

# Laughter

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“Laughter is the tonic, the relief, the surcease for pain.” –Charlie Chaplin

April Fools! Laughter has been described as the best medicine in life. Is there any actual evidence to back up this claim we've all heard since we were children?

The study of humor and laughter, and its psychological and physiological effects on the human body, is called gelotology. A link between laughter and healthy function of blood vessels was first reported in 2005 by researchers at the University of Maryland Medical Center with the fact that laughter causes the dilatation of the inner lining of blood vessels, the endothelium, and increases blood flow.

Laughter has also been shown to have beneficial effects on various other aspects of biochemistry. For example, laughter has been shown to lead to reductions in stress hormones such as cortisol and epinephrine. When laughing, the brain also releases endorphins that can relieve some physical pain. Laughter also boosts the number of antibody-producing cells and enhances the effectiveness of T-cells, leading to a stronger immune system.

<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Laughter>

## Ways to Exercise Your Funny Bone in Richmond:

### See A Comedian:

The Funny Bone Comedy Club is a sure fire way to have a laugh-filled night out. Visit their website for specific comedians, dates and showtimes:

[www.richmondfunnybone.com](http://www.richmondfunnybone.com).

### See a Show:

Many great, funny plays, shows and acts come through Richmond. Visit one of our theatres' websites for more info. on upcoming events:

[www.barksdalerichmond.org](http://www.barksdalerichmond.org)

[www.byrdtheatre.com](http://www.byrdtheatre.com)

[www.firehousetheatre.org](http://www.firehousetheatre.org)

[www.landmarktheater.net](http://www.landmarktheater.net)

### Play Games:

Nothing sets the tone for good old-fashioned fun like playing games with friends and family. Whether it be cards, board games or sports, this is a cheap, easy way to get together and enjoy each other's company.

## What Your Sense of Humor is doing for You

### Short-term benefits:

A good laugh has great short-term effects. When you start to laugh, it doesn't just lighten your load mentally, it actually induces physical changes in your body. Laughter can:

**Stimulate many organs.** Laughter enhances your intake of oxygen-rich air, stimulates your heart, lungs and muscles, and increases the endorphins that are released by your brain.

**Activate and relieve your stress response.** A rollicking laugh fires up and then cools down your stress response and increases your heart rate and blood pressure. The result? A good, relaxed feeling.

**Soothe tension.** Laughter can also stimulate circulation and aid muscle relaxation, both of which help reduce some of the physical symptoms of stress.

### Long-term effects:

Laughter isn't just a quick pick-me-up, though. It's also good for you over the long haul. Laughter may:

**Improve your immune system.** Negative thoughts manifest into chemical reactions that can impact your body by bringing more stress into your system and decreasing your immunity. In contrast, positive thoughts actually release neuropeptides that help fight stress and potentially more-serious illnesses.

**Relieve pain.** Laughter may ease pain by causing the body to produce its own natural painkillers. Laughter may also break the pain-spasm cycle common to some muscle disorders.

**Increase personal satisfaction.** Laughter can also make it easier to cope with difficult situations. It also helps you connect with other people.

<http://www.mayoclinic.com/health/stress-relief/SR00034>