

Secrets to Achieving the High

Article By: Vanessa Voltolina



Learn how to reap the feel-good benefits of exercise with these simple guidelines.

You've taken the first step toward a toned body and better health by trashing the container of Häagen-Dazs and tearing yourself away from the Project Runway marathon. You're pumping and sweating on the treadmill for 30 to 45 minutes, three to five days per week before work, after work and on weekends. But you still feel like something is missing. You've heard others talk about it, and you want a piece of it: The exercise high.

It's actually an endorphin high, and it occurs when endorphin hormones (and others) are secreted by the pituitary gland in response to physical stress. During exercise, these endorphin hormones have the power to block pain, decrease appetite, elevate mood, rid the body of stress hormones and make your workout far more enjoyable, says Debbie Mandel, a stress management specialist in Lawrence, NY.

[Read the article below](#)

ADVERTISEMENT

Because of our physical and chemical differences, some may experience a very good feeling from a 30-minute workout, while others may find that they need a longer or more intense workout in order to feel that high. For years, the exercise high was mostly medical speculation, but recently, German researchers reported in an issue of the journal *Cerebral Cortex* that the exercise high is more than just folklore — and surprisingly attainable. Here are three ways to get closer to achieving the workout high.

Give it time

"To get the [endorphin] high, I find that people have to work out for a while," says

Karen Voight, a Los Angeles-based trainer who has worked with stars including Tina Turner and Bette Midler. "Some magazines say that five-minute spurts or quick workouts do the trick, but I suggest a nonstop power session — just keep it going."

Even on the days when a workout seems futile, Christina Steepin, an IT business analyst from Seattle, suggests giving yourself the benefit of a full workout. "If I feel ill, haven't gotten enough sleep or am having family issues, I try to push through and at least get a workout in because I always feel at least a little bit better after I go," she says.

Everyone's high is different

Many women put pressure on themselves to find a workout formula guaranteed to achieve this euphoria after every workout. "One size certainly does not fit all," says Mandel, author of the book *Addicted to Stress* (Jossey-Bass / A Wiley Imprint). She swears by a belly dancing session for her high. Voight agrees: "Work out until you're out of breath, however long or intense that may be." For some gym-goers, a 40-minute run at a 10-minute-mile pace is enough to achieve an endorphin high; for others, it may take a hip-hop dance class or a spinning session. Steepin has figured out the formula to achieve her personal high: a routine, 45-minute kickboxing session, which elevates her mood and gives her an endorphin high almost every time. Whatever routine you find fits you, Voight, who is also the creator of her own line of fitness DVDs, recommends maintaining a heart rate of at least 140 beats per minute for maximum endorphin potential.

Stop obsessing

If you find yourself scanning the gym to see how many eyes are on you, or sizing up your bod in the mirror, you are losing the mind and body synergy necessary to reach your goal. Mandel assures exercisers that although it may feel as though you're being watched and judged, "Trust me — other gym-goers are totally narcissistic. They're not even paying attention to you!"

Although there is no foolproof way to achieve this stress-relieving, mood-enhancing exercise high, being conscious of your personal method, as well as external factors, can get you closer to feeling the full benefits of a workout. "The best thing to do is create an exercise synergy. My personal favorite is the triple synergy: music, sunlight and rhythm. Get outside, put on your headset and hike or run on the beach." For Mandel, this is a surefire way to an exercise high every time.

About the writer

Vanessa Voltolina has written for sheknows.com, Tango online and Zink magazine.

Next Steps

Share why you exercise on the [Motivation to Move message thread](#).

Subscriber Highlight: Focus on your overall progress and not just the numbers on the scale with our [Weight Tracker and Progress Charts](#).

[Ready to start losing weight?](#)

© 2009 Weight Watchers International, Inc. © 2009 WeightWatchers.com, Inc. All rights reserved.

WEIGHT WATCHERS and **POINTS** are the registered trademarks of Weight Watchers International, Inc. and are used under license by WeightWatchers.com, Inc.