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Media Release – What's the Secret to a Long and Healthy Life? It's No Secret  
From: NZ Register of Exercise Professionals



## What's The Secret to a Long and Healthy Life? It's No Secret

It's exercise!

When we think of the benefits of exercise a few common ones always spring to mind; fat loss, increased energy, and strength and muscle gains.

But the benefits of regular exercise and physical activity reach much further than this, with life changing benefits extending to prevention and management of some prevalent conditions. If you have been thinking about getting moving, it's never too late to start, adding years to your life.

Here are some common conditions where exercise can have significant benefits to your health and wellness:

**COPD.** Chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD) is the term used to cover a range of respiratory conditions including emphysema, chronic bronchitis and chronic asthma. COPD affects one in six kiwis. While there is no cure for COPD, there are plenty of ways to manage symptoms, and improve quality of life.

Part of the treatment for this condition is exercise. Even at low levels exercise has a strengthening impact on respiratory and muscular structures. If you have asthma or another form of COPD, exercise should form part of your treatment and be an important part of maintaining a healthy lifestyle.

**Heart disease.** Cardiovascular disease (including heart, stroke and blood vessel disease) is still the leading cause of death in New Zealand, accounting for 33% of deaths annually. Every 90 minutes a New Zealander dies from heart disease, with 172,000 New Zealanders currently living with heart disease, and they are limited by its impacts.

Being active is recommended to assist managing this disease as this can reduce the risk of getting heart disease by 50%, with extra benefits gained by eating a healthy diet and not smoking. Exercise can also lower blood pressure, and assist with reducing weight, which are both risk factors for heart disease.

**Osteoporosis.** As we age, and as lifestyle and diseases impact on our health, there can be a loss of balance between new bone growth and old bone breaking down, leading to a loss in bone density. Once this loss reaches a certain level a diagnosis of osteoporosis is made.

A regular exercise programme is essential for bone health. Specifically, weight bearing exercise offers the best defense. This includes a number of sports, and lifting weights, as well as using your bodyweight as resistance. While activities such as cycling and swimming have a range of fantastic health benefits, these activities are not considered weight bearing.

Depression. In New Zealand, more than half a million adults (16%) have been diagnosed with depression, bipolar disorder and/or anxiety disorder at some point in their life. This includes 14% of adults who have ever been diagnosed with depression, 6% with anxiety disorder, and 1% with bipolar disorder.

Little or no physical exercise can increase the risk of depression, and a poor diet can decrease the sense of wellbeing, so taking care of yourself needs to be part of any wellness or mental health plan. There is a good reason why exercise is recommended for improving mood. Endorphins are the 'happy hormones' that the body releases when moving. Endorphins contribute to a feeling of wellness post exercise and are released most effectively during long, continuous workouts of moderate to high intensity.

With so many benefits it's really worthwhile investing in yourself by getting active. If you are struggling with motivation or not sure where to start, then fortunately help is available through a network of appropriately qualified and experienced REPs registered exercise professionals located throughout New Zealand.

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**NZ Register of Exercise Professionals (REPs)** - Independent not for profit quality mark of exercise professionals and facilities. Using REPs Registered Exercise Professionals is the "warrant of fitness check" that exercise professionals and facilities meet New Zealand and internationally benchmarked standards to deliver safe exercise advice and instruction. REPs is affiliated globally to other national exercise professional registers representing over 210,000 exercise professionals through the International Confederation of Registers for Exercise Professionals (ICREPs) - [www.icreps.org](http://www.icreps.org)

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**Exercise Association of New Zealand** - Not for profit exercise industry representative organisation. Its *mission is to proactively support a sustainable exercise and fitness industry in New Zealand by growing participation in structured exercise through advocacy, information and industry standards.*

