your body uses calories. When combined with a healthy diet, you can help control weight and prevent obesity.
- **Back pain.** It helps to prevent back pain. It increases muscle strength and endurance and improves posture. It can also help you become more flexible.
- **Osteoporosis.** Weight bearing exercise promotes bone growth and may prevent bone loss common with aging.
- **Falling.** Exercise and strength training can help older adults stay independent and reduce the risk of falls.
- **Cancer.** It may decrease your risk of colon cancer.
- **Osteoarthritis.** Exercise and strength training can help you stay independent and lower your risk of other chronic diseases. It can also help maintain a healthy body weight.

Mental Health Benefits of Exercise

- **Depression.** Short and long term exercise can reduce depression. This effect begins as early as the first session and lasts beyond the end of the exercise program. It works best when combined with psychotherapy or medicine.

- **Anxiety.** It can reduce all types of anxiety. Aerobic (running, swimming, or biking) works best if you do it for at least 10 weeks.
- **Sleep.** It helps you get a restful sleep. It increases total sleep time and decreases REM sleep, a less restful form of sleep. It has the biggest impact on sleep among women who were unfit or older, and when done longer and early in the day.
- **Other benefits.** Even an eight minute workout can help lower sadness, tension, and anger. Many people work out to feel good about themselves and to relieve stress. As you work out, the release of endorphins, can increase feelings of happiness.

To Find Out More
https://www.hhs.gov/fitness/be-active/physical-activity-guidelines-for-americans/index.html

My Exercise Plan

Sample

I plan to:
Bike for 20 minutes on Monday, Thursday and Saturday. _____
Do stretching exercises on Tuesday and Sunday._____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

Your health care team may have given you this information as part of your care. If so, please use it and call if you have any questions. If this information was not given to you as part of your care, please check with your doctor. This is not medical advice. This is not to be used for diagnosis or treatment of any medical condition. Because each person's health needs are different, you should talk with your doctor or others on your health care team when using this information. If you have an emergency, please call 911. Copyright © 1/2024 University of Wisconsin Hospitals and Clinics Authority. All rights reserved. Produced by the Department of Nursing. HF#6246