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TALK™

SUMMER 2016



## Exercise as an EFFECTIVE TREATMENT?



AND IT ONLY TAKES 30 MINUTES...

It's common knowledge that routine exercise helps improve your cardiovascular health, builds muscle, and prevents excess weight gain. But the benefits of exercise seem to go well beyond the physical. Interestingly enough, more and more research is coming forward and suggesting that exercise has many above-the-neck benefits too. For the past decade or so, scientists, medical professionals and various scholars have been pondering how exercise can boost brain function and make us feel good mentally in addition to physically. Regardless of age or fitness level (so everyone from mall-walkers to marathon runners), studies seem to show that making time for exercise provides some serious mental health benefits. So, if you're looking for an excuse to skip the gym after work, you're not going to find it here!

Speaking of your brain, exercise has proven to be an effective part of treatment for many forms of mental health related issues – which can impact roughly 20 per cent of all Canadians<sup>1</sup>. According to a review by University of Toronto PhD candidate George Mammen, getting up and at 'em on a regular basis can actually help you prevent depression in the long run<sup>2</sup>. Mammen analyzed over 26 years of research to conclude that even the most moderate levels of activity for just 20 to 30 minutes a day can do the trick. This information is music to the ears of mental-health experts as treatments can vary depending on the individual – and the more information that comes forward the more treatments there are for individuals suffering from mental health related issues.

In the case of general anxiety, regular exercise such as cycling or gym-based aerobic, resistance, flexibility and even balance exercises can reduce symptoms by making your brain's "fight or flight" system less reactive<sup>3</sup>. When anxious individuals are exposed to situations or changes they fear, they take on a number of physical symptoms including rapid heartbeat, difficulty breathing and excessive sweating, which can ultimately trigger an unwanted panic attack. Through regular aerobic exercise, however, individuals can develop a tolerance for such symptoms and that can make the "fight" in the "fight or flight" system far more appealing.

But we're not just talking rigorous physical activity here. Meditative movement has been shown to alleviate depressive systems<sup>4</sup>. This type of movement invites the individual to pay close attention to their bodily sensations and internal movements (such as subtle changes in heart rate or breathing). Practicing mindful meditation or frequent yoga sessions can help with this. After all, your mind and body are intimately connected! And while yes, your brain is indeed the master control system, the way you move can indeed affect the way you think...and feel.

And it doesn't stop here. Back in March, a study published in The Journal of Alzheimer's Disease noted that physical activity – regular walking, cycling, swimming, dancing and even gardening – may substantially reduce the risk of Alzheimer's<sup>5</sup>. Yep, that's right – your memory may also be affected in all of this. So just how new is this information? Well, while exercise has certainly been linked to better mental capacity in older people in the past, very little research has actually been done to track these individuals over the years, especially in the form of routine MRI scans. For this particular study, a number of researchers at the University of California analyzed data beginning in 1989 which has evaluated almost 6,000 older men and women!

So the next time you're choosing between sleeping in and going for a quick morning jog, keep in mind that working up a sweat is doing both your body and mind a bigger favour than you may have ever realized...

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\* Tricks, skills or shortcuts that are meant to increase a person's productivity or efficiency in their everyday lives

# HACKS <sup>\*</sup>4 A healthier WORK WEEK Summer!



It's summer, which is synonymous with 'beach bod'. Keeping that in mind, we'll try and go the extra mile to do what we can to lose weight outside of the gym. We see fitness-y words (or even an image of a running shoe) on a package label and subconsciously feel like we've done some work to benefit our health, and are quick to pat ourselves on the back for selecting the 'healthier' option. What we usually are not aware of, however, are the changes this might cause in our behavior later on. Be on the lookout for truly healthy fuel choices, and don't be fooled by buzz words or imagery!

## Sources:

<sup>1</sup> Canadian Mental Health Association <http://www.cmha.ca/media/fast-facts-about-mental-illness/#.V3GT0PkrLRZ>

<sup>2</sup> Mammen, G, Faulkner, G., "Physically Activity and the Prevention of Depression." American Journal of Preventive Medicine, 2013 Nov;45(5):649-657. [http://www.ajpmonline.org/article/S0749-3797\(13\)00451-0/abstract](http://www.ajpmonline.org/article/S0749-3797(13)00451-0/abstract)

<sup>3</sup> Pillay S., "How simply moving benefits your mental health. Harvard Health Publications". 2016. Available at: <http://www.health.harvard.edu/blog/how-simply-moving-benefits-your-mental-health-201603289350>

<sup>4</sup> Cooney GM, Dwan K, Greig CA, Lawlor DA, Rimer J, Waugh FR, McMurdo M, Mead GE., "Exercise for Depression" Cochrane Database Syst Rev. 2013 Sep 12;(9):CD004366. doi: 10.1002/14651858.CD004366.pub6. <http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/24026850>

<sup>5</sup> Raji CA, Merrill DA, Eyre H, Mallam S, Torosyan N, Erickson K, Lopez OL, Becker JT, Carmichael OT, Gach HM, Thompson PM, Longstreth WT, Kuller LH., "Longitudinal Relationships between Caloric Expenditure and Gray Matter in the Cardiovascular Health Study." J Alzheimers Dis, 2016 Mar 11;52(2):719-29.

# Did you know?

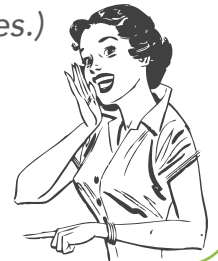


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**Psst!** Want to be featured on ATP? Tweet us (@GSC\_1957) or shoot us an e-mail at [askthepharmacist@greenshield.ca](mailto:askthepharmacist@greenshield.ca).

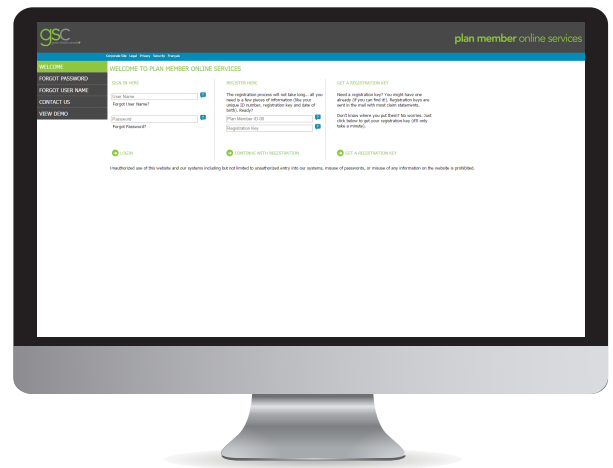
# darn' good HEALTH ADVICE

You can either laugh or cry.  
*(Laughing burns more calories.)*



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