

Adult Health Bulletin



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THIS MONTH'S TOPIC: THE BENEFITS OF PHYSICAL ACTIVITY



Many people know that there are benefits to physical activity for all ages, but many do not know what those benefits truly are. The Department of Health and Human Services has reviewed many scientific studies and acknowledged the following benefits of regular physical activity.

Adults and older adults

For adults and older adults there is strong data showing physical activity will lower the risk of heart disease. It can increase the ability of the heart to function and make muscles stronger for everyday activities such as walking up steps and picking up heavy objects around the home. There is also strong evidence that physical activity lowers the risks of stroke, type 2 diabetes, high blood pressure and cancers of the colon and the breast.

There is also strong evidence that regular

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physical activity will prevent weight gain. It is not the physical activity alone, but the combination of exercise and eating right, that help us lose weight.

For older adults there is strong evidence that physical activity aids in fall prevention, reduced depression and better mental function. Some studies show exercising can even lower the risk of hip fracture and increase bone density. The risk of osteoporosis is also greater in women who are not physically active.

There are several studies linking exercise and physical activity with better sleeping habits. Getting a good night's sleep is important to overall well-being.

Children and teens

Children also benefit from physical activity. The recommended amount of activity for children, ages 6-17, is at least one hour or more a day. Exercise can help develop stronger hearts and lungs, as well as stronger muscles. Children who participate in

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regular physical activity also have better bone health. There are some studies showing that exercise can ease worries children sometimes feel, and reduce depression in teens.

For all people, some activity is better than none. In order to maintain an activity, it is important to choose one you enjoy. Physical activity is usually safe for all people, however if you have questions or concerns, a visit to your doctor is suggested. If you have a chronic condition, it is important to visit with your doctor before starting any new exercise program.

SOURCES:

Department of Health and Human Services. *The Basics: Get Active*. <http://www.healthfinder.gov/HealthTopics/Category/nutrition-and-physical-activity/physical-activity/get-active>

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