

2-6 Muscle Fibers Do Different Things Your skeletal muscles – the ones you check out in the mirror – have two main types of fibers. Type I fibers, also called slow-twitch, are used mainly for endurance activities. Type II, or fast-twitch, begin to work when a task utilizes more than 25 percent of your maximum strength. A movement doesn't have to be "slow" for the slow-twitch fibers to take over; it just has to be an action that doesn't require much of your fast-twitch strength. And an effort doesn't have to be "fast" to call your fast-twitch fibers into play. A personal-record bench press is going to use every possible fast-twitch fiber (plus all the slow-twitchers, as we'll explain below), even though the bar probably isn't moving very fast. Most people are thought to have a more or less equal mix of slow- and fast-twitch fibers. (Elite athletes are obvious exceptions – a gifted marathoner was probably born with more slow- than fast-twitch fibers, just as an Olympic-champion sprinter or NFL running back probably started life with more fast-twitch fibers.) However, the fast-twitch fibers are twice as big as the slow ones, with the potential to get even bigger. Slow-twitch fibers can get bigger, too, although not to the same extent. *(Men's Health)*

Exercise Your Brain - Exercise can boost your mood, tone your muscles and help you fit into a smaller dress size. But it's not just your stomach and rear-end that benefit from physical activity – your brain loves it too!

Most people know that mental stimulation, like doing a

crossword puzzle, can help prevent cognitive decline and memory loss in diseases like Alzheimer's, but it turns out that exercise can have a similar protective effect. Many cubicle-dwelling professionals have to make a conscious effort to incorporate exercise into their daily lives, but the truth is that exercise is meant to be a natural part of life. Our hunter-gatherer ancestors were hard-wired for physical activity for survival purposes. And although you may not need to chase and spear a woolly mammoth to feed your family, your body and brain still crave movement to function at their best.

Take a look at what happens upstairs while you exercise:

The area of your brain that regulates heart rate and blood pressure works harder.

Your brain releases norepinephrine, a chemical that raises your alertness and energy levels.

The production of serotonin, a chemical that tells you when you're tired or in pain, is reduced.

Neurotrophins, proteins that help you learn a new skill (like belly dancing) are released.

So the next time you find your motivation waning, remember that the sole purpose of exercise is not just to look good. Physical activity keeps every part of your body, especially your brain, in top form. So it actually is all in your head! *(LifeScript)*