

Let spring make you Happier and healthier!

It's not your imagination that life's better in the spring—and it's not just due to our relief that winter's over, either! Research shows this time of year promotes psychological and biological changes that improve your mood and your health!

Spring air makes exercise easier!

The air doesn't just smell fresher at this time of year, it *is* fresher, says Pierce J. Howard, Ph.D., author of *The Owner's Manual for the Brain*. Spring's new foliage has the same effect on outdoor air that houseplants do on indoor air. "The green leaves filter out toxins, pollutants and carbon dioxide while releasing oxygen into the air—and the better the air, the more glucose your body can burn, and the more stamina you have!" says Howard. Because your muscles get more oxygen, there's less of the lactic acid buildup that can lead to cramping after a workout.

—Barbara Hustedt Crook

Spring gardens slim you down and boost your relationship!

Sure, time spent in nature is pleasant, but that's not the only reason to get out and do some digging now, says Debbie Mandel, author of *Addicted to Stress*. "In studies, people who tended plants as they sprouted from seeds or bulbs not only felt better about themselves, but they had good reason to: Gardening is good aerobic exercise that burns 295 calories per hour and has even been proven to trigger the hormones that jumpstart libido!"

Spring scents lift your mood!

It's no coincidence that spring flowers—like cherry blossoms, lilacs and roses—make you feel happier. "We think those scents inhibit a part of the limbic system that governs stress, essentially switching off anxiety," says neurologist Alan Hirsch, M.D. And your sense of smell is actually keener now: "In cold weather, air goes straight to your lungs, where it's most needed. But as the air warms, more air molecules reach the olfactory nerve at the top of your nose!"

Spring rains help you

Those spring showers don't just help the grass grow, says Howard. "Rain generates negative ions—molecules that remove contaminants from the air and improve breathing," he explains. In fact, in one U.S. study of 1,000 people with allergies, hay fever and bronchitis, 62% saw improvement in their symptoms just from being near a negative ion generator—and 30% saw their symptoms disappear completely! You don't have to buy an expensive generator for benefit, says Howard—just open your window after a spring rain!