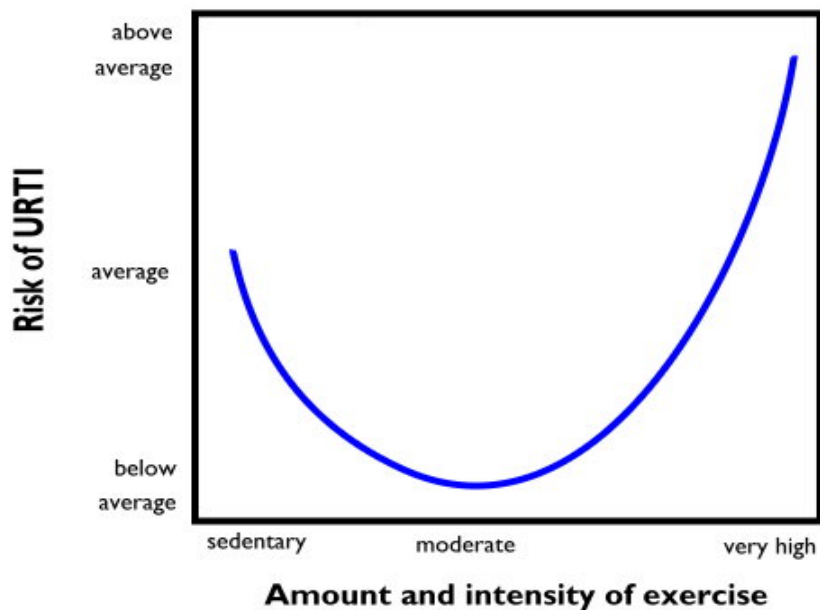


Immunity & Exercise



Exercise is well known to be beneficial to the body, both mentally and physically. The immune system protects the body from infections and it is often assumed that exercise has positive effects on the immune system. It is also commonly assumed that the relationship is linear, i.e., the more you exercise, and the stronger will be the immune system.



The chart above shows the relationship between risks of upper respiratory tract infection, a viral illness and the amount and intensity of exercise. The chart shows that the risks of infection increases with intensity and amount of exercise, indicating that intense exercise actually decreases the resistance to viral infections.

Research has shown that intense exercise suppressed most immunological functions for a few hours after exercise and that concentrations of salivary antibodies have been shown to decrease after intense exercise. Salivary antibodies play a role in resistance to certain viruses and moderate exercise has been shown to increase salivary antibodies. Hence, moderate exercise provides some protection against infection, while intense exercise may dampen immune function.