

You've probably heard of the "feel good" chemicals our bodies produce in response to exercise and other stimuli. These chemicals, **known as endorphins**, stimulate our mood and happiness by producing morphine-like effects on the body that react with opioid receptors in the brain.

Endorphins!

These naturally occurring chemicals vary in amount and production from person to person and are part of your body's natural reward circuit.

Endorphin triggers may include:

- Physical exertion
- Eating or drinking
- Maternal behavior
- Personal accomplishments
- Anticipation of an event
- Happy surprises
- Simple everyday things



I found money in my pants pocket

My baby walked for the first time

6 ways to stimulate your brain:

TRY OUT AROMATHERAPY

While not an exact science, certain fragrances – mainly vanilla and lavender – lend themselves to an endorphin-triggering response.

Essential oil rollers, diffusers or candles can help you reap the benefits.

GET REGULAR EXERCISE

Exercise causes physical stress on the system. In response to aches from fatigued muscles, the body releases endorphins to counteract and soothe the pain.

Any physical activity that gets the heart pumping counts, including running, cardio, dancing and sex (bonus for the additional release of the happiness hormone oxytocin).

INDULGE IN DARK CHOCOLATE

Chocolate contains compounds that encourage neurotransmitter activity and promote relaxation.

Limit yourself to one serving, and look for chocolate that's at least 70% cacao.

My body makes morphine? Mind blown!

Morphine is medicine derived from opium that acts on the central nervous system to relieve moderate to severe pain.

Endogenous mor**phine** is your internally produced morphine, aka “**endorphins**.”



I finished the charity run

I checked one more thing off my to-do list

I got acknowledged for a job well done at work

I reached my goals today

My bowling team won the league

LAUGH MORE

You’ve heard the age-old term “laughter is the best medicine,” and there’s truth to it; laughter triggers the release of endorphins.

Try a comedy television show, stand-up comedy act, funny movie or comedic novel. Or, get together with a friend – social laughter is even more powerful.

GET OUT THE CORKSCREW

Endorphins are released in response to alcohol, but keep in mind there’s always too much of a good thing!

Stick with the recommended intake, knowing you’re getting a touch of endorphin boost along with it.

If you do not drink, it is not recommended that you start drinking alcohol. If you choose to drink, do so only in moderation. Drinking too much can harm your health.

VOLUNTEER OR GIVE

It’s a proven fact that the act of giving increases activation of endorphins in the brain.

Small, kind gestures, such as buying your friend lunch, giving a hand-made gift, or shoveling the snow for a neighbor, boost all of those good feelings.