

## “5 Ways Laughter Can Enhance Your Workout” by Dan Israeli

"So, a dim-witted guy goes golfing with his buddies for the first time. He brings his golf clubs, golf shoes, golf gloves, and two pairs of pants. His friends, puzzled, ask, “Why the two pairs of pants?” The dim-witted guy simply responds, “Ya know. In case I get a hole in one.”

Did you laugh? Maybe a little chuckle? OK, probably not. There is a good chance though (despite our lame attempt at humor) that you *did* laugh today, hopefully a few times. The average person, in fact, laughs 13 to 15 times day, according to [laughteryoga.com](http://laughteryoga.com).

But laughing is much more than just an emotional response to something funny. It's physical. Laughing exercises several muscles in the body, including your abdomen, back, shoulders, and 15 facial muscles. And it *may* enhance your workout.

In a [recent study](#) at Oxford University, scientists tested the correlation between laughter and decreased pain threshold on a group of volunteer subjects. Researchers demonstrated that pain thresholds of volunteers would increase after watching comedic videos, but not after viewing boring documentaries.

Makes sense, right? Laughter plays a vital part in raising the body's level and release of endorphins, and the resulting euphoric and natural feeling often known as “runner's high.” When your endorphins are kicking, your mind and body are less susceptible to pain, like the strenuous pain you go through during exercise, according to the Oxford study.

While you can raise your pain threshold through different means, laughter is a good old-fashioned way to get in the right physical and mental state needed to push through the day— and *especially* a rigorous workout. “There's a lot of evidence that frequent, mild bursts of activity are good for our fitness, in addition to major, intensive workouts,” says Dr. Deirdre Barrett, professor of evolutionary psychology at Harvard and author *Supernormal Stimuli*. “And laughter is one of the most pleasurable ways to accomplish that.” Here's how laughter can give your workout the energy it is missing.

**It works your core to release tension** – It is called a belly laugh for a reason. With core strength and agility being so vital to physical fitness, it is good to know that laughing exercises the diaphragm while also contracting your abdominal muscles and even your shoulders. The result is not only a mini workout crunch (according to [laughteryoga.com](http://laughteryoga.com)), but also a release of tension throughout the body to keep your muscles loose and limber for the long haul.

**It improves your mood to keep going** – The benefits of having a workout buddy are not limited to motivation or safety, like lifting spotters. Sharing a laugh with friends exponentially raises your pain threshold, as the group dynamic posted strong results in the Oxford study. “Laughter is obviously good for your mood and social bonding,” says Barrett. “Camaraderie at the gym or among running buddies helps get people get out and exercising, and also motivates them to keep going as they fatigue.”

**It teaches you to breathe properly** – Anyone who invests heavy time in cardio or weightlifting knows the essential importance of breathing technique. While you may feel

somewhat out of breath during a serious laughter outburst, the process of emptying your lungs has a positive effect on the respiratory system, according to Barrett. “It makes it easier to push through uncomfortable parts of your routine. An excellent stimulation of your lungs—much like power-breathing yoga—gives you little aerobic bursts when done between workouts.”

**It increases your cardio capacity** – “Laughter is a great workout for the respiratory system, and somewhat for the cardiovascular system as well,” says Barrett. It’s been shown in studies that laughter does in fact lower your blood pressure and ease the natural flow of blood through your body, improving cardiovascular strength. In fact, laughing 100 times a day has been known to equal 15 minutes of cardio exercise. Of course, low blood pressure also equates to low stress and having a tense-free session at the gym.

**It fights off germs to keep you healthy** – During COVID- 19 and the fall season in the upcoming months, many of us will have to combat sickness while keeping up with our gym routines. Good thing that laughter also assists another bodily system that you’d probably never assume. “Several earlier studies have found that laughter boosts the immune system, raising levels of antibodies and natural killer cells,” says Barrett. Whether you’re baring the outside cold or combating gym germs, having a strong immune system is key for workouts. "

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