

With traces dating back to antiquity, exercise for mental health is not a new practice. However, in recent decades, empirical research has proliferated on exercise and its effect on mood, a number of mental health disorders, and the mechanisms that may explain these effects. In this article, we begin by reviewing the history of this area. Next, we offer an overview of cross-sectional and longitudinal research regarding short- and long-term correlates of exercise on mental health, evidence for a number of putative mechanisms, and results from clinical trials for mental health disorders. Finally, we conclude with suggested directions for future research and recommendations for clinicians who wish to add exercise prescription to their practice.