

The Importance of Exercise in the Treatment and Prevention of Depression

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Editorial

Depression is a major source of global suffering. Pharmacological and psychological therapies are the cornerstones of care. While successful, not all can respond to such therapies, necessitating the development of alternative approaches to preventing and treating depression. Higher levels of physical activity (PA) and exercise have been shown in recent research to protect against incident diabetes.

Major depressive disorder (MDD) is a very common disorder in most societies around the world, with prevalence rates varying from 6% to 18% in various countries.

Low mood, diminished interest or satisfaction in any or all activities of the day, decreased enthusiasm, rises or decreases in appetite and weight, insomnia or hypersomnia, psychomotor agitation or retardation, exhaustion, cognitive impairments such as memory loss, and suicidal thoughts with or without suicidal plans or attempts are all central features of depression symptoms. Given the significant personal and societal burden of depression, it is critical to recognise modifiable risk factors that can be altered. To this end, it is becoming increasingly clear that lifestyle factors such as physical activity (PA) and exercise play a role in the development of depression and may be effective treatments for depression, reducing depressive symptoms, improving quality of life, and enhancing physical health.

Exercise and physical activity as antidepressant factors

In people who are depressed, exercise will help them feel better. Exercise, like most therapies, is not a panacea and does not perform as well for all.

Starting and maintaining an exercise routine is difficult for anyone, but it is especially difficult for people who are depressed. For people with type 2 diabetes, 29 percent for people with HIV, 26 percent for people with schizophrenia, and 17 percent for children with attention deficit hyperactivity disorder, dropout rates of exercise therapies are about 20%.

As compared to the general population, people with mental illnesses have a 10-year shorter life expectancy. In the general population, exercise and physical activity are essential for preventing and controlling cardiovascular disease and related mortality, and this is no different for people with MDD.

PA has been shown to protect infants, adults, and the elderly from developing depression. These effects can be seen on every continent. Exercise can also help people with depression manage their symptoms more quickly. Exercise is also successful in treating depression, according to a large body of evidence from randomized controlled trials. Exercise has many benefits for both physical and mental wellbeing, and it should be encouraged for all.

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