

VOTING AND HEALTH: 5 Reasons It's Good For You

1. It Strengthens Social Ties

Voting helps to strengthen our social ties, and feeling part of a close-knit society is in turn linked with greater quality of life and longevity, according to Stanford researchers.

2. It's Linked With Reports Of Greater Health

A 2001 study in the *American Journal of Public Health* shows that people are more likely to self-report "fair" or "poor" health in states where there's below-average voter turnout. "Socioeconomic inequality in political participation (as measured by voter turnout) is associated with poor self-rated health, independently of both income inequality and state median household income," Harvard researchers wrote in the study.

3. It's Good For Mental Health

Among people who are at risk, voting could help to lower stress and even ward off future mental health conditions. Specifically, researcher Lynn Sanders, Ph.D., an associate professor of politics at the University of Virginia, noted that, "I think that people who are on the wrong sides of the disadvantage divide, measured according to anything -- health, income, quality of community, or job status -- those are the people who stand to benefit most."

4. It Sets A Good Example for Kids

Children may not be able to actually cast a ballot, but they can see their parents vote, which could help to open dialogue about issues affecting society today. "Parents don't realize that even though kids can't vote they can learn about the voting process and learn about how their parents think about different issues," said Marc Zimmerman, a psychologist and professor

at the University of Michigan. "There is also some evidence that talking about politics may help kids become better critical thinkers and help parents build communication patterns with their kids."

"Politicians and activists typically attempt to motivate ordinary citizens to participate in democracy on the basis of moral appeals or attempts to fix a problem. Our results suggest that it might also be worthwhile to highlight the internal rewards citizens can obtain from being politically engaged: A sense of satisfaction and the experience of pleasant emotions and of connection with others."

5. Political Activism Boosts Well-Being And Life Satisfaction

Being politically active is linked with greater well-being and life satisfaction, according to research conducted by Tim Kasser, Ph.D. and reported in *Political Psychology*.

*Modified from Huffington Post:
Healthy Living, 11/06/2013*