

Online Resources

- * http://www.helpguide.org/life/humor_laughter_health.htm
- * <http://www.umm.edu/features/laughter.htm>
- * <http://www.JoyfulNoiseletter.com>
- * http://findarticles.com/p/articles/mi_m0BJI/is_6_31/ai_73181080

Laughter is good for social relationships, and that is always good for full health. Humor can break down social barriers.

A smile is understood in every language. Laughter shared is laughter expanded.



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This newsletter is produced by Inova Health System in conjunction with your faith community. If you prefer not to receive this newsletter, please notify the appropriate personnel in your faith community.

Inova Health System is a not-for-profit health care system based in Northern Virginia that consists of hospitals and other health services including emergency and urgent care centers, home care, nursing homes, mental health, blood donor services, and wellness classes. Governed by a voluntary board of community members, Inova's mission is to improve the health of the diverse community we serve through excellence in patient care, education and research.



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For Your Health

Laughter... It Does A Body Good!

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Let a joy keep you.

-Carl Sandburg

There are so many things in our daily lives that adversely impact our health: unhealthy diets, lack of physical activity, and stress. So, it stands to reason that the opposite would be true. The components of a healthy lifestyle would include regular physical activity, a well-balanced diet, and daily laughter.

Daily laughter? Absolutely!



Studies show
adults laugh 15
times a day.
Children laugh
300 times a day.



*Congregational
Health
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Community
Health Division*

The Word of Faith

"A cheerful heart
is good medicine,
but a downcast
spirit dries up the
bones."

Proverbs 17:22

Humor is, in fact, a
prelude to faith; and
laughter is the begin-
ning of prayer.

-Reinhold Niebuhr



Health Benefits of Laughter

We've heard that there are many health benefits to regular laughter. So, let's take a look at them.

- * **Laughter lowers blood pressure.** People who laugh heartily on a regular basis have lower standing blood pressure than the average person.
- * **Humor changes our biochemical state.** Laughter decreases stress hormones and increases infection-fighting antibodies.
- * **Laughter protects the heart.** Laughter, along with an active sense of humor, may help protect you against heart attack, according to a study at the University of Maryland Medical Center.
- * **Laughter gives our bodies a good workout.** Laughter can be a great workout for your diaphragm, abdominal, respiratory, facial, leg, and back muscles. It is estimated that hearty laughter can burn calories equivalent to several minutes on the rowing machine or the exercise bike.
- * **Humor improves brain function** and relieves stress. It stimulates both sides of the brain to enhance learning. It eases muscle tension and psychological stress, which keeps



the brain alert and allows people to retain more information. It raises our endorphins to help fight depression. We simply cannot laugh and stay angry at the same time.

Need a joke break? Try these sites.

- * <http://www.crosswalk.com/fun/>
- * <http://www.basicjokes.com/>
- * <http://www.ahajokes.com/>

Ways to Incorporate Daily Laughter

Okay, we see that there are health benefits to humor, but honestly laughing is just plain fun. And the fact that there are health benefits to boot, how great is that?

So let's say you're on board; the next question might be, "Like many people, I work under stressful conditions. Or I feel besieged by life. How can I laugh daily when there doesn't seem much to laugh about?" Here are some recommendations:

- * **Look for the everyday humor.** Start looking for the absurd, silly, incongruous activities that go on around you each day. How about checking out the license plates on the cars that surround us? Look for things like "Alice" on a white VW Rabbit, "Baa Baa" on a black Jeep, or "RMOTL6" on a recreational vehicle.
- * **Observe infants and young children** to learn how to find delight and amusement in the most ordinary things.
- * **Increase your exposure to comedies,** comic sitcoms, joke books, comedy clubs, etc.
- * **Hang around funny friends,** choose a funny partner or spouse.
- * **Take a 5-10 minute humor break each day.** Read jokes, add to a humor notebook, listen to a funny tape. Ads and signs in store windows can offer unintentional mirth. One store boasted that it was both a Taxidermy and Beauty Shop. Now, that's a scary thought!

These things are out there, just waiting to be discovered and enjoyed:

- * **If you hear a joke you really like, write it down,** or tell it to someone else to help you remember it.
- * **Remind yourself to have fun.**
- * **Spend time with those who help you see the bright side,** and, whenever possible, avoid people who are negative and depressing.
- * **Rather than getting caught up in all the bad news, pay attention for news that makes you smile or even laugh out loud.** A newspaper headline saying "Lead-lined caskets are bad for your health" or "Police begin campaign to run down jaywalkers" are good reasons to at least chuckle.

