



Why Should You Exercise?

Exercise can help you feel better, enjoy life to the fullest, live longer and healthier. One study at the Cooper Institute found that a person's fitness level was more important than body weight. Men in the study who were overweight or obese but who were physically fit had a lower risk of death than men who were a healthy weight but were not physically fit.¹

Aerobics

Aerobic exercise, which involves or improves oxygen consumption by the body, is generally performed at a moderate level of intensity for an extended period of time. Examples include walking, jogging, swimming, bicycling, stair climbing, and cross country skiing.

According to the Mayo Clinic, aerobic activity can help you:

- 1. Keep excess pounds at bay.** Combined with a healthy diet, aerobic exercise helps you lose weight—and keep it off.
- 2. Increase your stamina.** Aerobic exercise may make you tired in the short term. But over the long term, you'll enjoy increased stamina and reduced fatigue.
- 3. Ward off viral illnesses.** Aerobic exercise activates your immune system, leaving you less susceptible to minor viral illnesses, such as colds and flu.
- 4. Reduce health risks.** Aerobic exercise reduces the risk of many conditions, including obesity, heart disease, high blood pressure, type 2 diabetes, stroke and certain types of cancer. Weight-bearing aerobic exercises, such as walking, reduce the risk of osteoporosis.
- 5. Manage chronic conditions.** Aerobic exercise helps lower high blood pressure and control blood sugar. If you've had a heart attack, aerobic exercise helps prevent subsequent attacks.
- 6. Strengthen your heart.** A stronger heart doesn't need to beat as fast. A stronger heart also pumps blood more efficiently, which improves blood flow to all parts of your body.
- 7. Keep your arteries clear.** Aerobic exercise boosts your high-density lipoprotein (HDL), or "good," cholesterol and lowers your low-density lipoprotein (LDL), or "bad," cholesterol. The potential result? Less buildup of plaque in your arteries.
- 8. Boost your mood.** Aerobic exercise can ease the gloominess of depression, reduce the tension associated with anxiety, and promote relaxation.
- 9. Stay active and independent as you get older.** Aerobic exercise keeps your muscles strong, which can help you maintain mobility as you get older. Aerobic exercise also keeps your mind sharp. At least 30 minutes of aerobic exercise three days a week seems to reduce cognitive decline in older adults.
- 10. Live longer.** People who participate in regular aerobic exercise appear to live longer than those who don't exercise regularly.

¹ Barlow CE, et al. (1995). Physical fitness, mortality, and obesity. *International Journal of Obesity and Related Metabolic Disorders*, 19(Suppl 4): S41–S44.

