

What are the health benefits of humor and laughter?

The sound of roaring laughter is far more contagious than any cough, snuffle, or sneeze. Humor and laughter can cause a domino effect of joy and amusement, as well as set off a number of positive physical effects. A good hearty laugh can help:

Health Benefits of Laughter

- reduce stress
- lower blood pressure
- elevate mood
- boost immune system
- improve brain functioning
- protect the heart
- connect you to others
- foster instant relaxation
- make you feel good

Laughter activates the chemistry of the will to live and increases our capacity to fight disease. Laughing relaxes the body and reduces problems associated with high blood pressure, strokes, arthritis, and ulcers. Some research suggests that laughter may also reduce the risk of heart disease. Historically, research has shown that distressing emotions (depression, anger, anxiety, and stress) are all related to heart disease. A study done at the University of Maryland Medical Center suggests that a good sense of humor and the ability to laugh at stressful situations helps mitigate the damaging physical effects of distressing emotions. Some other specifics about laughter's affect on the body are listed below.

- **Laughter lowers blood pressure** - People who laugh heartily on a regular basis have lower standing blood pressure than the average person. When people have a good laugh, initially the blood pressure increases, but then it decreases to levels below normal. Breathing then becomes deeper which sends oxygen enriched blood and nutrients throughout the body.
- **Humor changes our biochemical state** - Laughter decreases stress hormones and increases infection fighting antibodies. It increases our attentiveness, heart rate, and pulse
- **Laughter protects the heart** - Laughter, along with an active sense of humor, may help protect you against a heart attack, according to the study at the University of Maryland Medical Center (cited above). The study, which is the first to indicate that laughter may help prevent heart disease, found that people with heart disease were 40 percent less likely to laugh in a variety of situations compared to people of the same age without heart disease
- **Laughter gives our bodies a good workout** - Laughter can be a great workout for your diaphragm, abdominal, respiratory, facial, leg, and back muscles. It massages abdominal organs, tones intestinal functioning, and strengthens the muscles that hold the abdominal organs in place. Not only does laughter give your midsection a workout, it can benefit digestion and absorption functioning as well. It is estimated that hearty laughter can burn calories equivalent to several minutes on the rowing machine or the exercise bike