

PRESS RELEASE

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Exercise: An Effective Treatment for Depression

The symptoms of major depressive disorder, the most common type of depression, range from an overwhelming feeling of sadness and loss of interest in most activities to insomnia and cognitive difficulties. Medications—including antidepressants such as selective serotonin reuptake inhibitors (SSRIs)—and psychotherapy are common treatment options but some experts are now singing the praises of a cheap and easy alternative: exercise.

Many experts are studying whether exercise, either alone or in combination with other treatments, can help those suffering from depression, a mental illness that affects 25% of Americans. A review study published in [ACSM's Health & Fitness Journal](#) titled "[Is Exercise a Viable Treatment for Depression?](#)" examined evidence and concluded that exercise is a comparable alternative to pharmacotherapy and psychotherapy. According to the study's authors, observational studies show that active people are less likely to be depressed, and interventional studies indicate that exercise can reduce the signs of depression.

While you don't need to be a fitness fanatic to reap the benefits, you do need to make sure you're following a safe and effective program. For those considering exercise as an alternative treatment for depression, it's important to discuss your options with a physician. Physical therapists can also serve as a great resource for those looking to adopt a more active lifestyle. The rehab professionals are trained to teach patients how to incorporate exercises and lifestyle changes that prevent injuries and improve overall health and well-being.

Though more experts agree that exercise is a great tool in combatting depression, the exact physical reasons why still elude us. Some researchers believe exercise works by increasing the production of serotonin—the neurotransmitter that antidepressants target. Others believe exercise helps people sleep better which can have a protective effect on the brain. On the psychological front, exercise may improve a depressed person's outlook on life by boosting confidence through a return to normal activities.

A physical therapist will work with you to find to a suitable and safe exercise program, one that takes other illnesses or injuries into consideration. PTs are trained to help patients improve strength, flexibility and mobility through individualized exercise plans and to teach home exercise programs to ensure continued benefits.

About the Private Practice Section of the American Physical Therapy Association

Founded in 1956, the Private Practice Section of the American Physical Therapy Association champions the success of physical therapist-owned businesses. Our members are leaders and innovators in the health care system. The American Physical Therapy Association (APTA) represents more than 85,000

physical therapists, physical therapist assistants and students of physical therapy nationwide. For more information, please visit www.ppsapta.org.

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