

Editorial**Daily Exercise Helps Keep the Sniffles Away****Dr. Azhar Masud Bhatti**A. Director Health Services, EPI Punjab, Lahore
&
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Regular exercise can improve your mood, help you lose weight, and add years to your life. Still need another reason to hit the gym? A new study suggests that working out regularly helps ward off colds and flu.

In the study, researchers followed a group of about 1,000 adults of all ages for 12 weeks during the winter and fall of 2008. During that time, people who logged at least 20 minutes of moderate aerobic exercise such as jogging, hiking, or swimming on five or more days per week were sick with cold or flu symptoms for just five days on average, compared to about 8.5 days among people who exercised one day per week or less.

What's more, regular exercisers tended to have milder symptoms when they were ill. Compared to the people who barely exercised, those who worked out frequently rated their symptoms about 40% less severe overall, according to the study, which was published in the British Journal of Sports Medicine.

Exercise is thought to boost the circulation of the virus fighting white blood cells known as natural killer cells—the “Marine Corps and Army of the immune system,” says the lead author of the study, David Nieman, a Professor of health, leisure, and exercise science at Appalachian State University, in Boone, N.C. “Exercise gets these cells out to deal with the enemy.”

The increased immune activity brought on by exercise only lasts for about three hours, but the cumulative effect seems to keep disciplined exercisers healthier than most. “As the days add up, it adds up to improved protection (from) the viruses that can make you sick,” Nieman says.

Endorphins may also play a role, says Len Horovitz, MD, a pulmonary specialist of Leno Hill Hospital, in New York City. These feel-good neurotransmitters the source of the so called runner's high have “positive effects on the immune system, so it's not surprising there's a spike in immune cells,” says Dr. Horovitz, who was not involved in the study.

It's also possible that people who exercise frequently tend to lead healthy lifestyles in general, and are therefore less likely than couch potatoes to get sick.

Nieman and his colleagues measured a host of factors besides exercise that could potentially affect a person's susceptibility to cold or flu, including age, gender, diet, stress levels, marital status, smoking and educational attainment. Of all of these physical activity was most closely linked to the number of days a person spent

sick, although some characteristics, such as being married and eating a lot of fruit, seemed to help protect against colds and flu as well.

“You can't do much about your age, and you can't do much about your gender. Here's something you can really do,” Nieman says, “Exercise is the most powerful weapon that an individual has in their hand to reduce illness days.”

Exercise is vital to keep a person healthy. Not only does it add to health benefits but also keeps a person fit and young. Fortunately it is something that we all can do and it is never too early and neither too late to make exercise a healthy habit. Sadly, many women with their burdening responsibilities find exercise routine vigorous and time consuming. As work, family and other responsibilities take precedence, they find it difficult to go to the gym or to fit any form of exercises into their schedule. However, aerobic exercise are one such practice that can be done easily at home without the help of an instructor.

Aerobics is a physical exercise that includes stretching and strength training routines of flexibility, muscular strength and cardio-vascular fitness. Practically aerobic exercises stimulate the heart and lung activity by increasing the level of oxygen, strengthening both the circulatory system and physiological endurance. “Aerobic exercises are low in intensity. Due to its rhythmic movements, it is suitable for women, old people and those who are not very fit.

- Strengthens the respiratory system, bones and muscles.
- Strengthens heart muscles.
- Normalises blood pressure.
- Reduces risk in osteoporosis.
- Reduces obesity and helps in weight loss.
- Increases cell respiration by adding to the amount and speed of the blood flow.
- Reduces the dangers of heart diseases.
- Lowers cholesterol.
- Prevents the onset of type 2 diabetes in adults.
- Increases energy level.
- Alleviates anxiety and depression.
- Prevents arthritis.
- Improves the quality of sleep.
- Decreases the risk of various types of cancer.

“if you have a hectic lifestyle that does not allow you to join a gym, you could always workout at home. For that planning is very important, so set a particular time for exercise and plan your weekly routine in advance,” Here are some of the best aerobic exercises:

Dance: It is the most effective way of aerobics that can be done without equipment.

Skipping: this fun exercise is easy and can be done on the spot. Skipping keeps one light on the toes and is also a very efficient fat burner.

Shadow boxing: this is an excellent way to burn calories and tone muscles. It's mostly low impact and can be done in doors.

Aerobics for the young and old: People in their teens are more energetic and can cope up with heavy and fast exercises while older people will find it impossible to keep up with a heavy exercise routine. “To avoid risks and injuries, older people need to follow low impact aerobics while younger people can practice high impact aerobics.”

Low impact aerobics: Low impact exercises are designed to protect the muscle groups from being overused or stressed.

They are for older people, pregnant women or those suffering from diseases like osteoporosis and arthritis. Also those who are completely new to exercise can start off with this routine as they may be at a risk of injury if they start high intensity exercises. Low impact aerobic exercises include walking and stair climbing.

High impact aerobics: High impact exercises are for younger people or those who are used to working out regularly. Such exercise routines are meant to strengthen the muscles and lungs. It also helps in reducing cholesterol levels.

The different types of high impact aerobics include jazz and hip-hop aerobics. Hip-hop aerobics include contemporary dance steps while jazz aerobics include funky twists and some steps of yoga.

Negative affects: Aerobics has many physical and mental health benefits but it can also harm people suffering from a number of health conditions. Aerobics can be dangerous for:

- Those suffering from heart disease.
- People who have recently had a surgery related to the heart, kidney or liver.
- Women who have a weak body immune system.
- Those suffering from arthritis, diabetes, high level of blood pressure, heart diseases, osteoporosis or any other kind of blood diseases.

It is advised to people who suffer from the above mentioned conditions to consult medical experts before starting off with any exercise routine.

Lower back pain can cause people to stop exercising because of discomfort or fear of causing further injury to their back. The lack of activity can cause the back

muscles to become “de-conditioned,” or weakened, setting up conditions for even more chronic pain.

Exercises such as yoga help reserve the muscle weakness by strengthening muscle of the mid-section, including the back extensors, abdominals and gluteus, which are key for stabilizing the trunk and decreasing the load on the spine.

According to background information in the study. Mary Lou Galantino, a professor of physical therapy at Richard Stockton College of New Jersey, said the study confirms previous research about the benefits of yoga for helping with conditions as varied as menopause and osteoarthritis. Other research has shown that yoga can improve mood in women with breast cancer.

“There is so much data excitingly pointing to the physical, psychological and spiritual benefits of yoga,” Galantino said. “I also believe there's a social aspect to yoga. It can foster a sense of community and overarching well-being.

There is integrated care. If done with proper breathing, postures and meditation yoga does all of that. You have to have all of the elements. If we westernize it and make it solely an athletic program, then you may not received all of the benefits.”

Though there are many causes of lower back pain, the culprit is often a herniated disc or arthritis.

Though people suffering from back pain may worry that exercise could make the pain worse, it's not likely to as long as you don't overdo it, Albert said.

The diet: Aerobics is more effective when combined with a diet that is low in fat and calories. Reducing caloric intake and increasing active exercise will result in weight reduction. “The diet should include everything like poultry, vegetables, fruits, dairy products etc. but in small proportions. Make sure that the use of sugar and oil is decreased. Intake of ample amount of water and other fluids are also essential in improving the immune system.”