

6 invisible benefits of exercise

By Cassie Shortsleeve, Outdoor

Muscle tone and weight control. For the past decade, these benefits have topped the list of reasons why we exercise, according to the Sporting Goods Manufacturers Association's annual report on the fitness industry. They consistently edge out others—like “feeling good after” and “increased energy”—we can't see in a mirror.

That doesn't mean we don't care about the stuff we can't see. We assume, for instance, that the effort to break a sweat leads to better cardiovascular health and a lower cancer risk. And extra energy and happiness are still key benefits.

But the breadth of invisible boons goes even further, affecting everything from our dating lives to our bowel movements. So the next time you're stressing about a few stubborn pounds or a less-than-cut quad, focus on these six invisibly awesome effects of your efforts. We'll start with your pain tolerance.

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