

YOUR BRAIN ON EXERCISE



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WELLNESS OBSERVANCES

- NATIONAL KIDNEY MONTH
- NATIONAL NUTRITION MONTH
- MARCH 6-12 NATIONAL SLEEP AWARENESS WEEK
- MARCH 22 WORLD WATER DAY
- MARCH 22 AMERICAN DIABETES ALERT DAY

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Your Brain

ON EXERCISE

It's well known that regular exercise has numerous positive health outcomes for the body, such as strengthening the muscles, bones, heart, and lungs and helping to prevent certain diseases.

One often-overlooked benefit is the impact of physical activity on mental health.

Considering the high prevalence of anxiety, depression, and other mental health conditions worldwide, countless people may benefit from the positive mental health effects of exercise.

HOW DOES EXERCISE IMPACT THE BRAIN?

RELEASES NEUROTRANSMITTERS

Endorphins block pain and increase sensations of pleasure, and exercise certainly increases your endorphin levels. But recent research suggests that the euphoric feeling you get after a hard workout may result from endorphins and endocannabinoids working in tandem.

Endocannabinoids, in particular, are a group of neurotransmitters that are thought to be responsible for that "runner's high" – the feeling of calm euphoria that occurs after a strenuous workout.

Dopamine plays an important role in how you feel pleasure. It's also responsible for other processes in your body, such as regulating heart rate, sleep cycles, mood, attention, motivation, working memory, learning, and pain processing.

PROMOTES NEUROPLASTICITY

Neuroplasticity is the ability of your brain and nervous system to change their activity in response to internal or external stimuli. This plays a huge role in learning new skills, activities, and languages. Some research suggests that exercise can promote neuroplasticity by increasing certain signaling factors.

INCREASES OXYGEN SUPPLY TO THE BRAIN

As your heart starts to pump faster during exercise, it increases the oxygen supply to your brain. This results in certain changes to the blood vessels of your brain, promoting potential improvements in executive function, which includes working memory, flexible thinking, and self-control. In a 2021 study in 48 adults with mild cognitive impairment, researchers looked at the impact of exercise on blood flow to the cerebrum. This is the largest part of the brain and is responsible for higher intellectual function, sensory impulses, and motor activity. They found that a 1-year moderate to vigorous exercise program increased cerebral blood flow and reduced the risk of further cognitive decline.

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WHAT ARE SOME MENTAL HEALTH BENEFITS OF EXERCISE?

CAN RELIEVE STRESS

It may be no surprise to you that regular exercise is touted as a potent stress reliever. You may have experienced this firsthand. For example, maybe you've come home from a brutally stressful day at work and decided to hit the gym, and suddenly you've felt a bit of relief. Exercise is thought to reduce stress by reducing levels of stress-related hormones such as cortisol and adrenaline.

MAY IMPROVE SELF CONFIDENCE

Another mental health benefit closely linked with exercise is improved positive personal image and self-confidence. Several studies have found that regular exercise can contribute to an improved body image and better self-compassion.

CAN IMPROVE MOOD

Several studies indicate that performing regular physical activity is associated with a more positive mood and a reduction in negative thoughts.

CAN PROMOTE BETTER SLEEP

Although several factors affect your sleep quality, your level of physical activity appears to be particularly influential. A 2017 review of 34 studies concluded that exercise, regardless of the type, can improve sleep efficiency and duration. What's more, exercise may improve sleep onset latency, or the time it takes you to fall asleep.

PROMOTES SHARPER MEMORY & THINKING

Research suggests that exercising regularly can boost mental clarity and improve working memory and attention span. In addition, exercise has been shown to help reduce cognitive decline in adults over age 50.

Mini Workout

BENEFITS

- **Researchers say adding just 10 minutes of exercise a day can provide significant health benefits.**
- **Experts say exercise is more important as a person gets older because it can slow down the effects of aging.**
- **They say you should pick a type of exercise that best fits your schedule.**
- **You can also start with a small amount and build that up over time.**

Almost anyone can find an extra 10 minutes in their day to exercise. And that might be enough to prolong your life, a new study^{Trusted Source} suggests.

Researchers said that if adults ages 40 to 85 engaged in just 10 additional minutes of moderate to vigorous physical activity a day, it would save 110,000 deaths a year.

Not that you have to stop at 10 minutes.

If the same groups increased their exercise by 20 minutes, it could save 209,459 lives, and 30 minutes could prevent 272,297 deaths, the researchers reported.

MAKING TIME FOR WORKING OUT

Getting over the mental barrier of “needing” a full 30 minutes to work out can be an important one.

Experts say the study supports that notion.

“What happens often is that people become so focused on needing 30 minutes of movement each day that if they can’t dedicate a full 30 for any reason (as opposed to breaking it up throughout the day into 10-minute increments, for example), they’ll end up doing nothing,” Dana Ryan, PhD, director of Sport Performance and Education at Herbalife Nutrition, told Healthline.

“This study linking movement and longevity is a good reminder that some type of exercise or functional movement throughout your day is still always better than doing nothing,” Ryan added.

Dr. Tina Gupta, a health coach and ACE-certified fitness nutrition expert, agreed.

“Ten minutes per day seems nominal,” she told Healthline. “But over a span of a year, it adds up to [a lot more] hours of exercise.”



Ways to MOVE YOUR BODY MORE

TAKE THE STAIRS

I know. This is so boring, and you've heard it a bajillion times. Yet, it's one of the best tips for a reason.

Taking the stairs instead of the elevator increases your heart rate, helps with balance, and improves lower-extremity strength. If you're feeling saucy and have a few minutes, you can even do some heel raises off the edge of a step for calf strength, or take the stairs two at a time.

INCORPORATE WALKING MEETINGS

If you work in an office, take your one-on-one meetings to go. Walking together enhances team bonding, and you may even come up with better ideas. Research shows walking boosts creativity and enhances mental acuity.

LUNGE IT UP

When you're shopping, try walking lunges down the supermarket aisles while holding onto the cart. The cart offers a good balance point, and you can get about 10–20 lunges in a single pass, depending on how long your supermarket's aisles are. Go for it, it's surprisingly fun!

SIT ON AN EXERCISE BALL

Swap out your office chair for a stability ball. This can help with back pain and help improve posture, and while sitting on the ball, you can do some gentle mobility stretches for your neck, pelvis, and spine.

PARK FAR AWAY

While we need to be safe and alert to our surroundings, if you're in a safe and well-lit area, consider parking further from the entrance of wherever you're going. Adding in a few minutes of walking time here and there adds up over time and can increase your daily step count!

EXERCISE OR STRETCH DURING TV TIME

I know this goes beyond all tenets of "binge and chill," but hear me out. Walk on the treadmill, use a stationary bike, stretch on the floor, use weights for upper- and full-body strengthening, or do Pilates during your next Netflix sesh.

HAVE A DANCE PARTY

Clear the furniture from the room and put on some tunes. You can do this while cooking dinner, folding laundry, or vacuuming.

Dancing is a fabulous way to burn calories and work on your balance and coordination. Plus, you can make it a game or contest with your kids. They need to learn about 80s rock, right? Put on some ACDC (or whatever makes you tap your feet) and get shakin'.

Olive Oil vs. Canola Oil

WHICH IS HEALTHIER?

SIMILAR NUTRITION PROFILE

In terms of nutrients, canola and olive oil are quite similar.

The nutrients in 1 tablespoon (15 ml) of canola and regular (refined) olive oil are can be found on the table to the right.

Notably, olive oil provides more saturated and monounsaturated fat, whereas canola oil contains more polyunsaturated fat.

	Canola	Olive
Calories	124	124
Fat	14 grams	14 grams
• Saturated	7%	14%
• Monounsaturated	64%	73%
• Polyunsaturated	28%	11%
Vitamin E	16% of the RDI	13% of the RDI
Vitamin K	8% of the RDI	7% of the RDI

ANTIOXIDANT CONTENT

Canola and olive oil differ significantly in their content of antioxidants, compounds that neutralize potentially harmful molecules called free radicals.

Free radicals are highly unstable and can cause cellular damage when levels get too high in your body. Studies link free radical damage to chronic illnesses, such as heart disease, diabetes, Alzheimer's, and certain cancers. Olive oil boasts over 200 plant compounds, including polyphenols, which act as powerful antioxidants in your body. However, the amount of polyphenols depends on the processing method.

Because the refining process significantly reduces antioxidant content, regular olive oil has a low polyphenol count. Meanwhile, extra virgin olive oil is packed with polyphenols.

These include oleuropein, hydroxytyrosol, and oleocanthal, which are linked to a lower risk of heart disease and reduced inflammation.

CULINARY USES

Olive and canola oils are suitable for pan frying and medium-heat cooking, while canola oil is better for deep frying and high-heat searing. For dips, dressings, and toppings, extra virgin olive oil is preferable due to its strong flavor.

WHICH ONE IS HEALTHIER?

Nutritionally, olive oil — especially extra virgin — is healthier than canola.

People who regularly use olive oil have reduced heart disease risk factors, improved blood sugar levels, and a lower risk of death.

For example, an analysis of 33 studies revealed that people with the highest olive oil intake had a 16% lower risk of type 2 diabetes than those with the lowest intake

Olive oil's benefits can be attributed to its antioxidants and other plant compounds, which are especially abundant in extra virgin varieties. On the other hand, canola oil is highly refined, which drastically reduces its content of nutrients like essential fatty acids and antioxidants.

Mindful Moments

GUIDED MEDITATION FOR STRESS



Nourish

SPICED CARROTS WITH HARISSA YOGURT SAUCE

Recipe From: <https://blog.misfitsmarket.com/2022/02/24/bobby-flays-spiced-carrots-with-a-harissa-yogurt-sauce/>



ingredients

Spice Rub

- 2 teaspoons paprika
- 1 teaspoon ground mustard
- 1/2 teaspoon ground cumin
- 1/2 teaspoon ground fennel
- 2 teaspoons light brown sugar
- Kosher salt and freshly ground black pepper

Carrots

- 1 pound baby carrots, tops removed but with a little green left attached, and peeled
- 1/4 cup olive oil
- 1/2 cup Greek yogurt
- 1–2 tablespoons harissa
- 2 tablespoons fresh flat leaf parsley, chopped and divided
- 1 teaspoon fresh thyme leaves, finely chopped
- 1/2 teaspoon lemon zest, finely grated
- Kosher salt and freshly ground black pepper
- Optional garnish: Mint leaves, hand torn

recipe preparation

- For the spice rub, whisk together the paprika, mustard, cumin, fennel, brown sugar, salt, and pepper in a small bowl until combined. Set aside.
- For the carrots, start by blanching: Bring a large pot of heavily salted water to a boil. Set up a bowl of heavily salted ice water. Blanch the carrots in the boiling water until slightly al dente (still have crunch, about 3 minutes depending upon their size), then plunge them immediately into the ice water for 2 minutes. Drain well and pat dry.
- Place carrots in a large bowl. Drizzle with olive oil, season with salt and pepper, and toss to coat. Add 2 teaspoons of spice rub and toss to coat. For a more robust spice, add another teaspoon of spice rub and toss to coat again.
- Heat a few tablespoons of oil in a cast iron skillet over medium heat until the oil shimmers. Add the carrots and cook until lightly charred on all sides, about 3 minutes per side.
- While carrots are cooking, add the yogurt, harissa, half of the parsley, thyme, and lemon zest in a small bowl and season with salt and pepper, lightly marbling them to combine.
- To serve, place the harissa yogurt down on the platter. Transfer the carrots to the platter and top with a drizzle of olive oil, the rest of the parsley, and mint if so desired.