Scientists say singing boosts immune system.
Singing strengthens the immune system, according to research by scientists at the University of Frankfurt in Germany, published in the latest edition of the US Journal of Behavioral Medicine. The scientists tested the blood of people who sang in a professional choir in the city, before and after a 60-minute rehearsal of Mozart’s Requiem. They found that concentrations of immunoglobin A, proteins in the immune system which function as antibodies and hydrocortisone, an anti-stress hormone, increased significantly during the rehearsal. A week later, when they asked members of the choir to listen to a recording of the Requiem without singing, they found the composition of their blood did not change significantly. The researchers, who included Hans Guenther Bastian from the Institute of Musical Education at Frankfurt University, concluded singing not only strengthened the immune system but also notably improved the performer’s mood.

Singing is good for you.
Many studies done over a number of years have focused on the health benefits of singing, and the evidence is overwhelming.
• Singing releases endorphins into your system and makes you feel energized and uplifted. People who sing are healthier than people who don’t.
• Singing gives the lungs a workout.
• Singing tones abdominal and intercostal muscles and the diaphragm, and stimulates circulation.
• Singing makes us breathe more deeply than many forms of strenuous exercise, so we take in more oxygen, improve aerobic capacity and experience a release of muscle tension as well.

Singing can help prolong life.
Graham Welch, director for advanced music education at London’s Roehampton Institute, states, “Singing exercises the vocal cords and keeps them youthful, even in old age. The less age-battered your voice sounds, the more you will feel, and seem, younger.” He says that when you break into song, your chest expands and your back and shoulders straighten, thus improving your posture. Singing lifts moods and clears the “blues” by taking your mind off the stresses of the day, as well as releasing pain-relieving endorphins. As you sing along, the professor adds, your circulation is improved, which in turn oxygenates the cells and boosts the body’s immune system to ward off minor infections. And “it provides some aerobic exercise for the elderly or disabled,” Welch says.

A recent German study has shown that active amateur group singing can lead to significant increases in the production of a protein considered as the first line of defense against respiratory infections, and also leads to positive emotional changes. “Given that every human being is, in principle, capable of developing sufficient vocal skills to participate in a chorus for a lifetime, active group singing may be a risk-free, economic, easily accessible, and yet powerful road to enhanced physiological and psychological well-being.”

Greg Cohen of George Washington University tracked a Senior Singers Chorale in Arlington, Va. The chorale singers’ average age is 80 — the youngest is 65 and the oldest 96. Preliminary data shows the singers suffer less depression, make fewer doctor visits a year, take fewer medications and have increased their other activities. Singing starts in infancy. John Lennon, Professor of Vocal Performance, Emeritus Emporia State University, says, “I contend that singing is an inborn response in those moments of absolute emotional tranquility. Babies sing to themselves. The fact that we recognize no identifiable melodic sequence does not mean that it is not singing. Such spontaneous oral response has sustained emission, rhythm, pitch variation and emotional expression. Like the infant, we sing because we feel good and singing makes us feel even better. When we sing to ourselves we are, in effect, communicating with the inner-self … it may well be counter-productive to one’s well being not to sing.” Preschool and kindergarten teachers have known for a long time that children learn best through songs. They remember the material easier and it is easier to keep them engaged in the activity. It could be as simple as someone who told us that it was something we shouldn’t do because it wasn’t pleasant to listen to or the self-talk that says it doesn’t sound good enough, so don’t do it. Lennon asks, “Is the logic that if one sounds better one enjoys it more? Do we sing primarily to sound better? It is a coveted fringe benefit, but hardly the primary reason why we sing.”

Reid Wilson, Ph.D., Associate Clinical Professor of Psychiatry at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill School of Medicine, believes you can, “sing away your woes.” Simply choose a familiar song, and then set your troubles to music. For example, instead of crooning the traditional words to Mary Had A Little Lamb, imagine warbling, “My credit card bill is going to be late, going to be late, going to be late; my credit rating will be ruined, and I’ll never
It’s a mood lifter and anti depressant with no side effects. And it’s not news to health professionals that mental and physical health are intimately linked.

Sing yourself happy and fit! If you have ever wondered why choral singers look to be on a high, here are some of the reasons. The health benefits of singing are well documented:

- Singing improves your mood. It releases the same feel-good brain chemicals as chocolate!
- It is very effective as a stress reliever and improves sleep.
- Singing releases pain-relieving endorphins, helping you to forget that painful tooth/knee/whatever.
- Your posture improves.
- Lung capacity increases.
- Singing clears sinuses and respiratory tubes.
- Your mental alertness improves.
- Singing tones your facial and stomach muscles.
- It boosts your immune system, helping to fight disease and prolonging life expectancy.
- Your confidence increases.

And of course the social benefits are important too: Singing widens your circle of friends.

“Singing fortifies health, widens culture, refines the intelligence, enriches the imagination, makes for happiness and endows life with an added zest,” says the American Academy of Teachers of Singing.

If you sing in the shower or sing along with the radio, consider taking this raw vocal skill to new heights.

Music – the “universal language” not only stirs our deepest emotions, but active participation can increase energy and vigor to see us through even the most stress-filled life commitments. Good vocal technique goes beyond the basics to include both physical and vocal warm-ups, proper nutrition, adequate rest and emotional commitment. An experienced vocal teacher will explore all aspects of posture, abdominal and chest development, tone production and breath control. What health club can promise these benefits?

- Singing increases poise, self-esteem and presentation skills.
- Singing strengthens concentration and memory.
- Singing develops the lungs and promotes superior posture.
- Singing broadens expressive communication.
- Singing adds a rich, more pleasant quality to speech.
- Singing animates the body, mind and spirit.
- Singing enables the performer to delve into characterization/acting.
- Singing stimulates insight into prose and poetry and piques interests in the inner meaning of words.
- Singing enriches one’s ability to appreciate the art of great singers.
- Singing is an ageless enjoyment – you are never too young or too old.
- Singing is therapeutic both emotionally and physically.

Solo singing is easy to develop with the assistance of a well-trained vocal coach. Performing opportunities include church/band soloist, cabaret artist, or enjoying your newly developed skill exclusively for self-satisfaction.

Opportunities for group singing abound from choirs to classical ensembles, Madrigal troupes, doowop, a cappella and more. If you commit to a performing ensemble, be sure the group shares the same emotional and health-enriching goals you have set for yourself.

Whether or not you become a world-class singer is not important. Sharing the joy of singing will enrich your life far beyond the notes and music. Add a healthy, new dimension to your life – try SINGING!

Want to start feeling better now? Go to www.sweetadelineintl.org and start living!

(This article was originally published and written by BHS and its staff. It is edited, adapted and republished with permission. Portions and excerpts are written by the late Patty Mills, who was an active member of the YankeeMaid Chorus for many years.)