

Wonder why exercise is really that important?

We can help!

**PHYSIOTHERAPY
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We often hear reports and discussions on how important exercise is for us, particularly managing our weight. It is also important for stress management, circulation, energy levels, muscle and bone development, ability to concentrate, sleep patterns and so many more aspects of health and wellness. Three of the major health risks and how exercise has its impact are discussed here; however, the list really is endless as to how exercise is good for us.

First of all, regular cardiovascular exercise helps to keep the heart and blood vessels fit and working properly. It is important for blood vessels to remain flexible and keep their elastic properties. An exercised heart does not have to beat as often or as hard to distribute the amount of blood required by the body. Also, an exercised heart will have a lower resting heart rate resulting in less stress on the blood vessels over a longer period of time. Decreased stress on the vessels throughout the body helps



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decrease the sticky plaques floating around in the blood from attaching to the artery and causing a blockage (potentially resulting in a heart attack). Also, these plaques that do adhere can grow over time and then become dislodged into the blood stream again to cause a blockage further along in a smaller artery (potentially resulting in a stroke).

Secondly, daily exercise can help control your blood glucose (sugar) levels and help to fend off diabetes. We can become diabetic due to hereditary reasons and exercise may help control the amount of insulin required but likely wouldn't prevent someone from becoming diabetic if strong hereditary factors are present. Many people become diabetic due to the lifestyle we lead; eating a diet high in refined sugars, not getting enough regular exercise and carrying excess body weight, particularly on our midsection. Regular daily exercise helps the body to metabolize sugars within the blood stream decreasing the burden on the pancreas to release large amounts of insulin to counter the sugars we eat and drink. When the body uses the sugars within the blood stream as we ingest them our body does not have to store these sugars long term in fat cells helping to minimize weight gain.

Exercise also helps to release fat from cells in the body to also be used as a fuel source and this will gradually result in weight loss over time.

The third major health risk that exercise can help manage is your cholesterol. Measures of cholesterol levels are comprised of two parts; HDL (high density lipoprotein) and LDL (low density lipoprotein). The HDL we have within the body is what we often refer to as our "good" cholesterol as we need this cholesterol for building cells within the body and many other bodily functions. The LDL is what is often referred to as the "bad" cholesterol as it can contribute to the buildup of plaques within the arteries and lead to heart disease. Consistent daily exercise has been shown to gradually increase the amount of HDL in the body and decrease the amount of LDL. Although the effectiveness of exercise on cholesterol may be slower and less than the effect on blood pressure or blood glucose levels it still plays its role in cholesterol management in combination with proper medications.

The minimum recommendation to improve cardiovascular health is 30-60 minutes of exercise at a moderate intensity 4-6 days/week. Moderate intensity is raising your heart rate to 60-70% of your maximum heart rate. Simply put, you should feel like you are getting warm and beginning to sweat a bit and be able to carry on a conversation but huffing and puffing a bit is good thing so long as you feel okay. Remember, you can break these exercise times up into several, shorter duration (10-15 minute) workouts throughout the day. Simple activities such as walking, using the stairs instead of elevators, parking further from the door, avoiding drive-through lines and walking to the mailbox instead of driving are excellent ways of increasing activity without demanding too much extra time. Keep in mind, however, that to really make a difference in your health you are going to have to make a conscious effort to work your heart.



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