

Finally, A Magic Pill That Mimics Daily Exercise!



Psych! There is no such thing! (Sorry for the teaser title.) But rest assured, if I *could* prescribe a pill that promised the countless benefits of daily exercise, *everyone* would want it. The problem is you have to *do* it. And therein lies the challenge.

We've all heard that habitual exercise is a critical weapon in combatting adult (and child) obesity, but believe me, it's even more important to your overall systemic health than trimming your waistline. Our bodies are designed with engines that need revving. And the more your engines sit idle, the more your metabolic, emotional and cognitive health declines. Remember, the goal is for you and your beloveds to have your *healthspan* equal your lifespan.

I'll boil down the research and tell you succinctly: People who exercise daily have significantly better heart and lung fitness, better insulin sensitivity, stronger bones, more restful sleep, emotional stability, *and* improved cognitive function.

If it's been a long time since you've experienced the kind of athletic fitness you desire, I'm here to reassure you that it's not a destination; it's a journey! Let yours begin today! Spoiler alert ... it's *not* about spending time at the gym; it's all about incorporating more movement.

Furthermore, parents play a pivotal role in shaping their children's attitudes toward ongoing physical activity. Contrary to popular opinion, organized sports do *not* stimulate lifelong habits of daily exercise. It truly starts with parental involvement and modeling. By demonstrating an active lifestyle, your kiddos will be much more apt to mimic your actions. Now, while the Michigan weather is so lovely, try engaging in family walks after dinner, participating in sports or games together, prioritizing outdoor playtime, or even prompting a family dance party in your living room.

If you're a "wannabe" daily exerciser, chances are you are regularly "shoulding" on yourself for not working out enough and feeling guilty about it. Here are some tips that have helped many of my patients' families jump-start their flab-to-fit journey:

- Commit to two 10-minute walks a day, remembering that every step counts. Use a step counter to track your progress. For bonus points, carry a stretchy fitness band to do some upper-body strength training during your walk.
- Try weaving physical activity into the fabric of daily life, such as incorporating a handful of 60-second breaks for jumping jacks, stretching, pushups, crunches or squats during work or study sessions.
- Expand the role of playfulness in physical activity. Movement should be fun and enjoyable rather than a chore. Take a go at activities that involve social interaction, game playing and/or creativity, such as hopscotch, keep-away, badminton, pickleball, jump rope, tag, dance challenges, Marco Polo (a water game) or synchronized swimming. By fostering a playful approach to exercise, you will empower your children to lead active lives from an early age.
- Go on nature walks, scavenger hunts or trail rides on your bike. There are so many psychological, even spiritual, benefits to exercise — and most especially if you can be outdoors when you do it!

Never forget the immense role that daily movement plays in your overall health and happiness! Every effort counts — not only in promoting physical health today, but also in laying the foundation for lifelong habits that enhance the overall quality of your life.



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