

Q. Can exercise help treat depression?

A. Yes. Your brain responds to exercise in positive ways that can boost your mood.¹

Ever have one of those days where you're feeling down?

- You know something isn't right.
- You're sad or anxious.
- You're not sleeping well.
- Maybe you don't have any energy.
- Your appetite has changed, or...
- You've lost interest in things you used to enjoy.

A day or two of feeling down doesn't mean you're depressed. But if you feel down for more than two weeks, you might be suffering from depression.

An estimated 11.5 percent of adults in the U.S. have experienced mild to severe depression in the last two weeks.²

Maybe it's the daily grind that's getting to you. Or maybe it's something bigger like the death of a loved one, job loss, family matters, financial issues, or serious illness. You can even feel depressed for no apparent reason.

Common factors linked to depression include:

- Genetics
- Personal problems
- Social isolation
- Substance abuse



Get Moving to Beat the Blues

If you're feeling depressed, the two most common forms of treatment include:

- **Counseling.** A trained professional can help you change negative thought patterns. Counseling can help you learn skills to train your brain to think differently, too.
- **Medication:** About 1 in 8 adults in the United States take antidepressants.³ Antidepressants alter chemicals in your brain to improve your mood and reduce feelings of sadness and hopelessness.

Exercise is medicine for your mood

Besides counseling and medication, there's at least one other way to treat depression and boost your mood: Exercise.

In a recent study, researchers looked at the connection between exercise and depression in 33,908 adults over an 11-year period.⁴ They found that:

- **No exercise** increases the risk for developing depression by 44 percent, compared to people who exercise at least 1 hour per week.

ASK THE Wellness DOCTOR

- **Regular exercise** can help treat and prevent depression.
- **Just one hour of physical activity a week** (less than 10 minutes a day) can improve mood and reduce depression.

Need a dose of something to improve your mood?

- **Here's your prescription:** Stop reading this right now. Go for a walk. And make it a daily habit.
- **Side effects:** You'll feel better, burn extra calories, and improve your physical and mental health. Exercise is medicine.

References

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