

YourHealthNews

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Exercise improves brain size, Australian study finds

Numerous studies have sealed the benefits of regular exercise on the general health – physical and mental health. It has also showed association in lessening risks of developing cardiovascular and metabolic diseases as well as cancer.

In a recent Australian study, exercise was found to have positive effects on brain volume.¹ The authors reviewed and



analyzed 14 controlled studies that involved more than 700 participants aged at least 18 years old, who underwent aerobic exercises.

Results revealed that aerobic exercises have a positive significant effect on the volume of the left hippocampus, a part of the brain that

is highly involved in neuroplasticity (the ability of the nerve cells to reorganize or form new connections after a stimuli). This important effect is seen in healthy individuals in the study. In addition to this, the healthy group also noted significant changes on both hippocampus.

With these results, it can be inferred that aerobic exercises may help maintain neuronal health and prevent deterioration of the brain overtime.

This study provides another layer of benefit on having a regular exercise; that is, on brain plasticity. An active lifestyle through the form of a regular exercise offers our organs better functioning and prevention of conditions related to age.

Common heart valve disorder associated with high blood pressure

One of the most common heart valve disorders, mitral regurgitation, is considered as an age-related disorder wherein the valves are due to 'wear and tear'; hence, no risk factors can be modified to help prevent the occurrence of this condition.

Until recently, a team of experts from the University of Oxford has explored the link between heart valve disease and blood pressure.² It is known that high blood pressure is associated with a number of cardiovascular diseases; thus, the investigators hypothesized that longstanding high blood pressure may also affect the structure and function of one of the valves of the heart, known as mitral valves.

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To test their hypothesis, they studied data from medical records of the *United Kingdom Clinical Practice Research Datalink*. More than 5 million adults with no known cardiovascular or valve diseases were followed-up for ten years, making this study the largest cohort of its kind.

Analyses of data showed that high blood pressure specifically systolic blood pressure (SBP), increases the risk of developing mitral regurgitation. In more detail, every 20mmHg increase in a normal SBP (≤ 120 mmHg) rises the risk of mitral regurgitation to 26%.



Additionally, those with more than 160mmHg SBP are 1.5 times more likely to have mitral regurgitation.

The authors concluded that longstanding high blood pressure is

a risk factor for developing mitral regurgitation.

Although they recommended further studies to establish the causation, they also suggested that controlling blood pressure may prevent mitral regurgitation, not just other cardiovascular diseases.

Regularly, adults need to have routine health check-ups that includes blood pressure checks to ensure that they are within normal and, if not, interventions initiated.

Research reveals that different alcohols have varied mood effects

Have you ever wondered why you drink a certain alcoholic drink?

Well, this has been the central premise by a current study conducted by boffins in the UK and published at *BMJ Open*.³

In the research, the authors conducted analyses of the *Global Drug Survey* which involves approximately 30000 participants who are within the 18 - 34 age range



and drank beer, spirits, red and

white wine. The participants were from 21 countries.

Their results revealed that different kinds of alcohol causes varied types of mood, which can be either positive or negative.

Specifically, consumption of spirits is reported to provide energy and confidence. It is also stressed to make the drinker feel 'sexy'. Despite of these, spirit drinkers are more likely to experience aggressiveness, restlessness,

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tiredness and feeling tearful when compared to other alcoholic drinks.

On the other hand, red wine and beer are noted to make someone feel relaxed. However, red wine is considered by most to increase tired feeling.

Interestingly, females were noted to report all feeling of emotions when compared to males, with the exception of aggression.

Furthermore, those whose level of dependency on alcohol is high tend to report all feeling of emotions. Aggressiveness is likely to be higher in those who are dependent in comparison to those who are low-risk drinkers.

The experts concluded that with their promising results it is important to understand how people feel when consuming alcohol in order to underpin better prevention for problem drinking.

Relevant to the study is to emphasize that alcoholic drinks may provide positive moods but may also be outweighed by negative emotions. Alcohol dependence may also increase aggression, which may lead to unfortunate and unlikely events; hence, drinking of alcohol must always be in moderation. That is, sticking to no more than 2 standard drinks on any day.

Owning a dog may let you live longer, study says

We often feel good about having pets around our home. They provide us with companionship and, oftentimes, they are fun to be with.

In addition to these benefits, one latest research investigated by Swedish experts found that owning dogs may reduce cardiovascular disease risk and increase longevity.⁴

To understand the relationship between dog owning and longevity, the researchers looked into a national sample of more than 3 million participants who had no cardiovascular disease and followed them for 12 years, which included data on dog ownership.

Analyses of data collected show that households with dogs are more likely to have a lower risk of developing cardiovascular diseases (CVD) such as heart attack, heart failure and stroke compared to those households without a dog. Authors

also noted that the risk of death due to this causes were also lesser; implying that it may prolong life.

Particularly, owners of hunting breed dogs – terriers and retrievers, have the lowest association in CVD risk.



As causal relationship cannot be determined through the study, they believed that owning a dog might have direct positive effect on health. Specific mechanisms theorized include

improving the factors involved in the stress relief and enabling better physical activity. The latter is an important lowering risk factor especially in the development of cardiovascular diseases.

With the results of this study, it provided another health benefit of having a dog.

No wonder dogs are really a man's best friend!

Being married may lessen your dementia risk

Dementia is one of the most concerning degenerative disease of today.

Although many advances in drug discovery for this condition have been a success, no specific drug at present is capable of reversing this dreaded disorder. Thus, prevention is one of the most important tool to lessen its risk.

In a research completed in the UK, the investigators analyzed 15 studies with more than 800000 participants to determine the association between marital status and dementia risk.⁵

Results of the study showed that people who are lifelong single and widowed are at higher risk of developing dementia in comparison to those who are married. More specific, lifelong singles and those who are widowed have an increased risk of 42% and 20%, respectively.

In contrast, those who were divorced were noted to have no association with the condition.

Authors believed that the difference between those who were widowed and divorced lies in the fact that end of marriage due to bereavement could potentially be the reason for increased risk in the former

compared to the latter.

These results suggest that marriage may be protective against dementia due to possible lifestyle changes that occurs during marriage.

Among these changes include better healthy lifestyles and increase social interaction.

With these encouraging outcomes, the authors recommended that preventive methods to increase social interaction and participation should be put in place for those at risk especially those people who are widowed and are lifelong single.



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