

BEYOND FUNNY

Laughter is the Best Medicine

This saying has been around for centuries and can be traced back to ancient Greece where Hippocrates, the father of medicine, is said to have believed in the therapeutic power of humor. While his methods may have differed from modern medicine, the sentiment remains the same. Today, scientific research is catching up to this ancient wisdom. Research suggests the age-old adage holds surprising truth: laughter triggers a cascade of positive effects within our bodies, ranging from boosting our immune systems to reducing stress and even easing pain.



Laughter improves our health in the following ways:

A good, hard laugh exercises your diaphragm, contracts your abs, and even works out your shoulders, **relaxing your muscles** and body overall.

Laughter **triggers the release of endorphins**, the feel-good chemicals in our brains that have pain-relieving and mood-elevating properties.

The endorphins released by laughter **reduce the level of stress hormones** like cortisol. This can help lower your blood pressure, improve your sleep, and boost your overall well-being, in addition to helping navigate stressful situations with greater resilience.

Laughter increases heart rate and blood flow, which can give your cardiovascular system a workout. This can help to **lower your risk of heart disease**.

Studies suggest that laughter can actually **strengthen your immune system**. By increasing the production of infection-fighting white blood cells and antibodies, laughter may help you ward off illness or recover from it faster.



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Laughter is the Best Medicine continued

The benefits of a good laugh also extend beyond the physical. Laughter acts as a social glue, strengthening bonds and fostering a sense of belonging. When we share a laugh with others, oxytocin, the “love hormone” gets a boost. This hormone plays a crucial role in building trust and empathy, deepening our connections, and creating a sense of social support, a vital factor for mental well-being.

There are many ways to add laughter to your life, which extend beyond jokes and comedians. Research suggests that simply interacting with loved ones and engaging in playful activities are potent triggers for bringing on laughter and its associated health benefits.

By incorporating more laughter into our daily routines, we can not only boost our physical and mental well-being but also foster a more positive and joyful outlook on life. The next time you feel stressed or overwhelmed, remember the science behind a good laugh. It just might be the most contagious and enjoyable medicine you can take.

Sources:

Help Guide (helpguide.org)

Mayo Clinic (mayoclinic.org)

Very Well Mind (verywellmind.com)

National Library of Medicine (pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov)

WAYS TO ADD MORE LAUGHTER TO YOUR LIFE

- ✓ Listen to funny podcasts or comedians during your commute or while doing chores.
- ✓ Create a stash of funny memes that you can revisit when you need a pick-me-up.
- ✓ Watch videos on YouTube or TikTok, reels on Instagram, or other social media channels that regularly feature funny clips.
- ✓ Remember funny moments from your past; invite a friend or loved one to reminisce with you.
- ✓ Binge-watch funny sitcom series or have a comedy movie marathon.
- ✓ Invite friends over for a party or game night.
- ✓ Read comics or funny articles.
- ✓ Draw funny doodles or a self-portrait, or use phone apps with silly filters to have a chuckle.
- ✓ Go to a comedy club with friends.
- ✓ Play with your pets; their antics are a natural source of amusement.
- ✓ Leave yourself funny notes in unexpected places.
- ✓ Spend more time with friends who make you laugh.

