



**EXERCISE  
AND  
HEALTH: 10  
EVIDENCE-  
BASED  
REASONS TO  
MOVE**

*by Kate Nunn  
Osteopath at The  
Perrymount Clinic*

The Perrymount Clinic  
Hurstwood Grange  
Hurstwood Lane  
Haywards Heath  
West Sussex  
RH17 7QX  
01444 410944

[www.theperrymount.com](http://www.theperrymount.com)  
[kate@theperrymount.com](mailto:kate@theperrymount.com)

## 1. EXERCISE IS ONE OF THE BEST INTERVENTIONS WE HAVE FOR MOST MUSCULOSKELETAL PAIN

THIS large review of over 3000 papers compared the effectiveness of different treatment options for musculoskeletal issues. It showed that exercise has a moderate to strong level of effectiveness and often outperforms other treatment options in the longer term such as pain medications, injections, surgery, manual therapy, ultrasound, acupuncture, ice/heat and other passive interventions.



## 2. EXERCISE IS ANTI INFLAMMATORY

Regular exercise protects against diseases associated with chronic low-grade inflammation such as cardiovascular disease, type 2 diabetes, some cancers and dementia. Various papers including THIS one propose that myokines, which are released by muscles when they contract, are transported around the body and have an anti inflammatory effect, which is protective against those diseases associated with low-grade, chronic inflammation.





### 3. LACK OF EXERCISE

Lack of exercise is a major cause of most chronic diseases

Modern humans have been able to engineer most physical activity out of daily life! We now have a choice not to be physically active. Conclusive and overwhelming scientific evidence [HERE](#) exists for physical inactivity as a primary and actual cause of most chronic diseases, including accelerated biological aging, obesity, type 2 diabetes, non-alcoholic fatty liver disease, hypertension, coronary heart disease, stroke, cognitive dysfunction, colon cancer, breast cancer and many others. A lack of physical activity affects almost every cell, organ, and system in the body causing sedentary dysfunction and accelerated death. It doesn't really matter what type of exercise or movement you decide to do to reduce the risk of chronic illness, so choose something you love as you are more likely to do it!



### 4. MENTAL HEALTH

The more we understand about ourselves the more we are realising that the mind and body cannot be separated. So unsurprisingly, exercise has been shown to have massive positive effects on our mental health too. Clinical evidence has demonstrated that exercise can improve brain function and protect memory and thinking skills. It also has a positive relationship with the outcome of different mental diseases, such as depression, anxiety, chronic stress, Alzheimer's disease and Parkinson's disease, improving not only patients quality of life but the disease itself, see [HERE](#).

## 5. PHYSICAL ACTIVITY REDUCES CHRONIC PAIN

This large study [HERE](#) looked at the relationship between recreational exercise and chronic pain. Both older and younger people were studied and the researchers found that for both groups exercise participation was associated with reduced chronic pain. A relationship was also shown for the frequency, duration and intensity of that exercise.

This study [HERE](#) showed that older adults who were MORE active also had better endogenous pain inhibitory mechanisms when their conditioned pain modulation was tested. In other words, the more active they were the better their natural pain killing mechanisms were!



## 6. IT CAN INCREASE YOUR ENERGY LEVELS

Exercise can be a real energy booster for healthy people as well as those suffering from various medical conditions.

This study [HERE](#) found that 6 weeks of regular exercise reduced feelings of fatigue for healthy people who had reported persistent fatigue. Furthermore, exercise can significantly increase energy levels for people suffering from chronic fatigue syndrome (CFS), fibromyalgia and other serious illnesses. In fact, exercise seems to be more effective at combating CFS than other treatments including relaxation and stretching, see [HERE](#).





## 7. EXERCISE WILL NOT WEAR OUT YOUR JOINTS OR OTHER BODY PARTS!

Many people view the body a bit like a machine, with the idea that the more we use a body part the more we will wear it out. This is simply not true. We are living organisms, constantly adapting and changing to suit our environment. Instead of the phrase "wear and tear" a more accurate description of our bodies reacting to physical activity should be "wear and repair".

Let's look at some examples:

A common belief is that the discs in our spine wear out the more we use them. This classic Twin Spine Study [HERE](#) looked at twins to determine the major contributors to disc degeneration. They suggest that the commonly held view that degeneration is primarily a result of ageing and "wear and tear" from mechanical insults and injuries was NOT supported.

In fact this study [HERE](#) shows that more vigorous exercise was associated with BETTER disc health.

Running does NOT wear out your knees! There is a growing body of evidence [HERE](#) that recreational running up to a marathon distance actually has a PROTECTIVE effect against the development of knee osteoarthritis compared to non runners.

This study from 2017 [HERE](#) found that if you have a rotator cuff tear (which is a common shoulder complaint) the tear getting worse did NOT appear to be simply related to activity levels. In fact they suggest pain development is actually associated with LOWER activity levels.



## **8. REGULAR EXERCISE IS ASSOCIATED WITH LONGER LIFE!**

Exercise can help add years to life, and above all, add life to years, by partially counteracting the effects of aging on physiological functions and preserving functional reserve in elderly. Numerous studies, including [THIS](#) one have shown that maintaining a minimal quantity and quality of exercise increases longevity. Recommendations include aerobic and resistance exercises to improve cardiorespiratory fitness and muscle function, as well as exercises targeting flexibility and balance.



## **9. IT'S GOOD FOR YOUR MUSCLES AND BONES**

Exercise plays a vital role in building and maintaining strong muscles and bones. As we age we tend to lose muscle mass and function, which can lead to injuries and disabilities. Physical activity like weight lifting can offset some of these changes by maintaining strength and reducing the risk of falls and injury.

Exercise also helps build bone density when you are younger, in addition to helping prevent osteoporosis later in life. Interestingly, high-impact exercise such as running or odd impact sports such as football and basketball have been shown [HERE](#) to promote higher bone density than non-contact, less weight bearing sports such as cycling and swimming.



## 10. IT CAN HELP WITH WITH SLEEP QUALITY

Regular exercise can help you relax and sleep better. Many studies on the effects of exercise on sleep have reached similar conclusions. THIS study found that 150 minutes of moderate to vigorous exercise a week can provide up to 65% improvement in sleep quality. Also, lots of studies show that engaging in regular exercise seems to be beneficial for the elderly, who tend to be affected by sleep disorders. You can be flexible with the kind of exercise you chose as it appears HERE that aerobic exercise alone or aerobic exercise combined with resistance training can equally help with sleep quality.



### WRITTEN BY KATE NUNN

I'm an Associate Osteopath at the Perrymount Clinic, and I work closely with patients to help restore health and wellbeing using a range of manual therapy techniques, exercise and movement prescription, lifestyle advice and self-management strategies. My experience includes treating long term (chronic) back and neck pain, shoulder problems, joint pain and osteoarthritis as well as acute conditions such as sports injuries and trauma.

What does movement in lockdown look like for me?

As well as running with my kids, I really love Yoga with Adriene, she has hundreds of free videos on her YouTube channel and caters for complete beginners upwards. And of course Joe Wicks, the nation's P.E teacher! He offers free cardio and strength workouts on his channel, but did you know he has done some excellent videos for the older adult too?

If you are unsure how to incorporate more movement into lockdown life, or if you're struggling with pain and don't know what exercise you could or should be doing then have a think about booking a telehealth consultation with one of our osteopaths. We may not be able to see you in person but research is demonstrating that telehealth appointments are a helpful way to guide, support, educate and rehab you back to living well.

[Click here to book online with Kate](#)

