

Script – Broadcast – Taking steps to fight off depression

INTRO

For years, we've heard about the many health benefits of walking and exercise in general. That includes for better mental health.

A new [study](#) published in the journal JAMA Network Open found that the steps we walk each day can help reduce symptoms of depression.

When you're feeling depressed or anxious, walking or any type of exertion might be the last thing you want to do. But a few miles or even a few steps can really go a long way to helping you feel better.

Victor Mendoza, a behavioral health provider for OSF HealthCare, says regular exercise such as walking can release natural brain chemicals called endorphins. It can help ease your mind of worries, help gain confidence and improve social interaction with others. It helps you get motivated, helps you get moving and helps you do the things you want to do," Mendoza says.

VO

The American Heart Association recommends 150 minutes a week of activity for better overall health. When it comes to exercise for improving mental health, Mendoza says the key is getting started – even if it's just five minutes or a quick lap around the block.

The study indicates that no matter the type of activity or intensity, every bit counts when it comes to preventing depression. The research reviewed 33 studies involving more than 96,000 adults.

Taking more steps isn't the only move you can make toward better mental health. It can be many things, as long as you're moving and active.

Many people struggle with finding the motivation to exercise, especially in the winter. Mendoza recommends going to a mall and walking around the center court or even in the store aisles. If that doesn't work, consider joining a gym, getting a trainer or asking a friend to go for a walk. You need to make the activity enjoyable to keep it up.

Mendoza stresses it's important to remain patient with yourself when it comes to starting an exercise routine.

(((SOS)))

Victor Mendoza, behavioral health provider, OSF HealthCare

"We're going to have some lows, and there's going to be time that we're just going to not be able to be consistent with it, but that's OK. That's part of being human. We are affected by our emotions, and sometimes they don't let us do those things that we know are good for us. It's just giving ourselves some breaks and telling ourselves, today was not a good day, but tomorrow we're going to try again. And restart that process and go back to that exercise routine." (:29)