

Exercise helps, hinders immune system

Question: Can exercise help my immune system?

Answer: Studies have shown that exercise generally improves your immune system. Like most things in life, however, too much of a good thing can have consequences.



**ERIC
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ASK THE EXPERT

Research indicates that mild to moderate exercise, such as doing cardio exercise four times a week for 45 minutes, can boost your immune system. This beneficial boost may be because of several factors, such as sweating that helps remove waste products quicker and a pumping heart that helps bacteria-fighting white blood cells better circulate throughout your body. Mild to moderate exercise also may reduce stress, which is helpful because high stress has been shown to suppress the immune system.

Keep in mind that this immune-

system boost is strongest right after you exercise. If you're traveling, that means it can be a good idea to do your workout right before you get on the plane. That puts you in the best position to fight off any germs shared by other travelers.

What if you're a heavy exerciser? If you exercise 2.5 hours daily or run more than 60 hours weekly, you will have a suppressed immune system. No, you don't need to stop training or exercising. But you do need to be aware that your immune system is suppressed.

That means being extra careful to wash your hands, which is the best defense against infection. Additionally, any scrapes, foot blisters, injured toes, road rash or other injuries that cause your skin not to be intact need to be cleaned and properly cared for. Be on the lookout for signs of infection and know that you may need medical care sooner rather than later.

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