

Rats that get regular exercise are more productive in day-to-day tasks

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Regular exercise may help keep you on top of your to-do list at work, latest University of Otago research suggests.

In a study recently appearing in the US journal *PLOS ONE*, researchers in the University's Department of Psychology have shown that, at least for [laboratory rats](#), a once daily [exercise session](#) is sufficient to increase task productivity throughout the day.

Study lead author Dr Kristin Hillman says that when challenged with laboratory tasks that tax problem-solving, persistence and strategy

execution, rats that ran 20 minutes a day for five days a week outperformed their non-exercised counterparts across the board.

The exercised rats completed more tasks, and did so more quickly and efficiently, which enabled them to earn more food rewards throughout the study.

Dr Hillman says the study is exciting in that it highlights a productivity benefit of staying physically active. "We all know exercise is good for our physical and mental health, but this data suggests that regular exercise may also help make you more productive when it comes to getting tasks accomplished each day."

"Links between [exercise](#) and occupational/educational achievement are starting to be noted in humans, but these links are largely correlations and can be riddled with confounding [psychosocial factors](#). These factors include family environment, socio-economic status and personality traits.

"By using an animal model we obviously eliminate such factors, and are able to demonstrate a causal relationship between [regular exercise](#) and generalised industriousness."

Dr Hillman, a lecturer in Psychology and a neuroscientist by training, says the next step will be to figure out the neural mechanisms responsible for this effect.

Data for the study was collected in part by students Nick Laurence and Lisa Labuschagne during their undergraduate training at Otago, under the supervision of Dr Hillman.

Provided by University of Otago

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