

# WV Wellness

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Mind, Body and Spirit

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## Happiness? It's all in a workout

Regular workouts do more than just firming up your muscles. On the contrary, the main benefits of sports activities are more to do with improved inner well-being than exterior aesthetics. In fact, it has been scientifically proven that doing regular sport contributes to happiness and this is true even if the dedication, sweat and effort don't lead to reaching an important goal.

**During physical activity the human body produces serotonin, a neurotransmitter commonly known as the 'happiness hormone'.**

Discovered fifty years ago, serotonin has long been the focus of many research projects. Serotonin is only produced by the brain and has a profound effect on sleep, mood and appetite. A lack of this substance can lead to problems such as insomnia and migraine headaches, and may also exacerbate anxiety. Low levels of serotonin may also cause feelings of tiredness during the day.

Good quality sleep and an ongoing sensation of happiness and well-being are two of the natural benefits enjoyed by people who do sports, or who dedicate a few hours a week to movement. In addition to physical exercise, certain foods also favor the production of serotonin, such as milk and cheeses, bananas and chocolate.

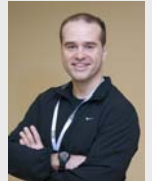
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Willamette View

### TIPS FROM THE TRAINER

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#### Exercise to Beat Arthritis

According to a Tufts University Diet and Nutrition Letter, sensible strength training eases the pain of osteo and rheumatoid arthritis. One perpetuated myth is that "rest is best." There is a common misconception in the medical community that exercise is not feasible in the treatment of arthritis. Research however has made it clear that the right types of exercise, performed correctly, in fact restore people's function while dramatically cutting down on their pain. Research tells us though that some joints are too far gone to make a noticeable difference. Many afflicted people feel that their arthritis is too far advanced to be treated. The fact is that people of all ages have made tremendous improvements in their disability by taking the proper steps to care for arthritic joints. Also of importance is that the sooner you begin your strength training program the better off you will be. One of the biggest mistakes I see so often is an individual waiting far too long to get started. So get started today! You do have a say in how your life will be affected by arthritis.

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That's why a glass of milk before bed can result in a deeper sleep and why savoring a delicious piece of chocolate is always so pleasurable.

Serotonin is not the only reason why exercising to stay in shape leads to happiness. Maintaining a good state of physical well-being through exercise also lifts our spirits and cheers us up because it does not entail any dietary restrictions or sacrifices. Last but not least, it improves confidence and self-esteem.

People who want to improve their figure often go on strict diets, which, in most cases, fail to produce the desired results, and can even be harmful. Whilst dieting is not guaranteed to lose those extra kilos, it is sure to have an adverse affect on our mood and happiness.

Regular physical exercise increases the basal metabolic rate, e.g. the energy expenditure required to keep the vital organs functioning, including the lungs, digestive system and nervous system. Increasing the basal metabolic rate forces the body to burn a greater quantity of calories for each of its daily activities. A little physical movement, combined with the large and small efforts of daily life, is therefore sufficient to cancel out the odd dinnertime treat or two!

