

Exercise During the Pandemic

Everyone knows that regular exercise is important. Most people think of how it affects them physically. However, it also affects you mentally. During these trying times it is important to stay physically active for many reasons, like the obvious physical reasons such as fighting obesity, helping with chronic health conditions, boosting the immune system and helping with balance and flexibility, just to name a few. Let's take a look at some ways exercise also helps our mind.

Exercise reduces stress and anxiety. It boosts mood by releasing a hormone called endorphins. Endorphins are known as the body's natural feel-good hormone. This helps make problems we are encountering seem more manageable. This is also what causes feelings such as "runner's high" and what makes you feel so good after a good workout. All of this adds up to helping individual reduce their stress levels and build emotional resilience.

Believe it or not, exercise helps to improve your sleep patterns as well. Regular exercise helps you fall asleep faster and even improves your sleep quality which, in turn, helps boost your immune system as well. It is not fully known or understood why exercise helps with sleep, but there are some theories. One is that it helps with stress reduction, allowing the body the ability to fall asleep faster and into a deeper state of sleep. This then helps rejuvenate the body for tomorrow.

It is becoming increasingly recognized that exercise is also necessary for helping people with their mental health and can even be a factor in treating chronic mental illnesses. Evidence shows that exercise reduces the likelihood of depression and helps maintain mental health as we get older. Exercise can also be used as a treatment option. Exercise can be as effective as medications for a wide range of conditions like mild to moderate depression, dementia, and anxiety. There is also evidence supporting that it helps reduce cognitive issues like schizophrenia.

So how long does one need to exercise before starting to reap the benefits? In order to feel the benefits of exercise to the fullest, you need to do aerobic exercises three or more times a week for 45-60 minutes per day. Positive effects will usually start to be noticed by week four of consistent exercise, with the most anti-depressant effect happening around the 10-12 week point of consistent exercise.

Now that you know some of the benefits of exercise, how do you exercise during a pandemic especially when you are advised to avoid gyms? One way is to go outside. You can go for a walk, a run, or find other ways to exercise while also getting some great Vitamin D from the sun, which is also helpful with mental health. Being outdoors also provides an opportunity to engage in activities with your family

outside of your house. Many gyms and workout programs are also offering virtual exercise classes. If money is an issue, there are a lot of great workout videos on YouTube.

We all need to continue to improve physically and mentally. Exercise is a great way to do so, but you must also challenge yourself to get better from day to day and week to week. It will also give you a sense of accomplishment and something to be proud of in these trying times. Exercise not only for your body but for your brain as well.

References:

Exercise is Essential for Well-Being During COVID-19 Pandemic

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