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## PHYSICAL ACTIVITY

### Physical Activity: These Benefits Might Surprise You

It is well-known that physical activity offers a wide range of health benefits, such as improving cardiovascular health, increasing muscular strength, and relieving stress. While these benefits frequently take center stage, there are some lesser-known health benefits as well.

#### Here are a few that might surprise you:

##### Libido

Research has found<sup>1</sup> a positive association between moderate physical activity and improved libido in both men and women. It is worth noting, however, that over-training—exercising at high intensities for long periods of time—has been shown to suppress testosterone, which can have the opposite effect on libido.

##### Self-Confidence

Most people associate exercise with physical improvements, but there are some psychological benefits as well. Exercise has been linked to higher self-confidence and self-esteem<sup>2</sup>, which can help boost resiliency.

##### Mood

Exercise triggers the release of serotonin, a hormone released by the brain that has been identified by researchers as a key ingredient in mood regulation. Similar to endorphins, serotonin has been the focus of many studies seeking natural approaches to prevent and treat depression.

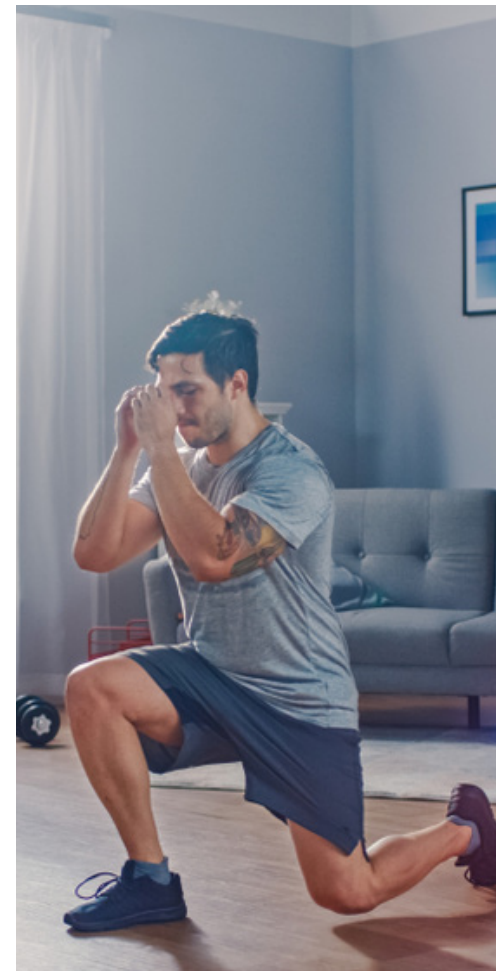
##### Creativity

Physical activity is also a creativity booster<sup>3</sup>, which can have a direct impact on your productivity and overall career success. Going for short walks throughout the day is a simple way to remove creativity blocks.

##### Energy

Another surprising benefit of exercise is that it increases the flow of oxygen-rich blood to your brain, which enhances alertness and makes you feel more energetic. If your energy levels tend to wane as the day wears on, try incorporating short bouts of activity throughout your day.

As you consider your fitness goals, be sure to take inventory of all the benefits you stand to gain, especially if you struggle to be consistent with your workouts. It might just give you the boost of motivation you need to keep pushing forward.



1. <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC5963213/>  
2. <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC5068479/>  
3. <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC1332529/>



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## Staying Active Outside the Gym

The gym is not for everyone. Whether you have concerns about overcrowded spaces or simply cannot get excited about going to a gym, there are plenty of ways to reach your fitness goals that do not require a membership card.

### Here are some simple ways to stay active outside the gym.

#### Take a walk

Walking is the simplest form of physical activity that does not require any special skills or equipment. Create a simple walking routine by mapping out a 30-minute circle near your home and setting a reminder on your calendar.

#### Begin a movement meditation

Bundle your meditation practice with physical movement. Walking and yoga are activities that can be easily incorporated into a meditation practice. If finding time for self-care is a challenge, use your time more efficiently by bundling your daily routines.

#### Join an online fitness studio

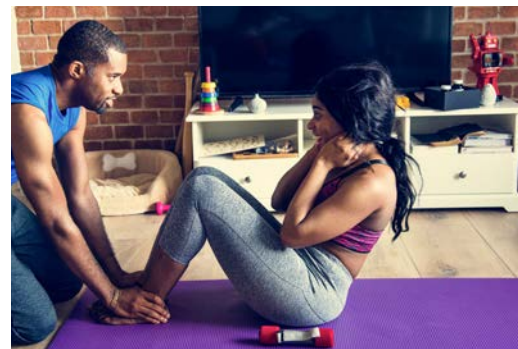
Many fitness classes can be accessed online, making it possible to exercise in the comfort of your own home. Yoga, dance classes, aerobics, spinning, and many other types of activities are offered for free or for a nominal monthly fee.

#### Assemble a home gym

Gather some free weights and build your own home gym. Even if space is limited, small pieces of equipment can be stored easily in closets or beneath your bed.

#### Find a fitness partner

Ask a partner or friend to join you for outdoor workouts. Leveraging the motivation of a fitness buddy can help build accountability and consistency. If you struggle to show up for workouts, having a partner could make all the difference.



*Having a gym membership is not necessary to achieve fitness results; finding what works for you is what matters most.*





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## Unconventional Ways to Improve Your Fitness

If you struggle to maintain excitement about your workouts, it might be time for a fitness makeover. Give yourself a boost of motivation by incorporating some new forms of physical activity into your routine. Here are some unconventional ways to improve your fitness:

### Ariel Yoga

Most people are familiar with traditional styles of yoga, but aerial yoga takes it to a whole new level. This modern format incorporates hammocks that hang from the ceiling, allowing participants to dangle above the ground in various inverted poses. It is guaranteed to bring a smile to your face.

### Hula Hoop

Hula hooping can be a fun way to spruce up your fitness routine. It may take some time to get the hang of it, but once you do, it may very well become part of your permanent workout plan. If you have kids in the home, they may want to join in on the fun, too.

### Dancing

Grab a dance partner and take some dance lessons. Experiment with tango, swing, ballroom, or one of the many other styles of dancing to find one that you enjoy. Since many classes are available online, you do not even have to leave your living room.



*Consider incorporating some nontraditional forms of physical activity for a boost of motivation when you need it.*

### Aqua Aerobics

Water aerobics has been around for a long time. One reason for its popularity is that it is easier on joints, which makes it a great option for people who have issues with balance and stability.

### Belly Dancing

If you are looking to spice up your fitness routine, belly dancing might be worth a try. It does not require any special equipment, and it is impossible to not have fun. Consider inviting a friend to join you for some extra belly laughs.

### Treadmill Workstation

If you get stranded behind your keyboard a lot, take multi-tasking to the next level. Treadmill workstations include a desk, so you can type away while you walk. Most models limit your max speed as a safety precaution. If you struggle to get enough physical activity throughout the week, this might be an effective way to get it.







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# RECIPE

## Avocado & Spiced Hummus Sandwich

### INGREDIENTS

- 4 slices of your fave gluten-free bread
- ½ of an avocado, peeled and sliced into thick strips
- 1 medium tomato, sliced thick
- ½ small sweet onion, sliced thinly
- ½ cup thinly sliced carrots
- 2 tablespoons chopped cilantro
- ¼ teaspoon black pepper
- Pinch of salt
- 4 tablespoons prepared plain hummus
- ½ teaspoon chili powder
- 1 teaspoon pure maple syrup

### VINAIGRETTE:

- Juice from 1 large lime
- 1 tablespoon apple cider vinegar
- 2 teaspoons maple syrup
- ½ tablespoon extra virgin olive oil

### Total Time:

Prep: 7 min. Cook: 7 min.

### Servings: 2



### INSTRUCTIONS

1. Slice the avocado into thick strips, and dip in the lime juice. Sprinkle with a pinch of salt and set aside.
2. Slice the onion, carrots, and tomato, and add to a medium sized bowl.
3. In another small bowl, whisk together the vinaigrette ingredients, and pour into the bowl with the onion, carrot, and tomato. Let sit for a few minutes while preparing the rest of the sandwich.
4. In another small bowl mix together the hummus with the chili powder and maple syrup.
5. Toast the bread and divide the hummus between the slices of toasted bread.
6. Between two slices, layer the avocado, a couple slices of tomato, the onion, shredded carrots, and a pepper.
7. Pour a drizzle of the vinaigrette over the layered ingredients. Top with the cilantro and the last piece of toast to close to sandwiches.

### NUTRITION INFO

(per serving)

Calories <i>kcal</i>	355
Carbs <i>g</i>	57
Fat <i>g</i>	14
Protein <i>g</i>	7
Sodium <i>mg</i>	373
Sugar <i>g</i>	11

Source:  
<https://nutritioninthekitch.com/avocado-spiced-hummus-sandwich/>