

## Exercise and Depression

Depression is characterized by persistent sadness and a lack of interest or pleasure in previously rewarding or enjoyable activities. It can also disturb sleep and appetite and cause tiredness and poor concentration. Depression is a leading cause of disability around the world and contributes greatly to the global burden of disease. The effects of depression can be long-lasting or recurrent and can dramatically affect a person's ability to function and live a rewarding life.



### In Hong Kong



Depression is a common mental disorder affecting more than 264 million people worldwide. In Hong Kong, a study by The University of Hong Kong in 2014 estimated the number of depressive patients to be 780,000, 11% of the total population. The Hong Kong Mental Morbidity Survey in 2015 revealed a local prevalence of 980,000 (13%) people suffering from depression and anxiety disorders.

### Why Can Exercise Help?



Studies show that physical activity can reduce symptoms of depression as effectively as medication. Even those starting at very low levels, are less likely to experience symptoms of depression and future depressive episodes. Greater amounts of vigorous exercise have an even bigger effect. Exercise also decreases symptoms of anxiety, both acutely and chronically.

## Exercise Recommendations

### Aerobic Exercise



Be active on all days of the week but aim for at least three days a week



Exercise from light to moderate intensity level, starting with 10 mins, gradually building up to 30-60 mins over the day.



Any rhythmic, continuous activity, like walking, biking, cross-trainer

### Resistance Training



Do resistance training two or three times per week with rest days in between



Exercise with light effort and slowly build up to medium or hard effort



Target to finish 2-4 Sets of 10-15 Reps and build up to 8-12 Reps with a higher load



Exercise all major muscle groups using free weights, resistance bands or machines

A combination of aerobic and resistance training leads to the BEST health outcomes

### Tips for Getting Started

- Some psychotropic medication can cause side effects, such as dizziness, slower movement and coordination problems, especially when you first start taking them or change the dosage.
- Exercising together is more fun, improves your mood state and increases the chance you will continue.
- You'll benefit even more from being active outdoors or in nature, particularly if you have Seasonal Affective Disorder (SAD).

### References

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- 4) Stanton, R., Happell, B., & Reaburn, P. (in press). The Mental Health Benefits of Regular Physical Activity, and its Role in Preventing Future Depressive Episodes. *Nursing: Research and Reviews*