

# MENTAL HEALTH

EXERCISE TO BOOST HAPPINESS HORMONES

Do you hear yourself saying “I really don’t want to work out, but I know I will feel better if I do”? You drag yourself to the gym, dreading the workout ahead of you only to find that once you get started you actually enjoy it, feel better about yourself and have more energy than you did before you got there. Your body and mind are designed to love exercise.



Exercise stimulates a biochemical process that releases happy hormones: **endorphins, dopamine, serotonin, and oxytocin**. These hormones are timed to release in a very unique way to keep you motivated, focused, energized, and provide you with feelings of happiness and satisfaction from the start of your workout until well after it’s completed! That sounds great, right?

## What are happy hormones, why do they make us happy, and how can we get more of them?

**Endorphins** – Endorphins are released with any type of vigorous exercise such as running, cycling or lifting. They are our natural pain killers that block the perception of pain and help to combat stress.

**Serotonin** – Known as the “mood booster”, serotonin lessens irritability, depression, and helps to regulate sleep. This happy hormone is released through low to high intensity aerobic exercise. Jump on an elliptical, go for an outdoor walk or hike, roll out your yoga mat. Serotonin has a lasting effect on energy and mood well after a workout.

**Dopamine** – The motivator and pleasure seeker. Setting a goal and working towards it or finding your competitive spirit helps to release dopamine. Studies show that dopamine deficiency can make you more prone to weight gain. Working out regularly, to keep dopamine levels up, will help you to avoid those extra pounds.

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## Want even more happy hormones?



**Complex carbohydrates like chickpeas, sunflower seeds, and quinoa contribute to increased levels of serotonin. Protein-rich foods like almonds and eggs and fruits like bananas and strawberries promote the production of dopamine.**

Happiness is a state of mind. With the right kind of exercise and some dietary changes, you can have what you need to create it! So the next time you dread your trip to the gym, realize that the time and effort that you invest in a workout will promote not only your own physical fitness, but your mental wellness as well, making you feel more confident, satisfied, and happier!



### Sources:

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