

Get Moving

EXERCISE IS FUNDAMENTAL FOR YOUR WELL-BEING

EXERCISE IS ONE OF THE FOUNDATIONS OF LIFE, says Dr. Andre Berger, cosmetic dermatologist and founder of the Rejuvalife Vitality Center in Beverly Hills, along with good nutrition and sleep. “Exercise has universal benefits in terms of wellness and appearance. It’s fundamental.” From an evolutionary perspective, humans are designed to be active. Yet our modern lifestyles tend to be sedentary—we take various forms of transportation rather than walking, our jobs tend to keep us inside sitting at our desks, and we spend a lot of time sitting in front of the television or on our phones. We don’t even have to go far to get food; we can just call a delivery service and it’s at our doors.

Nevertheless, “exercise is a fundamental, biological necessity,” Dr. Berger says. A sedentary lifestyle can lead to diabetes, high blood pressure, heart disease, and obesity. “Exercise is not discretionary,” Dr. Berger insists. “If you want to optimize your wellness, you have to move.”

Benefits of Exercise

The American Heart Association recommends we get 150 minutes of moderate exercise a week. That’s a little more than 20 minutes a day. If that seems daunting, Dr. Berger suggests you start small and build up the time you spend on activities, such as walking or swimming, and before you know it, you’ll

be experiencing the many benefits that come with exercise. As you get more comfortable with greater activity that improves cardiovascular health, add weight-bearing exercises to boost bone and muscle health.

In addition, “exercise is the number-one mitigating behavior to reduce stress,” Dr. Berger says. “Lack of exercise and stress feed into each other.” Exercise can also improve sleep quality and promote a healthier approach to good nutrition, he says. According to the American Heart Association, other benefits include lower risk of heart disease, stroke, type 2 diabetes, high blood pressure, dementia and Alzheimer’s, and several types of cancer; improved cognition and



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Yoga is a good option that combines several of these exercises—stretching, relaxation, and using the body as a form of resistance.

memory; better bone health and balance; less depression and anxiety; and better quality of life and overall well-being.

Types of Exercise

Aerobic: “With aerobic exercise such as brisk walking, running, stationary biking, jogging, and elliptical workouts, you get your heart rate up and keep it up,” says Dr. Berger. “It’s very good for cardiovascular conditioning; it’s good for your heart and blood vessels and reduces blood pressure. It also reduces stress; you create endorphins that give you a sense of well-being. That’s why people feel good after exercise. It’s a physiological response that should tell you that your body is indicating that exercise is a good thing because it feels better after exercise.”

Resistance: Resistance exercise is good for building strong muscles and bones. “Resistance exercise is designed to activate and stimulate muscle tone and allow muscles to improve in size and function and it builds muscle mass,” Dr. Berger says. Free-standing weights, resistance bands, and body weight movements are all good ways to make the muscle work harder. The muscle is stimulated to grow—you build muscle, get stronger, and get bulkier, depending on the exercise. “If you want to focus on strength, use less resistance but increase the repetitions. If you want more bulk, use heavier resis-

tance and do fewer repetitions.” Both will increase muscle mass.

Resistance training is also good for your bones. “All of your muscles are attached to the bone through ligaments. When you move a muscle, there’s pull that goes through the muscle, through the ligament, and it stimulates the bone. That stimulation is critical in bone metabolism and mineralization,” Dr. Berger says. “One of the ways to stave off osteopenia or osteoporosis, which is the loss of bone mineralization, is through resistance exercise.” Nutrition and vitamins also play a role, but resistance exercise has a major effect on bones, he says.

Relaxation: “Relaxation exercises are very good for stress,” Dr. Berger says. Examples are taking your dog for a walk after dinner or going for a walk with a spouse, kids, or a friend. “Go work in your garden. You’re not being sedentary, and it calms and relaxes you.”

Stretching: “Stretching is always important. It’s important for injury prevention if you’re doing sports activities or moderate exercise. It reduces recovery time from activities and maintains harmony and the relationship between your muscles and your joints,” Dr. Berger says. It helps reduce stiffness and promotes flexibility. In addition, he says, “It affects your quality of life—your daily activities of living. Mobility and flexibility are important,

and stretching every day should be an integral part of physical activity.”

Balance work: “Balance is critical to be able to exercise. As you age, it’s more important,” explains Dr. Berger. It’s also key in sports such as tennis or pickleball, he points out. “If you don’t have balance, you’ll never be a good player. You need balance to get your body in a proper position to be an effective player.”

Yoga is a good option that combines several of these exercises—stretching, relaxation, and using the body as a form of resistance. Pilates is also beneficial and has become popular in gyms across the country.

Just Do It

People should do some form of exercise every single day, Dr. Berger says. “That’s the ideal. I’m not talking about strenuous exercise; I’m talking about moderate exercise. But you have to start somewhere if you’ve been sedentary. Start slowly; do as much as you can and make it enjoyable. If it’s not enjoyable, it’s likely you won’t continue doing it.”

Experiment with different forms of exercise to find one that fits you and your lifestyle, he suggests. Incorporate a social aspect by joining a gym or walking with friends. Be realistic about your time commitment, he advises, and be consistent. Once you’ve started an activity, add a little time to your routine every day. You’re conditioning yourself to respond to higher levels of activity. Once you’ve established a routine, mix it up for optimal benefits that will improve your overall quality of life. ❁



For more from Dr. Berger, see his book *The Beverly Hills Anti-Aging Prescription*.

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