

The Health Benefits of Table Tennis

Most of you reading this article probably play table tennis simply because you enjoy it, without realising the great health benefits the sport provides. This article highlights some of the main benefits, particularly those that are unique to table tennis, enhancing your health in areas that you're not even aware of.

I hope it will encourage you to recommend this great sport to your friends and family!

1. Great physical exercise yet gentle on the body



Table tennis is not only a **good cardiovascular exercise**, keeping your heart healthy and strong, but it also tones and strengthens your core muscles, in both upper and lower body. It's an effective way of **improving your fitness and strengthening your muscles** all at the same time.

It is also a **great aerobic exercise**. As you run from side to side at the table, your heart rate increases and your body requires more oxygen, causing you to breath heavier, faster and deeper. This increases you lung capacity, and improves how efficiently your lungs use oxygen.

I think we all know it's easy to start doing exercise, but much harder to keep it going on a regular basis without losing interest or getting injured. This is a key aspect of table tennis, because it's not only a highly social sport and great fun, but it's a non-contact sport and has been proven to have a **very low injury rate**. You're not likely to get all the bruises and broken bones that are common in most contact sports, yet the exercise can be just as effective.

All these factors help you keep going to make your exercise a *regular* event, which is vital to improving and maintaining your health.

2. Improved Reflexes, Balance and Coordination

Reflexes and coordination are vital life skills for everyone.

For kids these skills are very important as they develop physically, and try to fit in socially. Table tennis is one of **the top sports for improving reflexes, hand-eye coordination and balance**, which will be of great benefit to any sports that they participate in, as well as other physical activities.

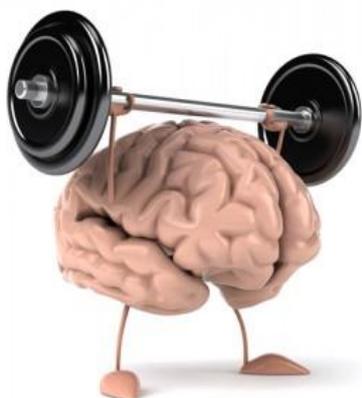


For adults, particularly the elderly, reflexes and coordination skills must be exercised to maintain them.

Since degradation of these skills is very slow, you tend not to notice them, but it's a lot easier to maintain them with a regular and fun game like table tennis, than it is to re-gain them once you lose them.

3. Table Tennis is The World's Best Brain Sport!

As well as being good physical exercise, table tennis also provides a great mental work out. You plan strategies and decide what spin to put on the ball, whilst trying to stay one step ahead of your opponent and react to the shots they are playing all at the same time. Decisions are made in split seconds, increasing concentration levels, short term memory and decision making ability. All this mental exercise boosts hormone levels and keeps the brain young, which can slow the progress of cognitive decline that occurs with ageing.



According to Dr. Wendy Suzuki, professor of neuroscience and psychology at New York University (1), table tennis works parts of the brain that are responsible for movement, fine motor skills and strategy... areas that could be growing stronger with each match. While scientists have yet to study the brain activity of ping pong players, Suzuki believes **the game enhances brain function unlike any other sport.**

Renowned physician, psychiatrist and brain imaging expert, Dr. Daniel Amen, says that 'Table Tennis is The World's Best Brain Sport.

*"You still may think that calling table tennis a sport is silly, but I think **it is the best brain sport ever.** It is highly aerobic, uses both the upper and lower body, is great for eye hand coordination and reflexes, and causes you to use many different areas of the brain at once as you are tracking the ball, planning shots and strategies, and figuring out spins. It is like aerobic chess. Plus, table tennis causes very few head injuries. Table tennis, or Ping Pong, is the second most popular organized sport in the world. What is even more impressive is that it is the youngest of the world's major sports. At the competitive level, players hit the ball in excess of 90 miles per hour across the table!"*

4. Social Bonding and Fun at any age or level!

Table tennis is a great sport for social bonding, through its friendly but competitive nature. It can be enjoyed at school or clubs, where you can meet new people and form lasting friendships, and also at home where it can be a great way to spend quality time to bring the family closer together.

There are no gender or age barriers. Young kids might be playing a 65 year old players, and still have fun and competitive games! Bigger or stronger players do not necessarily dominate the game, as there is much more to the game than just sheer speed or power. It's not uncommon for clubs to have kids, elderly and disabled people all playing in the same competition. Such is the diversity of the sport!

The great beauty of the sport is that you can still be competitive and have fun despite physical limitations, as the skills in reading the spin, and controlling the pace and placement of the ball, added with some clever tricks and specialised equipment, can compensate to a great extent for physical limitations! Few other sports can claim this, and even fewer can claim it to the same extent. Table tennis can be a sport for life no matter what the circumstances!

For those that learn to love the sport and excel, it will boost their self-esteem and teaches them to push themselves further, which is an important life skill at any age.

5. Fight Obesity



Obesity is a growing problem in modern society, and is of particular concern for our kids.

In addition to changes in our diet, regular exercise is the key element in the fight against obesity.

Particularly for schools, the ideal sport is one that is:

- Safe
- Inclusive to all kids regardless of age, race, sex or ability
- Good physical exercise
- Stimulates physical as well as mental ability and development
- Requires little space and can be played anywhere
- Relatively cheap to run and maintain
- Can be played all year round
- Can be fun and good exercise from day one.

Guess which sport ticks all the boxes?

Final words...

I hope you got something useful out of this article, and it will give you some ammunition to recommend our great sport over other sports to your friends as well.

Most people will benefit greatly from some regular exercise, and by recommending Table Tennis to your friends and family, you'll be doing them a great favour in more ways than one!

My next articles will be about table tennis in schools, and table tennis as a treatment for Alzheimer's and Dementia, titled:

1. "Why all schools should have table tennis as part of their PE curriculum".
2. "Table tennis – a highly effective treatment for Alzheimer's and Dementia"

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