

# Aerobic exercise has antidepressant treatment effects

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An analysis of randomized controlled clinical trials indicates that supervised aerobic exercise has large antidepressant treatment effects for patients with major depression. The systematic review and meta-analysis is published in *Depression and Anxiety*.

Across 11 eligible trials involving 455 adult patients (18-65 years old) with major depression as a primary disorder, supervised [aerobic exercise](#) was performed on average for 45 minutes, at moderate intensity, 3 times per week, and for 9.2 weeks. It showed a significantly large overall antidepressant effect compared with [antidepressant medication](#) and/or psychological therapies.

Also, aerobic exercise revealed moderate-to-large antidepressant effects among trials with lower risk of bias, as well as large antidepressant effects among trials with short-term interventions (up to 4 weeks) and trials involving preferences for exercise.

Subgroup analyses revealed comparable effects for aerobic exercise across various settings and delivery formats, and in both outpatients and inpatients regardless of symptom severity.

"Collectively, this study has found that supervised aerobic exercise can significantly support [major depression](#) treatment in mental health services," said lead author Dr. Ioannis D. Morres, of the University of Thessaly, in Greece.

**More information:** Ioannis D. Morres et al, Aerobic exercise for adult patients with major depressive disorder in mental health services: A systematic review and meta-analysis, *Depression and Anxiety* (2018).  
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