

Headache & Fitness

by Brent Lucas, BA, London, Ontario, Canada

Regular exercise can reduce your risk of headaches, and lack of regular physical exercise can leave you more susceptible to chronic headaches. Not only is exercise good at giving the headache sufferer an overall sense of well-being, it helps to promote good health. Exercise- depending on the individual - ranges from walking, treadmill, stationary bikes to aerobics. We now know that aerobic respiration increases our endorphins (our bodies' pain-preventing chemicals!) thereby reducing the sensation of headache pain felt!

Below are 4 major points for you to consider when making the critical decision to begin exercising. **First**, do it regularly, not severely. Prevention and moderation are always good pain preventing measures to follow. Walking is an excellent aerobic exercise and can frequently be done with others to get the added benefit of social support. **Second**, use stretching exercises to maintain flexibility and reduce injury. Always follow an instructor's advice on how to stretch. **Thirdly**, slow down or stop if you have increased pain from exercising. Always consult with an exercise professional. He or she can suggest exercises that will not bring on pain. **Fourth**, always start an exercise routine consulting with your doctor - then under supervision of a trained aerobic instructor.

The benefit of added social support is not only evident when your friend goes to work out with you, or to walk together with you, it brings you that extra bit of motivation we sometimes need.

An extra benefit of walking is that it is free.

Exercising can greatly reduce the frequency of headache attacks, and give you a greater sense of self. The benefit here is not just staying in shape, but feeling better all over. Take exercise seriously and your headache pain will surely diminish - but the first step comes from you - the sufferer.