

# Why You Might Want to Hit the Gym Four Hours After a Study Session

By Paige Towers • June 17, 2016 at 2:29pm

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We're always reminded of the physical benefits of working out — how it can prevent heart disease, increase our stamina and, perhaps most importantly, finally give us the confidence to post halfnaked #fitspo or #beachbody

selfies. But sweating it out has many mental benefits too, including increasing our retention of information. In fact, researchers recently suggested that exercise may be as crucial to memory as it is to developing meteorite-solid glutes.

In a study

published in the journal ,

researchers at the Radboud University Medical Center in the Netherlands found that exercising four hours after completing a series of learning tasks (e.g. memorizing pictures and locations) helped people better retain information. In fact, participants who waited four hours between learning and working out boosted their memory recall more effectively than those who worked out immediately after, or those who didn't work out at all.

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Those that exercised four hours after learning not only performed better on tests, but showed more activity in the hippocampus — an area of the brain that's important to learning and memory.

The study split 72 people into three groups: one group that did 35 minutes of intensive cardio exercise as soon as they finished a learning tasks session, one group that relaxed for four hours between learning before working out for the same amount of time and one control group that didn't work out at all. Participants returned 48 hours later to test how much information they'd retained.

Those that got their sweat on four hours after their learning task session not only performed better on the followup tests, but — as revealed via MRI scans — showed more activity in the hippocampus, the area of the brain that's important to learning and memory.

As stated by the researchers,

despite the obvious limitations to the study (e.g.

What happens if you exercise beyond four hours after learning something new, or test for retention 72 hours

later, or lift weights instead of perform cardio, or...?), their results “provide initial evidence that properly timed physical exercise can alter mnemonic processes at delayed retrieval and improve memory retention over a period of at least 48 hours.”

In other words, even though it’s not yet clear why, it’s possible that delayed exercise should be considered as a strategy for enhancing longterm memory. All the more reason, we say, to slip in a muchneeded nap in between working your brain and working those abs.

*Read more about the link between sleep, exercise and performance: New Evidence for Bingeing on Sleep Before a Big Race*

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