



Towson University ♥ St. Joseph Medical Center
Wellness Center

EXERCISE, MENTAL HEALTH AND MENTAL ABILITY

How does physical activity relate to mental health?

Physically active people tend to have better mental health, according to the 1996 U.S. Surgeon General's Report on Physical Activity and Public Health. Compared with inactive people, the physically active had higher scores for positive self-concept, more self-esteem and more positive "moods" and "affects." These findings seem similar in both young people and adults. Physical activity has also been used to treat mental health problems such as depression.

How does physical activity relate to mental ability?

More active people also seem to score higher on perceived ability to perform activities of daily living, physical well-being and other measures related to quality of life. A few studies even suggest that more-active lifestyles may be linked with higher levels of alertness and mental ability, including the ability to learn. **More research is needed to confirm these associations.**