

# What Laughter Can Do for You

Laughter really *is* the best medicine. It's good for our bodies, minds and spirits. How good is your understanding of laughter and its benefits?

LeAnn Thieman, Hall of Fame speaker and nurse who has addressed some annual meetings of Life Care directors of nursing, offers these fun facts:

1. **Laughter shows people we like them.** In social situations, laughter connects us with others, breaks down barriers, and shows people that we understand them. We are 30 times more likely to laugh when we're with others than when alone.
2. **Laughter doesn't burn calories.** Ten to fifteen minutes of laughing burns up to 40 calories. Researchers proved it raises your heart rate 10 to 20 percent. So, if you laugh for 15 minutes every day, you can laugh off four pounds a year!
3. **Laughing can't ease pain.** A good laugh releases brain chemicals called endorphins that help deal with pain. One study followed two groups of seniors with chronic pain. One got "humor therapy" sessions and the other didn't. The humor group told jokes and shared funny stories for an hour a week. After eight weeks, they reported less pain than those who didn't get the therapy. And they had a lot more fun at the retirement center.
4. **Laughter helps with mental health problems.** Research shows that a good chuckle lowers stress hormones like cortisol and epinephrine and raises serotonin, the brain chemical that helps fight depression.
5. **Laughter is contagious.** Scientists say we have a built-in "laugh detector," a brain circuit that responds to the sound of laughter. That's why when you hear others laughing, your laugh generator is tripped, and you get the giggles, too!



I hope you catch some laughter today – and share it with your residents and co-workers. You'll be the better for it.

The Bible tells us that in our relationship with God, He wants us to be happy and rejoicing ...

*He will yet fill your mouth with laughter, and your lips with shouting (Job 8:21 ESV).*

– Beecher Hunter