

A photograph of a group of people laughing together, with a semi-transparent white box overlaid on the left side containing text.

## Why laughing is healthy



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## Fasching? I don't need it - or do I?

**Just in time for November 11, 11:11 sharp, things get colorful, loud and cheerful: Carnival is here! And even if you might be rolling your eyes now and, as a passionate carnival grouch, you might solemnly do without costumes, Alaaf and Helau, one aspect of the foolish season should also be relevant to you: Laughter makes you happy and is proven to be healthy. Let's get to the bottom of why this is the case.**

## Laughter is the best medicine

At least that's what the common saying goes. And numerous studies also show that laughter has extensive, positive effects on the entire body. Laughter researchers analyze, for example, how laughter stimulates the brain, for example through the release of endorphins.

As the body's own morphines with pain-relieving and pain-suppressing effects, **endorphins** belong to the body's internal opioid system and are classified as “happiness hormones”. The entire skeletal musculature is also tensed during laughter, which leads to muscle relaxation and relaxation

after laughing. The body appears relaxed because the cortisol level drops. According to neurologist Henri Rubinstein, the “involuntary bodily reaction to an emotion that is perceived as pleasant”, which he describes laughter as, is therefore stress-regulating.

**Gelotology** as a medical discipline for researching the psychological and physiological effects of laughter on humans is still relatively young. The term is derived from the Greek word “gelos” (laughter). The founder of this interdisciplinary field of research, which also includes areas such as neurobiology, psychology, sociology and other areas of human medicine, is Prof. William Frey, who established the Institute for Humor Research at Stanford University in California/USA in 1964 with the aim of creating a sound basis for the therapeutic use of laughter.

**Laughter therapy**, in which intentional laughter is used as a method to improve mental and physical health, is used successfully for anxiety and depression patients as well as in pain therapy. Therapeutic laughter in groups appears to be the most promising. It has also been shown that targeted laughter, accompanied by breathing and relaxation exercises, is more effective than spontaneous laughter in terms of psychological markers.

**Would you like to try it out, but don't want to take out a subscription to laughter yoga right away?** Then let Vera F. Birkenbihl's lecture on “[Smile training](#)” inspire you for a gentle introduction.

Incidentally, laughter also has a positive effect on the **respiratory tract**: Laughing intensifies our breathing, causing the lungs to enrich the blood with oxygen and triggering combustion processes in the body, which in turn has a positive effect on the fat metabolism and cholesterol conversion. Waste products, such as the carbon dioxide produced, can also be effectively expelled when we laugh.

The increased oxygen consumption increases pulse and blood pressure in the short term, but then both drop and the arterial muscles relax, which lowers **blood pressure** in the long term. Studies show that regular laughter promotes the cardiovascular system. According to current research, laughing for 20 seconds is said to challenge our body about as intensely as a three-minute, moderate jogging session.

Laughing also cleanses the upper airways, similar to coughing. Laughing also increases the number and activity of the body's own immune cells. Your **immune system** benefits from this.

### **Laughter is contagious. But adults go to the cellar to do it.**

We know that children laugh up to 400 times a day at the top of their lungs, whereas adults only do this a maximum of 15 times. Age also seems to have an impact on the effectiveness of laughter therapy, with younger patients benefiting significantly more from the method.

It is also known that laughing together not only promotes interpersonal closeness, but even strengthens our sense of social support and trust. As soon as one person in a group starts laughing, it becomes difficult for the others to remain serious.

**So if you don't want to slip straight into the role of a jester or fool, just use the start of Fasching as a little reminder to treat yourself to a bit of humor. Read a funny book, browse social media for amusing memes or watch a funny comedy that will put a smile on your face. Because one thing is clear: the positive effects of laughter also work without a costume.**

