



Fitness Frontline

# The benefits of physical activity



- self-paced learning module -

### **Incorporating**

- The Benefits of Physical Activity
- The Seven Habits of fit and Healthy People
- The Seven Habits of Aerobically Fit People  
Keep in mind that if you move quickly between strength machines in the gym you will elevate your pulse-rate into an aerobic fitness zone

### **The Benefits of Physical Activity**

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August 2025

Published by Miller Health Pty Ltd

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## The benefits of physical activity

In affluent societies, regular, systematic, physical activity, both vigorous and gentle has a positive effect on all of the major body systems and along with diet and stress management is the foundation of good health.

### **Feel better**

The most immediate benefit of physical activity is that you feel better. The mind is just another body system, and like all body systems works better when you're aerobically fit.

### **Increased aerobic efficiency and capacity**

You can expect a rapid improvement in aerobic efficiency once you start to train. This means that the efficiency of the process of getting oxygen to every cell in your body becomes more efficient. It's one of the reasons you feel better.

### **Stimulate the elimination system**

The main players in the body's elimination system are the lungs, perspiratory system, lymphatic and blood systems, liver, digestive system and the kidneys.

### **Cool down an over stimulated sympathetic nervous system**

We live in an age when more and more people have over-stimulated sympathetic nervous systems, particularly people cooped up in offices all day. The fight response that starts with the mind and then works through the endocrine system produces muscle tension, constricts blood vessels and alters a range of body functions.

### **Overcome insulin resistance**

The major cause of adult-onset diabetes is insulin resistance in the muscles due to lack of regular, vigorous physical activity. Whilst physical activity will not cure a dysfunctional pancreas it will go a long way toward enabling diabetics to manage type II diabetes without medication. Get your insulin level measured regularly.

### **Warm up an under-stimulated parasympathetic nervous system**

The gentle exercises, yoga, tai chi and walking have the effect of stimulating the parasympathetic nervous system and causing muscles to relax and blood vessels dilate. Endocrine function is restored to more normal levels. You feel better

### **Strengthen the immune system**

Vigorous physical activity stimulates corticosteroid production and the increase of white blood cells. When the immune system is strong, you are more resistant to colds and flu. You have an enhanced ability to deal with allergic reactions and you're less at risk of cancer.

### **Lower incidence of high blood pressure**

Elevated blood pressure is directly related to motion starvation. For the greater proportion of people, training aerobically, with vigor for 40 minutes each day will restore blood pressure to normal.

### **Reduced risk of heart attack**

Cardiac dysfunction usually comes at the end of a long chain of dysfunctions (autonomic nervous system, elimination system, liver ...). The status of all these systems is improved by regular, systematic and vigorous physical activity.

### **Clears the respiratory tract**

Every person with a regular aerobic training program knows that physical activity has a wonderful effect on clearing the respiratory tract. One wonders how it gets 'cleaned up' without it.

### **Reduced blood sugar and cholesterol levels**

A key ingredient in a glucose and cholesterol lowering program is regular and systematic vigorous exercise.

### **Stimulates the bowel**

Anyone who runs or exercises with vigor knows that the digestive system works better. One has to wonder at where the gas discharged during activity goes when there is no activity.

### **Fewer headaches**

There is an epidemic of headaches in this country. It is the most popular symptom of poor health that people experience (and ignore). Headaches have many causes. However, what we know is that people who are fit and healthy don't get them nearly as often as those who don't exercise. If you want to have less headaches, do what fit and healthy people. They train.

### **Reduction in body fat**

It is a tough assignment in an affluent society expecting to stay at your ideal weight without a regular fitness training program. Once the activity level drops you can be certain that sooner or later, you'll start stacking on the weight. A reasonable body fat for a man is less than 30% fat, and for women less than 40%.

### **Ease musculo-skeletal dysfunction**

Bones do what muscles tell them to do. In affluent societies there is an epidemic of musculo-skeletal dysfunction caused principally by motion starvation of the skeletal muscles. Strength, flexibility and postural aligning exercises tone muscles, get bones back into position and increase the ability of the body to do the things that normal fit and healthy people take in their stride without breaking down.

### **More oxygen to the brain**

Physical activity ensures that your brain gets more oxygen. This is another reason you feel better.

### **More energy**

There is a universal law which says that if you want more energy you need to use more up.

### **Stimulates the endocrine system to release of a range of 'good' chemicals**

When you exercise with reasonable vigor for about 30 minutes or more, your endocrine system clicks into gear.

One of the better-known effects is the release of endorphins (that is, naturally occurring opiates) from the brain, which brings about a naturally occurring high: - you feel better. You have more energy and vitality.

### **Increased libido**

Regular vigorous physical activity has a wonderful effect on improving libido. A lowered libido is a symptom of poor general health. It is dramatic evidence that a number of body systems are not working properly, from the head down. Increase your aerobic fitness and you'll end up fit as a trout, lean as a greyhound and toey as a Roman sandal!

### **Slows down development of osteoporosis**

Weight bearing exercise is essential for maintaining and increasing bone density.

### **Sleep better**

When you are vigorously physically active you need less sleep and you sleep better.

### **Discipline**

If you can learn the discipline of regularly and systematically exercising your body, it stands you in good stead for disciplining yourself to do other things in your life.

### **Distraction**

You experience an elevated mood state when you interrupt your normal daily routine with physical activity. It's like having your own little escape from reality.

### **Looking after your Self**

Being involved in regular physical activity is the most potent symbol of your ability to give back to your Self.

### **Break down the emotional and physical vicious cycle**

Whereas it is widely recognized that emotional states affect the body (psychosomatic), it is also the case that physiological states affect the emotions (somatopsychic). This is why one of the best things you can do when you're depressed and miserable is to exercise. You feel better.

### **Eat less**

Strange as it may sound, when you exercise regularly, systematically and vigorously you are less inclined to overeat and/or search out those extra high fat/starch/sugar snacks.

### **Social**

One of the great benefits of physical activity is being with other people. People often feel better when they are doing things in the company of other people. The secret of a successful fitness program is having the mutual support of a buddy.

### **Antidote for depression**

In the book 'Healing without Freud or Prozac', psychiatrist, (the late) David Servan Schreiber outlined the case for exercise. He reports a study from researchers at Duke University who compared the anti-depressant effects of jogging with those of Zoloft.

*'After four months patients treated with either approach were doing well. On the other hand, a year later, there was a major difference between the two types of treatment. More than a third of the patients who had been treated with Zoloft had relapsed, whereas 92 percent of those who had followed the jogging program were still doing well.'*

### **Introspection**

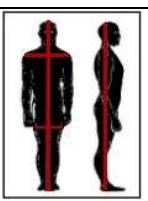
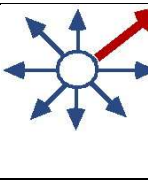
Exercising on your own provides an opportunity for introspection. As Thoreau said about his walks in the forest, *'I never found the companion that was as companionable as solitude.'*

Happiness is the only good. *The time to be happy is now.* The place to happy is here. The way to be happy is to make others so.

Robert Ingersol

## 7 Habits of fit and healthy people

When it comes to health, our objective is to keep the major body systems in good nick, from the individual cells to all the other systems that support their normal, healthy function - including the mind, nervous, immune, endocrine, elimination, cardio-vascular, respiratory, digestive, reproductive, dermal and musculo-skeletal systems ... Keeping these systems in good condition depends on how well we apply the **seven habits of fit and healthy people**.

|                                                                                     |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
|    | <p>1. <b>Keep yourself aerobically fit.</b><br/>Aerobic fitness:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- enhances the process of getting oxygen to every cell of your body</li> <li>- 'cools down' an over-stimulated sympathetic nervous system</li> <li>- stimulates elimination of the waste products of metabolism</li> </ul>                                                 |
|    | <p>2. <b>Keep yourself strong.</b><br/>You need strong muscles to support your skeleton as it goes about everyday tasks (lifting, pushing, pulling ...), without breaking down.</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                    |
|   | <p>3. <b>Keep yourself flexible.</b><br/>You need a regular and systematic flexibility training program, if you are to keep your skeleton in good alignment.<br/><br/>You need to loosen the tight muscles that have taken first your pelvis and then the bones above and below it out of alignment.</p>                                                                               |
|  | <p>4. <b>Eat from the top of the Hourglass</b> – good food at the top, junk down the bottom.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ drink more water</li> <li>▪ balance fat, protein, carbohydrate, fibre intake</li> <li>▪ eat the foods that provide vitamins, minerals ...</li> <li>▪ restrict intake of junk food, particularly flour, sugar and food additives</li> </ul>   |
|  | <p>5. <b>Manage the stress of your life</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ look after your Self</li> <li>▪ work out what you want for the big things in your life</li> <li>▪ maintain balance in your autonomic nervous system</li> <li>▪ keep yourself fit.</li> </ul>                                                                                                  |
|  | <p>6. <b>Manage the stress of your work</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Wouldn't it be good to have a job that you loved doing so much that you'd do it for nothing, but which you did so well you were paid handsomely</li> <li>▪ Find the job that suits your intelligence strengths and your personality.</li> <li>▪ Prepare yourself for your next job</li> </ul> |
|  | <p>7. <b>Meditate</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Relax, close your eyes, take long, slow your breathing down and with every breath you breathe out, feel yourself becoming more and more relaxed.</li> <li>• Gradually relax the muscles from your head down to your toes and then think about nothing for 10 minutes.</li> </ul>                                    |

## 7 Habits of aerobically fit people

It seems to be a tough assignment for most people to maintain the motivation to do the things they need to do to keep fit and healthy. The surgeries of the Western world are littered with the bodies of people who either have never taken part in a fitness program or who started one and then gave it away.

Yet some people do manage to keep their level of motivation up and maintain a long-lasting involvement in a regular and systematic aerobic fitness program. They're the ones that keep themselves fit and healthy; who save themselves an absolute poulitce on medical bills.

Here are the seven things aerobically fit people do to keep themselves focused on the job of keeping aerobically fit. They understand that it is a big ask expecting to stay healthy without keeping themselves fit.

1. **They write down their aerobic fitness goals** and then burn them into their subconscious mind. *'My goal is to get 250 Fitbit zone activity points each week (and my strength and flexibility workout in the gym three times a week).'*
2. **They have a definite program** of what they're going to do, when they're going to do it, who they're going to do it with and for how long. On balance they enjoy what they do. Whilst they may have started off with fear, trepidation and discomfort, for many people the enjoyment came with the development of the exercise habit.
3. **They have an exercise mate** who also doubles up as their coach. They perform the same role for their mate. They're in this together.
4. **They have strategies** for maintaining a high level of interest in their program; for instance, doing things like varying their program, cross training, intervals, exercising in different surroundings, on their own, with other people, joining a class where they have to be there at certain times during the week ... They train for specific events - like a fun run or a monthly fitness test. They're not afraid to make an investment in time, effort, money and thought in the pursuit of their fitness and health goals.
5. **They exercise at a rate they can successfully manage** over a long period of time. They have hard workouts and easy workouts. They're consistent as well as persistent. So, don't train so hard today that you can't train tomorrow. It seems to be a difficult assignment for most people to maintain an exercise routine that has too much pain attached to it. There's a spot at the back of the brain that says, 'Give it away!' if you train too hard, too often.

As for time, 20 minutes is good, 30 minutes is better and 40 minutes is best.

6. **They monitor their progress.** They use a wearable technology as a tool to measure, manage and monitor their aerobic fitness. I use and recommend the Fitbit system of measuring steps, heart rate and the duration and intensity of my workouts. My training is based on the number of Fitbit aerobic zone points I can achieve in a workout. The Fitbit system gives you one point per minute if your heart rate is above (roughly) 65% of your age-related maximum heart rate and 2 points per minute if it's above (roughly) 75% of your maximum heart rate. They establish a benchmark of their aerobic fitness at regular intervals.
7. **They stay focused on the results** they want to achieve. A goal is a dream with a deadline.

So, what is it that's holding you back? What is it that's stopping you from being a regular, systematic and vigorous exerciser? What is it that will cause you to drop out of any fitness program that you embark on? Is it laziness, ignorance, stupidity or attachment to a comfortable way of life?

