

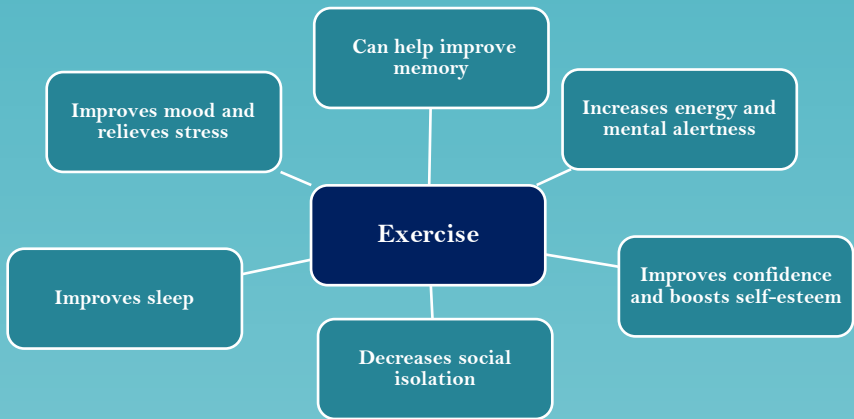
Exercise and Mental Health

How does exercise impact our mental health?



A growing body of research supports that regularly incorporating exercise into your routine can have a positive impact on alleviating mild to moderate symptoms of anxiety, depression, and other mental health conditions. There are several psychological and social benefits associated with exercising regularly. Researchers hypothesize that exercise

stimulates endorphin release in the brain. Endorphins are hormones that reduce the perception of pain and boost feelings of pleasure. The euphoric feeling you may have experienced after exercise or moderate physical activity is triggered by the release of endorphins in your brain!



How much exercise do we need?

Studies show that rhythmic, aerobic exercises such as jogging, swimming, cycling, and walking, of moderate to low intensity cause the largest improvements in reducing depression and anxiety symptoms. Most studies found that 15-30 minutes of exercise at a minimum of three times a week significantly improved symptoms in patients with elevated anxiety and depression levels.

Aerobic
Activities

Low Intensity

15-30 Minutes

Three or more
times/week

**Consult with your primary healthcare provider before beginning a new exercise routine.*

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Tips for Incorporating Exercise into your Routine

- ✓ **Plan ahead.** Create a schedule and map out when you would like to incorporate exercise into your week. You can also plan the type of exercise you would like to do in advance. Planning in advance introduces accountability and can increase your motivation.
- ✓ **Keep it short.** If your free time is limited, take a brisk 10-15 minute walk during breaks at work or school. Studies have found the same improvement on mental health conditions even when study participants break up their exercise sessions into several smaller exercise periods.
- ✓ **Make exercise a social activity.** Take a family walk after dinner, or ask a friend if they would like to join you for a workout. This helps decrease social isolation and helps build your support network, which is crucial for those dealing with depression and anxiety.
- ✓ **Choose exercises that you enjoy.** Studies suggest that any form of moderate exercise can help reduce depression and anxiety. If you don't have access to a gym/exercise equipment, dancing, gardening, and even activities like housework such as sweeping, or mopping can get elevate your heart rate and stimulate endorphin release.
- ✓ **Change up your exercise routine often.** Repeating the same types of exercise can get boring. Trying a new activity at your local gym or community center is great way to break out of an exercise rut and meet new people.
- ✓ **Be consistent.** Introducing exercise into your routine can be difficult at first, but the more you exercise, the more likely it will become a part of your lifestyle!



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