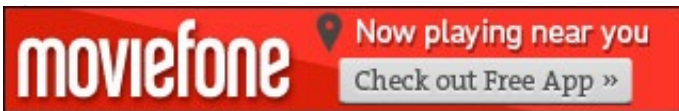


# Ask the Doctor: The Little Known Facts About Exercise

Grab a cup of coffee and learn how exercise improves our quality of life on many fronts.

By [Ayesha Qureshi](#) | April 10, 2012



So, we all realize that exercise is good to maintain heart health and to get some nice six-pack abs (if we are so fortunate). Exercise, however, plays so many other roles and vital functions in our day to day well-being and oftentimes they are glossed over as we focus more on exercise as a means for weight loss.

Exercise is, of course, essential for weight loss (or maintenance of weight), but what about those people who can stay skinny no matter what they eat? Well, without exercise, they still may not be all that healthy. Weight and BMI alone are not good indicators of health and if someone should or should not exercise.

So, let's talk about what exercise does for the body.

Not only is exercise essential for good cardiac and respiratory health, but it is also good for our brain function. Several studies have shown that children who exercise before going to school in the morning are much more alert, have greater attention spans, and actually perform better in school. A really good book to read on this is called *Spark* by Dr. John Ratey. Exercise releases all kinds of neurotransmitters in the brain and get blood flowing to essential areas of the brain that help us perform better from a cognitive stand point.

Those neurotransmitters that I mentioned— dopamine, serotonin, adrenaline— are all 'feel good' chemicals for our brain. So exercise can actually increase our sense of well-being and stabilize our mood. There are also studies out there suggesting that for some people suffering from depression or anxiety, exercise is more effective than taking an anti-depressant. This, of course, varies widely from person to person.

Physical and emotional well-being are very much interconnected. When we feel good about ourselves physically, we tend to feel good emotionally, and vice versa. For myself, I know that when I run a faster pace or am able to run longer than I have before, I feel a little invincible and feel like anything is possible from there.

So now that we feel great and we're exercising, the other benefit exercise has is that it strengthens our immune system. Every time we exercise, our immune system is compromised just a little bit. After it regroups, it comes back stronger, ready to fight off colds and the flu. Movement helps to keep blood and our lymphatic systems (essential in fighting off infection) flowing, resulting in a healthier you.

Exercise is also extremely important for the function of our musculoskeletal system. The stronger our muscles, the stronger our joints. Assuming we exercise correctly, the body is less prone to injury. Too much exercise is possible - I see it all the time. So moderation is important. Often times when patients come to my office at [BodyWorks](#), I also give specific strengthening exercises to help resolve their main complaint. With the way we live our lives, most of us are seated at a desk a lot and certain muscle groups get tight, while others get weak which has the potential to lead to a host of problems.

That is a broad overview on how exercise helps you beyond just weight loss and big muscles. There's a lot to the science of exercise.

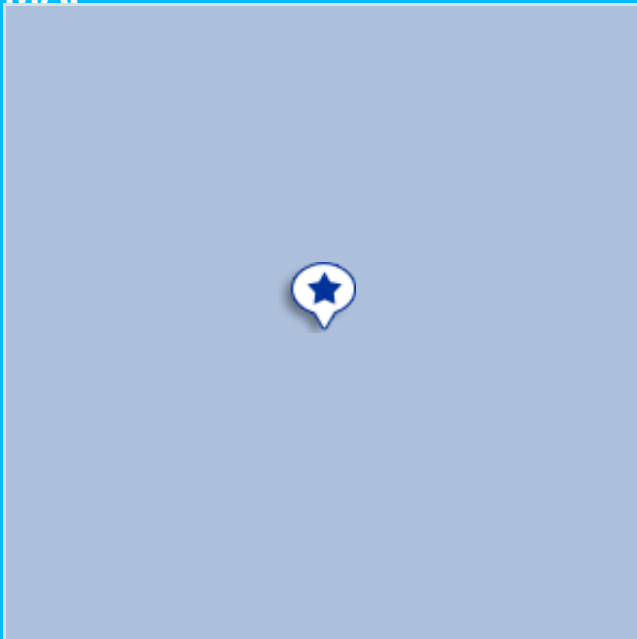
The topic of exercise is just one area I share with people that come into my office all the time. This column, ultimately, is about YOU and getting answers to questions you have on spinal health, exercise, and nutrition. So please submit questions, and hopefully I can provide a helpful answer!

**Please submit your questions by emailing me at [QureshiDC@gmail.com](mailto:QureshiDC@gmail.com), or in the comments section below. Thank you for reading and I look forward to hearing from you.**

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