

Diet, exercise and depression

We all know that exercise and proper diet are good for you. Proper nutrition and diet give you lots of energy and provide you with the ingredients for a healthy body. Regular exercise helps your body to stay fit and helps with sleep. People who eat well and exercise regularly feel more confident, more energetic, and better able to cope with stress.

A healthy diet and regular exercise are especially important for people with depression. Taking care of your body can help to shift your mood. One research study suggested that, for some people, regular exercise is as effective as antidepressant medication in reducing depression.

If you're currently depressed, paying attention to your body and starting some form of exercise can be tough. The problem is trying to stick to fitness and nutrition plans when you can barely stick to your daily schedule! Depression takes away your motivation to do things: the less you do, the less you feel like doing... and so on.

Just as you learned in the goal-setting section, it is important to set small goals and gradually work up to a better level of fitness and health. If you've spent most of your free time sleeping or vegging in front of the TV, you have to change slowly.

A study found that college students who showed risk signs of depression and received cognitive behavioral treatment had better physical health, fewer visits to their doctors and improved patterns of diet and exercise than similar students who didn't have the training.

*Buchanan, Rubenstein-Gardenswartz & Seligman.
Prevention & Treatment, Volume 2, 1999*

Things to remember:

be specific

"I'm going to eat better" sounds good, but it's too vague to be useful.

be consistent

Try to stick to your plans and don't let the excuses win.

the little things count

Try walking up some stairs instead of the elevator or get off one bus stop early and walk it.

find an exercise buddy

Doing it alone can be difficult. See if you can convince a friend or family member to join you and help each other stick to it.

have fun 15 minutes of running, bike riding, or swimming is still exercise.

