Physical Activity May Help Adults Manage Restlessness and Stress



GULFPORT, MS, UNITED STATES, October 2, 2026 /EINPresswire.com/ -- Restlessness and stress can affect concentration, sleep, productivity and the ability to settle into everyday routines. For some adults, including adults with attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder (ADHD), physical activity may provide one tool for managing some of these challenges.

Exercise affects numerous systems throughout the body and brain. Research has associated physical activity with reduced short-term feelings of anxiety, improved sleep and broader physical and mental health benefits. Research specifically involving adults with ADHD has also examined possible effects on executive function and core symptoms.

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>
> *Dr. Stanford Owen*

According to Dr. Stanford Owen, owner of ADD Clinics in Gulfport, Mississippi, physical activity can be considered as part of a broader approach to managing restlessness and stress.

“Restlessness can sometimes create the feeling that the body needs somewhere to put its energy,” Owen said. “Physical activity provides a structured outlet for movement while also supporting several aspects of physical and mental health. Exercise does not replace appropriate medical care, but it can be one useful part of an overall routine.”

Restlessness can appear differently from one adult to another.

Some adults may experience difficulty remaining seated for extended periods. Others may frequently change positions, tap a foot, pace, fidget or feel an internal sense of needing to

remain active.

Adult hyperactivity associated with ADHD does not necessarily resemble the highly visible physical activity commonly associated with childhood hyperactivity.

Stress can further complicate those sensations.

During periods of stress, the body can experience changes involving muscle tension, heart rate, sleep and alertness. Thoughts may become difficult to disengage from, and sitting quietly may feel more difficult.

Physical activity provides an opportunity to redirect attention toward movement and bodily activity for a period of time.

Exercise does not necessarily require an elaborate fitness program.

Walking, cycling, swimming, resistance training and other forms of movement can contribute to physical activity. Federal physical activity guidelines recommend that adults generally work toward at least 150 minutes of moderate-intensity aerobic activity each week, along with muscle-strengthening activity on at least two days.

The appropriate type and intensity of activity can vary according to age, physical condition and medical history.

Research continues to examine the relationship between exercise and ADHD specifically.

A 2026 systematic review and meta-analysis involving adults with ADHD found preliminary evidence that acute exercise may improve inhibitory control and produce a small beneficial effect on core ADHD symptoms. Evidence surrounding longer-term exercise interventions was more mixed, and researchers noted that additional study is needed.

Inhibitory control is one component of executive function. It involves the ability to regulate responses, resist impulses and pause before acting.

That does not mean exercise should be viewed as a substitute for established ADHD treatment.

Medication, behavioral strategies, psychotherapy, organizational techniques, sleep habits and other interventions may be used depending on individual circumstances. Treatment decisions

should be based on an appropriate clinical evaluation.

Owen noted that exercise can be particularly useful to consider because physical activity has health effects extending beyond ADHD symptoms.

“Exercise does not have to be viewed exclusively through the lens of ADHD,” Owen said. “Movement can affect sleep, stress, cardiovascular health and general physical functioning. Those factors can interact with concentration and daily functioning, which makes physical activity worth considering as part of the larger picture.”

Sleep represents one example of that interaction.

Insufficient or poor-quality sleep can affect attention, memory, mood and daytime functioning. Regular physical activity has been associated with improved sleep quality, while even a single session of moderate-to-vigorous activity may provide some immediate health benefits.

The relationship between exercise and stress also extends beyond intense workouts.

Physical activity can take many forms, and consistency may be more practical for many adults than attempting an overly demanding routine that quickly becomes difficult to maintain.

Breaking activity into shorter periods can also count toward weekly physical activity goals.

A walk during a lunch break, a bicycle ride, yard work or a scheduled workout can all introduce movement into a day that might otherwise involve long periods of sitting.

For adults experiencing restlessness, timing may also be worth observing.

Some individuals may notice that physical activity before a period requiring sustained concentration makes sitting and focusing easier afterward. Others may find movement breaks useful during long periods of desk work.

Individual responses can vary.

Exercise may also provide structure.

A planned activity creates a defined transition between portions of the day. For adults who struggle with shifting between tasks, routines built around movement may create natural stopping and starting points.

Physical activity should still be approached according to individual health circumstances.

Adults with medical conditions, physical limitations or concerns about beginning an exercise

program may need guidance from an appropriate healthcare professional regarding suitable activities and intensity.

The broader lesson is that managing restlessness and stress does not always involve trying to eliminate movement.

Sometimes movement itself can become part of the strategy.

For adults with ADHD or other difficulties involving restlessness, exercise represents one area of growing research interest. Current evidence suggests potential benefits in certain aspects of executive function and symptoms, while questions remain about the effects of different exercise types, intensity and long-term routines.

Rather than treating exercise as a stand-alone solution, physical activity can be considered one component within a broader approach to physical health, stress management and daily functioning.

About ADD Clinics
ADD Clinics, located in Gulfport, Mississippi, provides evaluation and medical care related to attention-deficit disorders and associated concerns. Dr. Stanford Owen works with adult patients addressing attention, concentration, impulsivity and related aspects of daily functioning.

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