

Walk your way to health

Study shows largest health benefits from light or moderate activity.

A new study by researchers from the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine (LSHTM), Cambridge University and the Karolinska Institute in Sweden has found that even light or moderate intensity physical activity, such as walking or cycling, can substantially reduced the risk of early death.

The study, which was published this week by the *International Journal of Epidemiology*, combined the results from the largest studies around the world on the health impact of light and moderate intensity physical activity. It showed that the largest health benefits from light or moderate activity (such as walking and cycling) were in people who do hardly any physical activity at all. Although more activity is better - the benefits of even a small amount of physical activity are very large in the least physically active.

The good news from this study is that you don't have to be an exercise freak to benefit from physical activity. Just achieving the recommended levels of physical activity (equivalent to 30 minutes daily of moderate intensity activity on 5 days a week) reduces the risk of death by 19% [95%confidence interval 15% to 24%], while 7 hours per week of moderate activity (compared with no activity) reduces the risk of death by 24% (95% CI 19% to 29%).

Lead researcher, James Woodcock said, "This research confirms that is not just exercising hard that is good for you but even moderate everyday activities, like walking and cycling, can have major health benefits. Just walking to the shops or walking the children to school can lengthen your life - as well as bringing other benefits for well-being and the environment."

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