**Keep Moving and Exercise Your Way Out of Winter Depression**

You might be surprised to know that exercise can alleviate depression. Getting outside and exercising gets your heart pumping. It also gives you the fresh air and sunshine your body craves. Exercising indoors can help too.

When you increase your heart rate and get the blood flowing through your body, it lifts your mood. Endorphins, also known as feel-good hormones, are released. The result is an elevated mood. In fact, many doctors recommend regular exercise to their depressed patients. It may not be the ultimate cure for all cases.

However, you can exercise your way out of a winter depression. Here’s how:

**1 Take a daily walk** - Unless the weather is unsafe, there’s a lot of value to good old-fashioned fresh air and sunshine. The sunshine stimulates the production of vitamin D which improves mood. It also helps your body manage stress.

Taking a walk gets your body moving without the pressure of fitness performance. Aim to walk for twenty to thirty minutes a day.

**2 Stretch** - Yoga and other mindful exercise programs help you accomplish two things. They help you get your blood flowing to your muscles. This releases those endorphins mentioned earlier. Stretching and yoga also helps you become mindful and focused. It pulls you into the moment.

Instead of worrying about tomorrow or regretting yesterday, you’re in the present moment. You can feel calm, in control, and centered.

**3 Dance and play** - Adults often forget how to play. They forget about joy and laughter. Find an activity that you love. Find something that makes you laugh or brings joy. Consider dance, martial arts, jumping rope or even riding your bicycle.

**4 Run or jog** - Running is a fantastic calorie burner and it’s great for improving your fitness. It’s also something that almost everyone can do. It doesn’t have to be about performance, speed and distance. You can simply embrace the sport as a fitness jogger.

The health benefits are the same. If you’re new to running, combine it with periods of walking. The goal is to help boost your mental and physical health.

**5 Swim** - One of the reasons we can become down during the winter is because it’s cold and gray. Join a swim club or find a gym with a pool. The warm water and the bright lights will help you feel better.

If swimming laps isn’t your thing, join a water aerobics class. There’s just something fun about water aerobics. You can laugh and get fit at the same time.

Think about the activities you did as a child. What made you feel good? Get outside and have a snowball fight. Go sledding. Climb a tree.

In addition to the mental and physical benefits exercise offers, it also helps you sleep better. Studies have linked poor sleep to depression.

Simply exercising and getting better sleep can help you beat the winter blues. Beat depression by moving your body. Get outside. Work out indoors. Stretch, run, jump. Play, laugh and have fun!