Giving Back Helps Others... And You

Health Benefits of Volunteering

Volunteering makes an immeasurable difference in the lives of others. But did you know how much you help yourself by giving back? From lowering stress to boosting self-confidence, volunteering offers many health benefits—especially for older adults.

Just search the web: There are over 19 million hits for articles on how doing good helps people lead better, healthier lives. Start reaping mental and physical health benefits today:

1. Decrease your risk of depression. Volunteering with and for others increases social interaction and helps build a support system based on common commitment and interests—both of which have been shown to decrease depression.
2. Enjoy a sense of purpose and fulfillment—and increase your self-confidence while you're at it!
3. Stay physically and mentally active. A study released by Johns Hopkins University in 2009 revealed that volunteers actually increased their brain functioning. Volunteer activities get you moving and thinking at the same time.
4. Reduce stress levels. By savoring your time spent in service to others, you'll feel a sense of meaning and appreciation—both given and received—which can be calming.
5. Experience "The Happiness Effect." You know that feel-good sense you get after a vigorous workout? It comes from a release of dopamine in the brain. Helping others has that exact same effect—so the more you volunteer, the happier you become!
6. Find global opportunities. Volunteering can open up opportunities to go abroad, as many organizations and programs put on "voluntourism" trips across the globe. Traveling spurs physical activity and mental planning while providing you different perspectives—literally and figuratively—on life.

Get active now!

Ready to start experiencing these health benefits? We make it easy! Try volunteering at summer camps, coaching a sport or exploring other ideas in our [Get Active, Get Outdoors](#) article.

Use [Create the Good](#) to connect with local volunteer opportunities or [Senior Corps](#), which helps those 55+ become mentors, coaches or companions to people in need.

AARP was founded in 1958 and has over 38 million members. It is a nonprofit, nonpartisan organization for people over the age of 50. AARP is well-known for its advocacy efforts, providing its members with important information, products and services that enhance quality of life as they age. They also promote community service and keep members and the public informed on issues relating to the over 50 age group.

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