

Regular Exercise Can Reduce Severe COVID Symptoms

Recent study shows any movement goes a long way

We can add one more possible benefit to getting regular exercise.

According to a [study](#) published recently by the British Journal of Sports Medicine, people who exercise consistently and then tested positive for COVID-19 were less likely to develop more severe COVID symptoms.

“I thought that the study fortifies the importance of having movement every day and focusing on weight control,” says Kathleen Meade, Family Nurse Practitioner, OSF HealthCare. “It plays a major factor in our immune response, not only in the COVID virus but all viruses and bacteria and other diseases that you are more prone to if you aren’t moving and develop obesity.”

Regular exercise helps improve immune function and lung capacity, as well as cardiovascular and muscle function. The lungs and heart are two major organs that have been greatly impacted by COVID.

“If you think about the risks that we have for increased severity of COVID revolve around some of the comorbid factors of obesity and inactivity, which lead to other diseases, including diabetes and heart disease,” says Meade. “If you extrapolate that out you can see how exercise can help improve the outcomes of COVID.”

The study revealed that compared to people who exercise between 11 and 149 minutes a week, inactive people were 120 % more likely to be hospitalized and 110 % more likely to need critical care admission.

“People who are inactive have a tendency to have some of the high-risk morbid factors including diabetes (type II) and also heart disease,” says Meade. “If they are starting out in a deficit, then the addition of the COVID virus puts them at a higher risk of needing intensive care.”

The American Heart Association recommends people get at least 150 minutes per week of moderate-intensity aerobic activity. According to Meade, it’s important to start gradually and any type of activity is a good start, including walking your dog or using the steps at home or work.

“When you think of exercise you don’t always have to think about being on a treadmill or lifting weights,” says Meade. “You can get outside and garden or a nice walk in the park; you can find many activities outside just to get out and get some fresh air, but it also helps with your vitamin D level, which is an immune booster, and it helps your general overall disposition.”

Check with your physician before starting any type of exercise program.

For more information about starting an exercise program, visit the [American Heart Association](#).