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Exercise Eases Menopause Symptoms

Study Shows Regular Exercise Improves Mental and Physical Health of Menopausal Women

By [Jennifer Warner](#)
WebMD Medical News

Reviewed By [Louise Chang, MD](#)
on Friday, March 24, 2006

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March 24, 2006 -- It's never too late for women to reap the benefits from starting a regular exercise program, according to a new study that shows exercise can relieve the symptoms of menopause and improve quality of life.

Researchers found menopausal women aged 55-72 who started a yearlong exercise program experienced significant improvement in both mental and physical health while those who didn't exercise got worse.

"The group that improved took part in three hours of fully supervised exercise a week for 12 months," says researcher Carmen Villaverde-Gutierrez, professor of nursing at the University of Granada in Spain, in a news release. "As well as monitoring severe symptoms, we also looked at the women's quality of life and found that the average scores for the exercise group improved while those for the control group decreased."

The results appear in the *Journal of Advanced Nursing*.

Exercise Relieves Symptoms

In the study, researchers examined the effects of an exercise program consisting of cardiovascular, stretching, muscle strengthening, and relaxation exercises in 48 menopausal women. Half of the women participated in the 12-month exercise program and the other half did not.

At the start of the study, 50% of the women in the exercise group and about 58% of nonexercising women had severe menopausal symptoms. By the end of the study, the percentage of women with severe menopausal symptoms dropped to 37% among the exercise group and rose to over 66% among the others.

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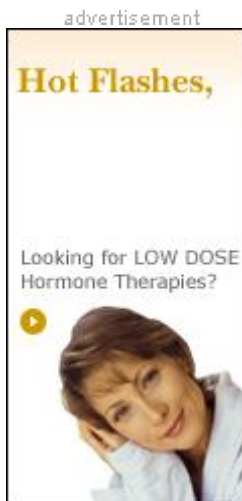
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The exercise group also improved on measures of physical and psychological functioning and positive state of mind, while the nonexercisers declined in these areas.

"Joining the regular exercise programme improved the women's health and also gave them the chance to join a sociable group activity and reduce feelings of loneliness," says Villaverde Gutierrez in a news release. "Our findings suggest that regular exercise programmes can help alleviate some of the physical symptoms associated with the menopause and improve women's health and quality of life."

"We would like to see exercise programmes offered as an integral part of primary healthcare for menopausal women. At the very least, women going through the menopause should be encouraged to join a local exercise group suitable for their age and health so that they can share the benefits experienced by the women in our study," says Villaverde-Gutierrez.

SOURCES: Villaverde-Gutierrez, C. *Journal of Advanced Nursing*, April 2006; vol 54; pp 11-19. News release, *Journal of Advanced Nursing*.

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