

WHY IS PHYSICAL ACTIVITY IMPORTANT DURING TIMES OF STRESS?

Being physically active has an effect on your body and brain. When you are physically active your body is more likely to increase the production of endorphins that send positive messages to your brain. Sometimes referred to as a “runners high” these changes in your body’s chemicals can happen at low levels of exertion as well as moderate levels of activity.

HOW DOES PHYSICAL ACTIVITY AFFECT OVERALL HEALTH?

Even a single session of physical activity can reduce blood pressure, improve the way your body processes blood sugar, and improve some ways your brain works the very same day you are active.

DOES PHYSICAL ACTIVITY AFFECT MENTAL HEALTH?

Physically active adults are more likely to report having a better quality of life, exhibit lower risk of anxiety and depression, and report improvements in sleep.

WHAT IS MEANT BY BRAIN HEALTH?

This refers to the ability to remember, learn, plan, and concentrate. There are changes in brain health as we grow and mature. Children show distinct patterns in how much they can remember and how

their attention span increases as they age. For adults, as they age there are sometimes shifts in memory and attention.

WHAT IS THE EVIDENCE LINKING BRAIN HEALTH AND PHYSICAL ACTIVITY?

Children, adolescents, and college students who engage in regular physical activity do better in school, process material faster, have better memory, and can control their attention. Studies have also shown that adults who are regularly active show signs of improved cognition and memory.

DO I HAVE TO JOIN A GYM TO GET THE BENEFITS OF BEING PHYSICALLY ACTIVE?

NO! There are many ways to be physically active without joining a gym. Taking a walk outside, running, dancing, and some muscle strengthening activities such as gardening are beneficial.

WHAT ABOUT INDIVIDUALS WITH DISABILITIES AND CHRONIC CONDITIONS?

The health benefits of physical activity are just as important for individuals with disabilities and chronic conditions. Individuals with chronic health conditions and disabilities who are physically active experience improved quality of life, decreased pain, and improved cognition.



WHAT ABOUT LITTLE CHILDREN (3-5 YEARS)? THEY JUST MOVE ALL THE TIME ANYWAY, RIGHT?

It is important that preschool age children incorporate movement throughout the day and not remain sedentary. Preschool age children often move “in spurts” and adult caregivers should encourage active play that involves a variety of activities such as ball play, running, and jumping.

HOW CAN I GET MY KIDS OFF THE COUCH?

Admit it—we all need some motivation to move. There are some tips offered by the Office of Disease Prevention and Health Promotion:

1. Make it a game!
2. Work as a team—tackle chores together. Even washing the floor can get your heart pumping!
3. Be a role model.
4. Doing an online yoga class? Invite your child to downward dog with you.

ONLINE RESOURCES

health.gov/moveyourway#parents
youtube.com/watch?v=zNs8srnJ95U&feature=youtu.be
heart.org/en/healthy-living/fitness/getting-active/daily-tips-to-help-keep-your-family-active
healthykidshealthyfuture.org/5-healthy-goals/get-kids-moving/classroom-activities/d3knp61p33sjvn.cloudfront.net/2016/01/Healthy-Habits-for-Life-Get-Moving.pdf

EVIDENCE BASE (SELECTED)

Khan, N. A., & Hillman, C. H. (2014). The relation of childhood physical activity and aerobic fitness to brain function and cognition: A review. *Pediatric Exercise Science*, 26(2). <https://doi.org/10.1123/pes.2013-0125>

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