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# Beyond the Scale: Fitness as a Whole-body Experience

## Introduction

For years, gym memberships, fitness tracking devices, sports drinks, and workout videos have been sold with the promise that you can lose weight fast.<sup>1</sup> With the emphasis on quick results, exercise is often painted primarily as a tool for weight loss. While weight reduction is certainly a perk, it doesn't need to be your main priority when pursuing fitness.

Most people today are busy with work or kids. Many have sedentary jobs that are not conducive to getting regular movement. When starting a new fitness routine, people can feel discouraged when they don't see immediate results. However, when you shift your focus to the whole-body benefits, the positive outcomes become clear.

While exercise may be the last thing on your busy to-do list, the far-reaching value may surprise you and inspire you to prioritize your own health.

## Health Conditions

According to the Mayo Clinic, regular fitness practices combat underlying and potential health conditions, including:

- Stroke
- Metabolic syndrome
- High blood pressure
- Type 2 diabetes
- Many types of cancer—colon, lung, uterine, and breast cancer
- Arthritis
- Risk of falling<sup>2</sup>

Exercise strengthens the heart and improves circulation. During physical activity, the respiratory rate increases, raising oxygen levels. Blood flow then accelerates to deliver oxygen and nutrients to the tissues and organs of the body. This increased systemic circulation strengthens the cardiovascular system and lowers the risk of heart diseases like high cholesterol, coronary artery disease, and heart

attacks. Exercise also lowers blood sugar, which improves the body's ability to respond to insulin and reduces the risk of diabetes. Furthermore, exercise strengthens the bones and muscles. As people get older, bone density diminishes. Resistance exercises – any activity performed under the “resistance” of bodyweight and the force of gravity such as walking, hiking, jogging, or dancing – can slow the loss of bone density that comes with age. Muscle-strengthening activities like lifting weights can help increase or maintain muscle mass and overall physical strength.

The benefits of aerobic exercise are extensive. While the results are not instantly noticeable, like a drastic weight change, they do provide long-term advantages. A regular fitness routine can result in a greater quality of life and help you avoid life-threatening health conditions like diabetes and certain types of cancers. While taking time to be active every day may seem unnecessary or unimportant compared to your many other commitments, it is a vital part of life-long wellness.

Plan a fitness routine that's right for you. Running may not be your preference—but you could try low-impact yoga sessions to get your heart rate moving. Whatever you choose, be consistent.

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## Sleep Cycles

According to the University of Pennsylvania School of Medicine, one in four Americans experience acute insomnia each year.<sup>3</sup> Sleepless nights perpetuate negative results. Missing a single night of sleep can cause forgetfulness and lethargy the next day, which can increase mistakes at work or at home.<sup>4</sup> Long-term sleep loss contributes to much bigger problems like heart disease, high blood pressure, diabetes, obesity, and even strokes. Clearly, sleep is a critical factor in leading a healthy life.

Maintaining normal sleep habits is easier said than done. Multiple studies have demonstrated that regular exercise affects sleep cycles. “We have solid evidence that exercise does, in fact, help you fall asleep more quickly and improves sleep quality,” says Charlene Gamaldo, M.D. at Johns Hopkins Center for Sleep.<sup>5</sup> People who engage in at least 30 minutes of moderate aerobic exercise a day have seen a difference in sleep quality.

When you sit at a desk all day, your body doesn't get the chance to expend its energy. By the time you're ready for bed, your body isn't tired enough for sleep. Activities that increase the cardiovascular workload use energy, thus contributing to better sleep.

## Mental Health

Regular exercise positively impacts mental health. When you work out, you release endorphins that can improve your mood and make you feel more relaxed. This chemical release helps people deal with stress and reduces their overall risk of depression. Everyday activities like shopping for groceries, preparing dinner, or even sitting at a desk can leave you feeling drained and unmotivated. Exercise can boost your energy, mood, and strength to help you face your every-day tasks.

Furthermore, regular exercise keeps your mind sharp as you age. Engaging in physical activity improves cognitive function. Older adults who exercised routinely saw improvement in memory retention and clarity of thought.<sup>6</sup> Exercise stimulates your body to release proteins and other chemicals that improve the structure and function of your brain.<sup>7</sup>

*Take control of your life by incorporating regular, sustainable exercise.*

## Conclusion

The good news about fitness is that it's never too late to start. Take control of your life by incorporating regular, sustainable exercise. It is a full-body experience that benefits your mind, sleep, and overall well-being. No matter where you are in life, it is possible—you just need to go at your own pace.

At Trinity School of Natural Health, we teach whole-person wellness. We provide you with the tools to succeed, not only in our online classes but also in your personal health journey. To learn about the programs we offer—and how they can empower you to lead a healthier, more active lifestyle—[visit our website](#).

### REFERENCES

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