

Exercise for All Conditions

review by Jule Klotter

The Exercise Cure, by Jordan D. Metzl, MD
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“Exercise is honest, inexpensive, all-natural medicine,” says Jordan D. Metzl, MD. “When formerly sedentary people start moving regularly, miraculous things happen – just as miraculous as any treatment or procedure or drug I’ve ever seen or prescribed in my medical career.” Metzl is a sports medicine physician at New York City’s Hospital for Special Surgery. He, along with fitness coach Andrew Heffernan, CSCS, has written *The Exercise Cure* – the most comprehensive and user-friendly book on physical activity that I’ve come across. The book is divided into four sections: an overview of exercise benefits, specific exercise recommendations for common ailments, a detailed fitness program, and concise advice about diet. The book also includes illustrations and instructions for dozens of stretches and strength-building exercises. Throughout the book, Metzl urges readers to find physical activities that they enjoy rather than making exercise “another obligation on a never-ending to-do list.”

Exercise does far more than strengthen muscles and promote cardiovascular fitness. The increased blood flow that comes with movement benefits every cell and organ in the body. Movement of any kind engages areas throughout the brain, including emotional, memory, and decision-making centers. Memory and cognitive function especially benefit when movement is combined with novelty such as walking an unfamiliar route or learning a new dance or sport. Physical activity increases energy, improves mood, and deepens sleep, aiding the body’s ability to heal. Regular exercise boosts immune function and reduces chronic low-level inflammation. All in all, physical activity improves quality of life and increases

“Give yourself permission to fail, to look awkward, to be a rank beginner. Babies and toddlers learn new physical skills at an astounding rate. You know why? They aren’t afraid to stink at something.”

longevity. “The higher your fitness level, the longer you’ll live,” Metzl writes. People who have the strength, flexibility, and coordination to rise from a seated position on the floor without using their hands or other help live much longer than those who need help to stand up, according to Brazilian research.

The Exercise Cure provides exercise advice for people with various physical and psychological problems and illnesses as well as for healthy folk wanting to take part in marathons and triathlons. People with back pain, for example, are encouraged to find ways to keep moving. “The most important exercise you can do for your lower back is to get up out of your chair as often as you can: Sitting weakens the muscles that surround your spine and leaves you vulnerable to injury,” Metzl writes. Special sections on heart disease and cancer give guidelines for safe, beneficial activity for patients. Whether addressing cognitive, psychological, cardiopulmonary, metabolic, hormonal, or musculoskeletal problems, Metzl gives a brief explanation of the physiology, exercise suggestions, and research that backs his suggestions. Each section also includes a note for “When to Call a Doctor.”

Too often, exercise is viewed as a one-size-fits-all workout at the gym. *The Exercise Cure* has a more individualized approach, providing basic guidance for encouraging physical activity in people with diverse conditions. It is a great resource for anyone who seeks a better quality of life.



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