



Sometimes you may wonder if exercise is really worth all the effort. It's normal to want to skip a workout on busy days. But don't skip too often because the benefits of exercise are enjoyed by those who make it a lifelong commitment.

1. Regular aerobic exercise helps prevent heart disease.

It slows down the buildup of plaque in the arteries of the heart. Active people tend to have larger, cleaner arteries. Aerobic exercise increases the level of the "good" cholesterol which helps carry the cholesterol out of the arteries and decreases the "bad" cholesterol, which is associated with heart disease. Aerobic exercise helps to prevent obstructive blood clots from forming in the arteries.

2. Exercise helps lower blood pressure.

Aerobic exercise make the heart stronger and efficiently pumps more blood per beat. The heart needs to beat fewer times to circulate blood throughout the body.

3. Exercise helps prevent type II diabetes by improving the body's ability to regulate blood sugar.

4. Weight-bearing exercise prevents the loss of bone mineral

that's normal as we age and that can lead to osteoporosis. Weight-bearing exercise is any activity that applies force to the bones. Walking and cross-country skiing are popular aerobic exercises.

5. Physical activity strengthens muscles, joints, tendons, ligaments and other structures that help hold the body together.

6. Exercise burns calories to help take weight off and maintain weight loss.

Weight loss through a program of a low-fat diet and exercise is more likely to be fat loss, rather than water or muscle tissue loss. Repeating weight loss and weight gain cycles is harmful to your health and seems to slow your metabolic rate. Gradual weight loss combined with regular exercise is the only way to go!

7. Exercise helps prevent the loss of lean muscle tissue.

It helps prevent the drop in metabolic rate that sometimes accompanies weight loss and the gradual decline in metabolic rate that occurs as we age.

8. In many ways, exercise is the antithesis of aging.

Exercise can slow the loss of stamina, strength, flexibility, bone density and metabolic rate, as well as improve general enthusiasm for being active. Exercise gives you the ability to maintain an independent lifestyle and increases the likelihood that you'll enjoy your post-retirement years.

9. Exercise helps maintain flexibility

in the muscles of the legs and lower back. Exercise helps maintain strength in abdominal and back muscles. This helps prevent the development of back problems that can be debilitating and very painful.

10. Exercise makes every day more fun!

As fitness improves, activities become easier and more enjoyable, and you're more likely to go out for a hike or enjoy a day of skiing. Exercise increases your stress-resistance, helps you feel more relaxed and even sleep better.