

Exercise for Depression and Anxiety

Exercise Category	Effect	
	Depression	Anxiety
Light Exercise (yoga)	+	+
Moderate Exercise (anaerobic)	+	+
Vigorous Exercise	++	+

Exercise in general: There is a large amount of data available that supports the conclusion that exercise promotes mental health. There are specific studies that target the question of whether exercise helps depression. The trend amongst these studies is to conclude that exercise is helpful for depression and anxiety, but cannot take the place of traditional treatments such as medications and/or therapy.

Current Limitations: The current body of research offers general guidelines about which exercises one may prioritize when SUPPLEMENTING the established treatments for depression and anxiety (therapy and/or medications), but it does not provide specific recommendations on how long each session should be, how frequently one should exercise or how long one should continue before expecting to see an effect. The majority of the studies use exercise programs that include 3-4 exercise sessions per week with each session lasting for 30-60 minutes. Follow-up investigation tends to occur after 4 to 8 weeks of exercise although at least one study followed results through week twelve. So, although there may be some benefit in including exercise in one's treatment plan, we do not have the data that compares specific exercise programs to determine which ones are likely to be the most effective.

Note: There is inadequate data to support the sole use of any exercise program as a treatment for depression and/or anxiety. The Standard of Care for depression and anxiety continues to be medication and/or therapy. Exercise programs should be considered for supplemental purposes only.

Data Taken From

- Prev Med. *Long-term effects of exercise at different intensity levels on depression: A randomized controlled trial.* 2017 Dec;105:37-46.
- Prev Med. *Training fast or slow? Exercise for depression: A randomized controlled trial.* 2016 Oct;91:123-131
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- CNS Neurol Disord Drug Targets. *Effects of Aerobic Exercise on Anxiety Disorders: A Systematic Review.* 2015;14(9):1184-93.
- BR J Sports Med. *Exercise for anxiety disorders: systematic review.* 2014 Feb;48(3):187-96.