

Leyla weighs in: The exercise prescription

The benefits of exercise cannot be overstated. It is an important component of a healthy lifestyle that includes diet, fresh air, pure water and sunshine.

To put it another way, exercise is a powerful *medicine*. This medicine makes your cells more sensitive to insulin, optimizing glucose metabolism. It oxygenates muscles and organs allowing for nutrient exchange via blood circulation and detoxification through perspiration and lymphatic drainage.



This medicine releases powerful neurotransmitters called endorphins. Endorphins don't just make you feel great, like that runner's high, these important neurochemicals alleviate depression and smooth the edges around tension and anxiety. Moreover, endorphins are potent immune system modulators.

Exercise provides energy by stoking metabolism and is critical to deep, restful sleep. But did you know that it has also been shown to delay shrinkage of the hippocampus—the brain's memory center? In this way, exercise bestows positive effects on thinking and memory.

Not motivated enough to start an exercise program? Play a sport. Do you enjoy basketball, soccer or volleyball? Recreational sports create a wonderful sense of camaraderie and team spirit. And as an added bonus, the interval training is built right in!

Or, if you prefer something solo, maybe running or working out at the gym is more your thing. I'm partial to yoga and strength training myself, but I love a game of volleyball on the beach or badminton in the yard on sunny days.

A positive psychological aspect to exercise is that it's YOU time. Whether you're on the road, in the gym or on your exercise mat in the living room, it's an opportunity to get out of your head and into your body—an opportunity to be PRESENT and aware of your breath.

Namaste!