

# Exercise helps beat the blues

## Activity also suppresses depression symptoms

By Brenda Bark

SPECIAL FOR THE REPUBLIC

Tough economic times, financial uncertainty, job insecurity: All affect our physical and emotional health.

According to a statement released by Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health, 18.8 million Americans, or roughly 9.5 percent of the population over age 18, suffer from depression disorders.



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It also stated that the current recession is partially responsible for the first increase in the suicide rate in 10 years.

The Mayo Clinic Web site authors suggest that depression symptoms often improve with exercise.

Exercise helps relieve depression in several ways.

The released endorphins, the feel-good chemicals manufactured by the brain, elevate one's mood. Activation of neurotransmitters speeds the delivery of endorphins and awakens depressed areas of the brain.

Exercise also suppresses certain im-

mune-system chemicals our bodies produce that can worsen depression. And the increase in body temperature may have a soothing effect.

Exercise also has non-physiological benefits.

It takes one's mind off worries, builds confidence through attainment of fitness goals, helps people cope through healthful activity without turning to potentially harmful behaviors or substances, and provides greater social interaction.

Furthermore, experts in depression therapy recommend exercise for those trying to remove dependency of antidepressant drugs.

Dr. Robert Hedaya, a psychopharmacologist and author of "The Antidepressant Survival Guide," calls exercise and a balanced diet crucial to kicking antidepressant-drug dependency.

In no way do I advocate ignoring your physician's recommendations, but if you, or someone you know, is overwhelmed with worries, beat the blues and get in shape at the same time, in conjunction with whatever program your health-care professional suggests.

### FITNESS

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