

February 2016

Body, Mind and Spirit: The Benefits of Exercise



Though it may help you lose weight and prevent chronic diseases such as diabetes, high blood pressure and cardiovascular disease, exercise also benefits the mind and spirit. Did you know that regular exercise can **lift your mood, fight depression, lessen anxiety** and **slow the cognitive decline** that comes with age? The benefits of regular exercise seem endless, and we can help you enjoy these benefits.

If you are feeling down, exercise is probably the last thing you want to do. But several studies have confirmed that physical activity can

- release endorphins and other “feel good” brain chemicals that can **ease depression**
- **distract you** in a positive way from a cycle of negative thoughts and emotions that contribute to anxiety
- increase **positive social interaction**
- boost **confidence levels**

Studies have found that exercise is more than a short-term mood-lifter. Data suggest that active people are less depressed than inactive people, and that regular exercise can be a **powerful intervention** for those suffering from depression.

If that’s not enough motivation to be more physically active, studies have also found that sedentary people who take up a new exercise routine actually **curb the rate of mental decline** that comes with age. Physically active older adults have stronger **recall and reasoning skills**.

Though we usually associate exercise with running laps and lifting weights at a gym, you can boost your physical activity levels in many ways: Gardening, walking through your neighborhood and taking the stairs instead of the elevator are all good ways to stay active. When choosing an exercise program, make sure you **find something you enjoy**. And check with your physician to ensure that you are ready for a new exercise routine.

If you want to increase your level of physical activity, **call our office** for an appointment. We will discuss the many benefits of exercise and work with you to design a routine that you will enjoy and that you stick with. That way, you will reap the many benefits exercise can confer on your body, mind and spirit.

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Cycling Your Way to Heart Health



Most of us are aware that regular exercise is **essential for good health**. Engaging in regular, moderate activity makes you 20% to 30% less likely to die prematurely and 50% less likely to develop serious diseases such as cancer, diabetes, stroke and cardiovascular disease. The last of these—also known as heart disease—is a major contributor to premature death in our country.

The best way to incorporate exercise into your daily routine is to find something that does not require gym memberships, fancy equipment or specific weather conditions—something that becomes **part of your normal day**. Cycling fits these parameters, and more.

Riding a bike a few miles a few times a week can improve aerobic fitness, cholesterol levels and resting heart rate. It will strengthen heart muscles, while reducing obesity and stress. Better still, studies show that people who take up cycling tend to make it a **lifetime habit**. It's something you can do outdoors or indoors (thanks to stationary bikes), and it is a great exercise option for people with certain injuries or restrictions.

It's important to start slowly and focus on moderate exercise rather than trying to be a weekend warrior—and we can help. We can assess and design a program that suits **your individual fitness needs**, keeps you engaged and appropriately challenged, and ensures that you gain all the **cardiovascular benefits** of cycling without risking any adverse effects.

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Take the Weight off Your Shoulders



The shoulder is a complicated joint. It moves very freely, unlike a knee or elbow, because it has less bony stability. Instead, the **surrounding muscles** provide stability. Those muscles must be strong to help prevent injury—but injuries do happen.

One of the most common shoulder injuries is impingement syndrome. The supraspinatus muscle, part of the rotator cuff, runs along the top of the shoulder, with its tendon

attaching to the “ball” of the ball-and-socket joint. That tendon runs under the sometimes rough and sharp front edge (acromion) of the shoulder blade. Since there’s not much space, sometimes the tendon becomes **painfully pinched**, or impinged, especially when performing activities requiring overhead reaches.

If left untreated, impingement syndrome can lead to another common injury: a torn rotator cuff. Not all rotator cuff injuries result from impingement syndrome, since the “cuff” is actually composed of four shoulder area muscles and attendant tendons. A tear can be acute—caused abruptly by a trauma, such as lifting something incorrectly—or chronic, caused by repeated small injuries to one or more muscles and tendons. We can **help you recover** from impingement syndrome or rotator cuff tears by demonstrating better methods and positions for performing tasks that involve the shoulder area as well as teaching you strengthening exercises for the muscles.

You may wonder why your shoulders hurt when you do core-strengthening exercises. The core is in a different area entirely. It’s composed of a large group of muscles including the transversus abdominis (part of the abdominal wall), multifidus (adjoining the spine), diaphragm (under the lungs) and pelvic floor muscles. But many of the suggested **core strengthening exercises**, such as bridges, push-ups and quadrupeds, require your shoulders to bear weight.

We can provide an alternate routine to strengthen your core that will put much less stress on your shoulders, as well as show you how to **incorporate pillow supports** into your core strengthening to further relieve pressure. We’ll literally take the weight off your shoulders.

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Elevating Your Flatfoot



In the medical world, it's called posterior tibial tendon dysfunction, but most of us know it by a much simpler term: flatfoot. Specifically, this type of flatfoot **develops during adulthood** and often affects only one foot. More common among women and people over 40, flatfoot occurs when the posterior tibial tendon, which runs from the calf to the bottom of the foot, tears or becomes inflamed, causing the arch of the foot to fall over time. People who play high-impact

sports, are obese, or have hypertension or diabetes are the most likely to be afflicted. Symptoms include pain and swelling on the inside of the foot or the outside of the ankle. The pain usually worsens with activity such as walking or running.

The good news is that, for most patients, conservative measures can usually assist in managing this condition. But getting rid of flatfoot takes **time and patience**, as the process can last three to six months. Conservative treatment measures include the following:

- **Rest.** For those who engage in high-impact sports, switch to activities that place less stress on the foot, such as cycling, swimming or using an elliptical machine. Sometimes a boot or small cast is used to immobilize the area for a short period of time.
- **Physical therapy.** Targeted exercises strengthen and rehabilitate the tibial tendon. We can design a regimen of exercises suited to your condition.
- **Orthotics.** Shoe inserts are the most common treatment for this condition. Orthotics can either be purchased over the counter or custom made. While custom-made orthotics are more costly, they are usually more effective at controlling the position of the foot.
- **Braces.** A lace-up ankle brace can support the back of the foot and take tension off the tendon.

We can assess your condition and, if appropriate, help you begin **a course of treatment** to stabilize, strengthen and rehabilitate your tendon so that foot and ankle pain becomes a thing of the past.

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Fight Back Against Rheumatoid Arthritis



More common among women than men, rheumatoid arthritis is a chronic autoimmune disease in which your body attacks the joints, starting as painful swelling in the hands and feet. Though it primarily affects people older than 40, it can strike at any age. And while there is no cure, treatment for rheumatoid arthritis has come a long way in recent years.

Symptoms of rheumatoid arthritis include swelling and warmth in the joints, **stiffness in the morning** and bumps under the skin on the arms. People usually begin to feel symptoms in the smaller joints, such as the fingers and toes, before they spread to other parts of the body.

Treatment for rheumatoid arthritis focuses on pain relief as well as early, aggressive treatment to slow the progression of the disease. Physical therapy helps **improve function** as you perform your daily activities. If you have been diagnosed with rheumatoid arthritis, your physician may recommend the following treatments:

- nonsteroidal anti-inflammatory drugs (such as ibuprofen) to ease pain and inflammation
- corticosteroids to get potentially damaging inflammation under control quickly
- disease-modifying antirheumatic drugs—taken by mouth, self-injected or given by your physician as an infusion—to slow the progression of the disease
- surgery to reduce pain, correct deformities or repair (or replace) damaged joints
- physical therapy to keep your joints flexible and help you perform daily tasks with minimal pain

Though your joints may be painful, not moving them will only make your rheumatoid arthritis worse. We can work with you to **improve your strength and flexibility** in every muscle and joint group. After assessing your current condition, we will create an exercise plan that helps keep you functioning at your best.

If you have been diagnosed with rheumatoid arthritis recently—or even if you have been living with it for years—call our office for an appointment. Using our extensive knowledge of how the muscles, bones and joints work together, we will create an **individualized exercise plan** for you that will keep your joints flexible and minimize pain both now and in the future.