

**LIFE BALANCE:**

# JOIN THE SMILE HIGH CLUB

laughter really is good for your health. Think we're joking? Have a laugh then - it'll do you some good! Michelle Drielsma explains.

*"The human race has one really effective weapon, and that is laughter."*

– Mark Twain, 1835-1910

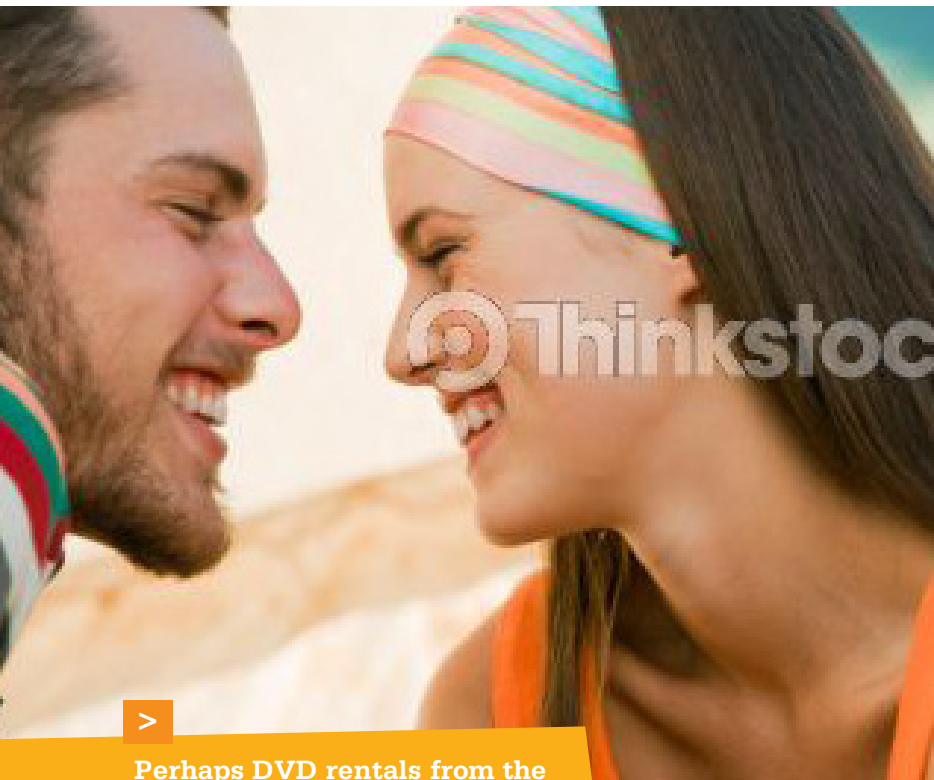
**JUST START THINKING** about laughing and notice what happens.

It's not just humour that lessens tension, but merely anticipating laughter.

Research at the 2008 Annual Meeting of the American Physiological Society showed that anticipating the idea of watching a comedy actually correlated with a decrease in the stress hormones cortisol by 39 per cent, adrenaline by 70 per cent and dopac by 38 per cent.

Laughter stimulates your lymph system and oxygenates your organs. At the biophysical level, lymph fluid is moved around your body simply by the convulsions you experience during the process of laughing; so it boosts immune system function and helps clear out old, dead waste products from organs and tissues. Remember, your lymph system doesn't have a separate pump; your body needs exercise to properly





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Perhaps DVD rentals from the comedy section could be the contemporary GP prescription for colds and flu in the future?

circulate lymph fluid so that your immune system can carry out its natural functions. Laughter is a great way to support that.

Secondly, laughter increases oxygenation of your body at both the cellular and organ level. By laughing, you intake vast amounts of oxygen in huge gulps, and you repeat this process in a sort of temporary hyperventilation session. This is the natural result of laughter, and if you watch someone laugh, you will notice these biophysical effects – a natural high!

It's also interesting to note that cancer cells are destroyed in the presence of oxygen. In fact, many parasites and bacteria don't survive well in the presence of oxygen, and to the extent that you can circulate extra oxygen throughout your body, you can help prevent, or in some cases treat, these diseases.

The harder you laugh, the greater this effect. Therefore, if you can find a way to put yourself into a state of rolling, outrageous laughter, you're going to get a fantastic physical workout from it. In fact, the next day, you may even find your stomach muscles are sore. Have you ever laughed so hard that your stomach hurt and your facial muscles were exhausted? That's some serious exercise, and it's the kind of exercise in which we should all engage on a regular basis.

## HEALTH BENEFITS OF LAUGHING INCLUDES:

- + raising self-esteem
- + promoting overall psychological wellbeing
- + building group identity, solidarity and cohesiveness (when laughing with others)
- + fighting depression
- + boosting energy
- + strengthening problem-solving and creative thinking
- + heightening levels of immunity-boosting HGH (human growth hormone)
- + promoting relaxation
- + increasing pain tolerance
- + decreasing pro-inflammatory and increasing anti-inflammatory cytokines
- + decreasing blood pressure
- + dissolving distressing emotions; it is impossible to feel anxious, angry or sad when you are laughing
- + changing perspectives; humour shifts perspective, allowing you to see situations in a more realistic, less threatening light.

### MICHELLE DRIELSMA

Michelle is an exercise physiologist and holistic health practitioner.

## LAUGHTER FACTS

- + 1 minute of deep belly laughter is equivalent cardiovascular exercise to 15 minutes on the exercise bike or 10 minutes on the rowing machine.
- + Laughter is a great way to diffuse, release and transform anger in a healthy way (ever tried to stay angry at someone who makes you laugh? It's almost impossible to do).
- + When we laugh endorphins are released through the body, which can instantly enhance our mood and make us feel happy.
- + Laughter is a great natural form of anti aging as it increases blood flow, oxygenation and tones the face making our skin glow and look younger.
- + Laughter releases the body's natural painkillers. Norman Cousins who cured himself of a very painful and rare degenerative spinal disease discovered that 20 minutes of deep belly laughter could give him two hours of pain free sleep.
- + Can you remember the last time you laughed so much your abdominal muscles started to ache? Laughter is not only a great way to strengthen your abdominal muscles but also massages and tones our internal organs.

+ Studies have shown that in the 1950s people used to laugh 18 minutes a day, but today we laugh not more than four to six minutes a day, despite the huge rise in the standard of living.

+ Children can laugh up to 300 to 400 times a day, but when we grow up to be adults this frequency comes down to less than 15 times a day, if at all.

+ Laughter is attractive. Did you know that women are more attracted to men who can make them laugh and men are more attracted to women whom they can make laugh?

+ Do you feel like there is nothing in your life worth laughing about? You may be surprised to discover that you don't need a reason to laugh but the more often that you do laugh the more reasons you will start to find to laugh, the happier you will feel and the more playful your life will become.

The above information is provided by mind/body specialist and Australian Laughter Ambassador Kathy Popplewell. Kathy is a free spirit and fitness professional who loves to help people to live, love and laugh naturally and is especially passionate about empowering women. To watch some of Kathy's Laughter Giggle clips, sign up for her Weekly Infusion or tap into some of her free online resources visit [www.vibrance.com.au](http://www.vibrance.com.au)