

[IMAGE]

Can Exercise Help Beat Depression?

By Editorial Staff

Whether you've been diagnosed with mild to moderate depression or not, your likelihood of experiencing symptoms such as persistent low mood, feelings of sadness, fatigue, sleep pattern disturbances and difficulty concentrating decline if resistance exercise (weight and strength training) is a part of your regular routine. That's the conclusion from a research review published in *JAMA Psychiatry*, a journal of the American Medical Association, that analyzed 33 previous studies.

In total, the studies encompassed nearly 1,900 adults, approximately half of whom had been randomly assigned to participate in resistance training programs, while the other half were inactive during the tracking period. Participating in resistance workouts was associated with fewer depression symptoms whether or not the subject had an existing mental health problem; however, exercise had the greatest symptom impact on subjects with mild to moderate depression. The impact of resistance exercise on depression symptoms also appeared to be independent of how often the study subjects exercised, or whether they improved muscle strength or mass.

Exercise (not just resistance exercise) may reduce depression symptoms courtesy of the following mechanisms:

- Releases "feel-good" brain chemicals (neurotransmitters, endorphins and endocannabinoids)
- Reduces immune-system chemicals that have been implicated in depression
- Increases body temperature, which may provide a sense of calm, reducing anxiety
- Helps you deal with your depression in a healthy, productive way
- Boosts self-confidence, which can make you feel better about yourself
- May provide for more social interaction, improving your mood

Talk to your doctor for more information regarding the health and wellness benefits of consistent exercise and how exercise (and other nondrug strategies) can help you beat the blues. Antidepressant medications continue to be a first-line treatment for depression, but evidence suggests these drugs also may increase the risk of suicidal thoughts or behavior, particularly in children and adults younger than age 25.

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