HEALTH BENEFITS OF LAUGHTER AND HUMOUR

Anti Stress

Laughter is one of the finest, most economical and easy to practice anti-stress measures. Laughter is one of the best muscle relaxants. Laughter expands blood vessels and sends more blood to the extremities and other muscles all over the body. A good bout of laughter also reduces the levels of stress hormones epineprine and cortisol. It can be said to be a form of dynamic meditation or relaxation.

While laughing all our senses naturally and effortlessly combine in a moment of harmony, to give joy, peace and relaxation

Strengthens the Immune System

The immune system plays a most important role in maintaining good health and keeping away infections, allergies and cancers. It has been proved by psychoneuroimmunologists that all negative emotions like anxiety, depression or anger weaken the immune system of the body, thereby reducing its fighting capacity against infections. According to Dr. Lee S. Berk from Loma Linda University, California, USA, laughter helps to increase the count of natural killer cells (NK cells - a type of white cell) and also raises the antibody levels.

Researchers have found that after laughter therapy there is an increase in antibodies (Immunoglobulin A) in the mucous on of the nose and respiratory passages, which is believed to have a protective capacity against some viruses, bacteria and other micro organisms. Frequency of common colds, sore throats and chest infections decrease. The effect of laughter on the immune system is considered to be very significant with regard to deadly disease like AIDS and cancer.

Best Aerobic Exercise

The one benefit almost everybody derives is a sense of well-being. If you have 15 minutes of laughter in the morning, you will feel fresh throughout the day. There is no medicine like laughter which gives such an instant result. The reason for the sense of well-being is that you inhale more oxygen while laughing. Laughter can be compared to any aerobic exercises except you don't have to wear fancy shoes or clothes. You don't need to sweat hard on the jogging tracks. According to Dr. William Fry from Standford University, one minute of laughter is equal to 6 minutes on the rowing machine. In other words, laughter stimulates heart and blood circulation and is equivalent to any other standard aerobic exercise. Laughter exercise is very suitable for sedentary people and those who are confined to a bed or wheelchair.
Depression, anxiety and psychosomatic disorders

The stress and strain of modern life are taking a heavy toll of the human mind and body. Mind-related diseases like anxiety, depression, nervous breakdowns and sleeplessness are on the rise. Laughter has benefited many people who were on heavy anti-depressant pills and tranquillizers. Now they are getting better sleep and their depression has reduced. People with suicidal tendencies have started living with more hope.

High Blood Pressure and Heart disease

There are a number of causes for high blood pressure and heart disease like heredity, obesity, smoking and excessive intake of saturated fats. But stress is one of the major factors. Laughter definitely helps to control blood pressure by reducing the release of stress-related hormones and bringing relaxation.

In experiments it has been proved that there is a drop of 10-20 mm. pressure after participating for 10 minutes in a laughter session. It does not mean that those who are taking 2-3 tablets for blood pressure everyday will be completely cured. Maybe, you will require 2 tablets if you are taking 3, or borderline high blood pressure patients may not require any medication after some time. It takes years to develop high blood pressure. It cannot be reversed in a few days or a month. But definitely laughter will exercise some control and arrest further progress of the disease. Similarly, if you are at high risk of developing heart disease, laughter could be the best preventive medicine. Those who are suffering from heart disease and have stabilized on medication will find that laughter improves the blood circulation and oxygen supply to the heart muscles. Due to improvement of blood circulation there are less chances of forming a clot.

Natural Pain Killer

Laughter increases the levels of endorphins in our bodies, which are natural pain killers. Norman Cousins, an American journalist who was suffering from an incurable disease of the spine, was benefited by laughter therapy when no painkiller could help him. Endorphins released as a result of laughter may help in reducing the intensity of pain in those suffering from arthritis, spondylitis and muscular spasms of the body. Many people have reported a reduced frequency of migraine headaches.
**Alleviates Bronchitis and Asthma**

Laughter is one of the best exercises for those suffering from asthma and bronchitis (but never encourage laughter while you or someone else is having or recovering from an asthma attack).

It improves the lung capacity and oxygen levels in the blood. Doctors recommend chest physiotherapy to bring out mucous (phlegm) from the respiratory passages.

Blowing forcefully into an instrument and blowing balloons is one of the common exercises given to asthmatics. Laughter does the same job, more easily and almost free of cost. One of the most common causes for frequent attacks of asthma is infection. Laughter Therapy increases the antibody levels in the mucous membranes of the respiratory passages, thereby reducing the frequency of chest infections. It also tones up the normal mucous clearing system of the bronchial tubes. Stress is another factor, which can bring on an attack of asthma. By reducing stress, laughter can improve the prognosis of the disease.

**Improves Stamina**

Since breathing capacity is one of the factors which determines stamina, laughter before any sport or strenuous activity will increase the relaxation levels and hence, performance.

**Internal Jogging**

There are plenty of exercises available for your muscles, but laughing provides a good massage to all internal organs. It enhances their blood supply and increases their efficiency. It has been compared to magic fingers, which reach into the interior of the abdomen and massage your organs. The best massage it gives is to the intestines. It improves the blood supply and helps the bowels to move properly.

**Good For Communicators**

Increased lung capacity and exercise of the diaphragm and abdominal muscles will help in gaining better control over speech. Another benefit is enhanced self-confidence and reduced stage fright due to an increase in the body’s relaxation level, which results from laughter.

**Makes You Look Younger:**

People do exercise for all the muscles of the body, but there is no regular exercise designed for facial muscles except in Yoga. Laughter is an excellent exercise for your facial muscles. It tones up the muscles of the face and improves facial expressions.
When you laugh, your face becomes red due to an increase in blood supply, which nourishes the facial skin and makes it glow. Laughing people look more cheerful and attractive. By squeezing the tear glands through laughter, it moistens the eyes adding a little sparkle to them. Laughter exercises the abdominal muscles and helps to improve muscle tone of those with pot bellies.