

Learning Objectives

For pages 384–387

In studying this text, you will focus on the following objectives:

Reading:

- Using text features.
- Analyzing informational text.
- Evaluating evidence.

Set a Purpose for Reading

Read this article to learn how an everyday activity can improve a person's health.

Preview the Article

1. Read the **deck**, or subtitle. What does it suggest the article is about?
2. Scan the article to find the **subhead**. What point do you think the writers will make in the article's second part?

Reading Strategy

Evaluate Evidence

To evaluate evidence, first find the main idea. Next find the facts the writers use to support that idea. Then make a judgment about whether the evidence supports the writers' claims.

As you read, use a graphic organizer like the one below to keep track of the evidence.

Main idea: _____

Fact 1: _____

Fact 2: _____

TIME

The Giggle PRESCRIPTION

Laughter is the best medicine.

By TRACY EBERHART and ROBERT A. BARNETT

Go ahead, grin. Or better yet, laugh out loud. Laughter is an important part of a healthy life, according to Lee Berk, assistant professor of family medicine at the University of California. "Just thinking about a silly video you are going to watch can reduce feelings of tension, anger, and sadness," says Berk.

Berk and other researchers have done studies to confirm that laughing spells keep your body and mind healthy. In fact, Berk says, "Laughter is an instant vacation."

Laughing for a few seconds may give you the same workout as a minute of aerobic exercise by increasing the activity of the heart and stimulating



Arni Katz/Index Stock

circulation.¹ A good case of the giggles massages not only the heart but also the lungs, muscles, and digestive system. This increased physical activity, coupled with the feel-good mental benefits of having a good laugh, may have lifesaving effects.

According to studies done by doctors at the University of Maryland Medical Center in Baltimore, people with heart disease were 40% less likely to laugh in a variety of situations compared with people of the same age without heart disease. This may mean,

researchers say, that laughing can have something to do with helping to keep your heart healthy. Doctors are not sure exactly how laughter helps prevent heart disease, but they do know that mental stress causes physical changes that damage the lining of blood vessels, which can cause them to swell. At these sites of swelling, fat and cholesterol often build up, which can cause heart attacks. And because laughter can reduce mental stress, it may actually protect you against a heart attack!

¹ *Stimulating circulation* means "encouraging the movement of blood through the body."

Laughing prevents disease and eases pain

Part of laughter's benefit is its positive effect on the immune system, which is the system that helps the body fight disease. Laughter helps your body stop the release of a hormone that weakens the immune system. Laughter also boosts your body's production of certain cells and proteins that fight infection and disease.

Hospitals and nursing facilities have learned to utilize² another of laughter's great benefits. Doctors have

² To *utilize* is to make use of.

learned that, if a patient is in pain, a good laugh can help. Fits of laughter boost chemicals in the brain that control pain. Your ability to withstand pain is raised during laughter and for a short time after you laugh. For this reason, many hospitals use laughter programs, including clowns and other performing artists, as part of their patients' treatment.

But maybe kids already know that laughing makes them feel good. Studies show that young people laugh many more times a day than older people. Just try to keep your ability to laugh as you get older. And remember to be silly. It's good for you!



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For a long and healthful life, eat right, get plenty of sleep, and laugh as often as you can. Don't just wait for funny things to happen. Plan for humor in your life.

- Watch funny movies (with other people if possible). Laughing is contagious.
- Create a humor journal. Record some of the funny things that happen to you. When you talk about your day with family or friends, find the humorous moments in it.
- Observe young children. They do and say a lot of funny things.
- Collect funny cartoons. Post some around your room.
- Read joke books or funny stories.
- Visit a zoo and watch the monkeys.
- Spend time with people who have a good sense of humor.
- Play charades, using only funny titles.

Respond and Think Critically

1. Write a brief summary of the main ideas in this magazine article. For help on writing a summary, see page 219. [Summarize]
2. **Text-to-Self** Think about a time when laughing made you feel better. In what way did laughter help you? Explain. [Connect]
3. What does Professor Lee Berk mean when he says, "Laughter is an instant vacation"? Give details from the article to support your answer. [Interpret]
4. Doctors believe that laughter may help prevent heart attacks. Why do they believe this? [Analyze]
5. **Reading Strategy Evaluate Evidence** Use your graphic organizer to evaluate the evidence in the article. Does the evidence support the main idea? Is the evidence reliable? Do the writers show bias, or give opinions based on their personal preferences? Explain.
6. **BQ BIG Question** Based on the information in this article, what role do you think humor plays in life? Explain.

