

Can Physical Education Make You Smarter?



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By Melinda Bossenmeyer

For some time, researchers have known that exercise changes the structure of the brain, resulting in improvements in concentration, fidgeting and creates new brain cells.

The body-mind link is well documented. But current thinking and actions (like eliminating recess and physical education) leads me to question if some decisions reflect the cliché that "our bodies exist to carry our heads around." Current thinking on the topic however, acknowledges, "Any thinking has the whole body participating."

Physiologically it appears that blood flow to the brain stimulates brain growth as a result of physical activity and exercise by oxygenating the brain. Early research indicates that physical exercise defined as "aerobic" exercise induces neuroplasticity changes in different brain regions.

What type of exercise is best for brain growth?

Movement and exercise increase breathing and heart rate so that more blood flows to the brain, enhancing energy production and waste removal. Studies show that in response to exercise, cerebral blood vessels can grow, even in middle-aged sedentary animals. ([Franklin Institute](#) 📄)

Walking is especially good for your brain, because it increases blood circulation and the oxygen and glucose that reach your brain. Walking is not strenuous, so your leg muscles don't take up extra oxygen and glucose like they do during other forms of exercise. As you walk, you effectively oxygenate your brain. Maybe this is why walking can "clear your head"