



The Health Benefits of Laughter

Dr. Andrew Weil, in his April 2005 newsletter wrote: I think it's (laughter) one of the most effective ways to reduce stress, and preliminary research suggests laughter may also boost immunity, relieve pain, lower blood sugar in people with type-2 diabetes, and help protect against heart disease.

"Laughing is great exercise. It tightens your abs, gets your endorphins going, and filters out all those anxieties that weigh you down." Denise Austin, TV fitness guru. Source: July 2006 Redbook Magazine.

Two studies released on March 8, 2005 at the American College of Cardiology recommend that people try to laugh on a regular basis. Dr. Michael Miller of the University of Maryland, School of Medicine in Baltimore said, *"Thirty minutes of exercise three times a week, and 15 minutes of laughter on a daily basis is probably good for the vascular system. The recommendation for a healthy heart may one day be to exercise, eat right and laugh a few times a day."*

According to a study by Maciej S. Buchowski, PhD, and his colleagues, using a whole-room indirect calorimeter at Vanderbilt University in Nashville, a daily laughter workout of 15 minutes can burn 40 calories, or as much as 4 pounds per year. Up to 80 muscles are used during a hearty laugh, the blood pressure rises, the heart beats faster and blood oxygen levels increase. In fact, a study released last year by German gelotologist Professor Gunther Sickl revealed that a one-minute guffaw has the same health benefits as a 45-minute gym workout. When the laughter stops, the blood pressure returns to normal and stress hormones are reduced - actually strengthening the immune system.

According to University of California, Irvine Professor Lee Berk, *"If we took what we know about the medical benefits of laughter and bottled it up, it would require FDA approval. Laughter can lower blood pressure, trigger a flood of endorphins - the brain chemicals that can bring on euphoria and decrease pain, and enhances our immune systems. Gamma-interferon, a disease-fighting protein, rises with laughter. So do B-cells, which produce disease-destroying antibodies, and T-cells, which orchestrate our body's immune response. Laughter lowers the flow of stress hormones, which suppress the immune system, raise blood pressure, and increase the number of platelets, which cause clots and potentially fatal coronary artery blockages."*

According to William F. Fry, M.D., associate professor of clinical psychiatry at Stanford University, *laughing 100-200 times per day is the cardiovascular equivalent of rowing for 10 minutes. When something strikes you as funny, you laugh. And when you laugh, your body responds. You flex, then relax, 15 facial muscles plus dozens of others all over your body. Your pulse and respiration increase briefly, oxygenating your blood. And your brain experiences a decrease in pain perception, possibly associated with the production of pain-killing, pleasure-giving endorphins.*

From **Diabetes Care May 2003**; *People with type 2 diabetes may be better able to process sugar from meals if they laugh, according to a small study. Researchers found that diabetics who watched a comedy show had a smaller rise in post-meal blood sugar than when they listened to a non-humorous lecture. The effect occurred in people without diabetes as well. Researchers are not certain why laughter appears to reduce blood sugar, but suggested that it might increase the consumption of energy by using the abdominal muscles, or might affect the neuroendocrine system, which controls glucose levels in the blood.*

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