



# FIVE SURPRISING THINGS THAT HAPPEN WHEN YOU WORK OUT

*Participating in regular exercise has several well-known health benefits, including lower risk of heart disease, stroke, some cancers and even reversing the effects of diabetes. But the buck doesn't stop there – there are several other benefits to exercise that are a little bit unusual...*

## **1. EXERCISE CAN IMPROVE YOUR EYESIGHT**

No, you're not going blind, exercise will actually improve long term eye-sight. Several studies have found relationships between exercise and the incidence of cataracts (the leading cause of blindness worldwide). The precise reason is currently unknown; however, scientists think it might be because of the reduction in free-radicals (particles that can cause damage to DNA, proteins and other parts of the body) caused by all types of regular exercise.

## **2. EXERCISE CAN MAKE YOU SMARTER**

Studying for an exam? Struggling to remember things? Then maybe exercise is the cure for you. Studies have shown that exercise improves memory, academic achievement (especially in children), attention span and executive function (the ability to think differently about situations and regulating emotions). There are several reasons for this, including increased blood flow to the brain and decreases in overall stress levels.

## **3. EXERCISE CAN REGENERATE HEART CELLS**

As mentioned above, it is well established that exercise can reduce the risk of having heart attacks, but what if you have already had one? When we have a heart attack, part of the heart muscle essentially dies, but emerging research suggests that regular aerobic exercise can actually regenerate heart cells; reversing the damage caused by heart attack. The amount of regeneration that takes place wouldn't completely regenerate a heart but will massively reduce the risk of further attacks.

## **4. EXERCISE CAN IMPROVE LONG-TERM GUT HEALTH**

Long term endurance-based exercise has been shown to decrease the risk of colon cancer by up to 50 percent, decrease the risk of gall-stone formation, decrease incidences of constipation and inflammatory bowel disease (IBS). This is thought to be because of the changes in gut micro bacteria that regular endurance-based exercise causes. It is important to note, though, that current guidelines suggest that if you are suffering from acute symptoms of anything to do with the gut, its probably best to stay away from high intensity and high impact exercise and do some lower intensity, lower impact exercise such as cycling instead until the acute symptoms have passed.

## **5. EXERCISE CAN IMPROVE MENTAL HEALTH**

All types of exercise have been shown to improve several aspects of mental health, including anxiety levels, symptoms of depression and overall wellbeing. Furthermore, strength training has been shown to increase mood states. There are several reasons why this is the case, including increases in several hormones that regulate the function of the brain, which can be impaired in some of the above mentioned conditions.

## **THE BOTTOM LINE:**

The benefits of regular exercise, whether it be strength, cardio or endurance based, span a vast array of conditions that go way beyond the typically reported benefits of exercise. Exercise really can be considered a "magic pill", and we all probably should get up and get moving. So what are you waiting for?