

EXERCISE: NOT JUST A BODY BENEFIT



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The Benefits of Exercise

You think exercise is all about losing weight and toning your abs? Science shows that regular exercise can help the body produce and release nitric oxide and endorphins. So basically, it can also help to make you happier and smarter as well...bonus!!

In the late 1980's researchers discovered that human cells produce nitric oxide and use it to communicate with other cells. Abnormalities in the body's production of nitric oxide have been linked with high blood pressure, atherosclerosis, diabetes, impotence and stroke.

In the body, nitric oxide is generated through the action of enzyme systems called nitric oxide synthase. The enzyme uses a common amino acid, L-arginine, and converts it to nitric oxide. This process takes place in many cells and tissues. The nitric oxide then regulates many body functions including: blood pressure, respiration, blood clotting, bacterial killing, brain and sexual function. Blood vessels continuously generate small amounts of nitric oxide that cause the vessels to widen and greatly increase blood flow. At the same time, some of the nitric oxide interacts with blood platelets, the elements in the blood stream responsible for clotting. This causes the platelets to become less reactive and prevent their clotting of important blood vessels such as those feeding the brain or heart. By opening blood vessels and increasing blood flow, nitric oxide can also relieve impotence.

In the lung blood vessels, nitric oxide improves the amount of oxygen that the lungs deliver to the blood. An important part of the body's defenses against microbial invasion relies upon the production of nitric oxide. Nitric oxide is a major component of the body's policing against infections. The process of memory formation within the brain can also be nitric oxide dependent. Specific cells within the brain produce nitric oxide that can reinforce memory storage.

Regular exercise helps increase or enhance nitric oxide production in the body; and the more nitric oxide that is produced, the more protection you have against cardiovascular disease and many other diseases. For individuals who have problems with inflammation, studies indicate the release of nitric oxide can also work as a natural anti-inflammatory.

Regular exercise can also help the body to produce and release endorphins. Endorphins are a group of substances formed within the body and are normally released during exercise. They naturally relieve pain and work as a natural anti-depressant. Endorphins have a similar action as morphine and codeine without the side effects.

Jumping on the treadmill or cross trainer for just 30 minutes can blow off tension by increasing levels of “soothing” brain chemicals such as serotonin, dopamine, and norepinephrine. Exercise also appears to stimulate the growth of neurons in certain brain regions damaged by depression.

Exercise increases the level of brain chemicals called growth factors, which help to make new brain cells as well as establish new connections between brain cells, helping us to learn. Even mild exercise such as a leisurely walk can help to keep your brain fit and active, fending off memory loss and keeping skills like vocabulary retrieval strong.

So really, with all these wonderful reasons to exercise, including the obvious ones such as toned abs and a healthy body, what could possibly be a reason not to start today on your journey to a better you?