

THE Wellness Minute

Exercise Series: 3.0

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Lack of Exercise Worse Than Obesity

What Does Research Tell Us About Exercise and Longevity?

Just 20 minutes of brisk walking a day may be all it takes to lessen a sedentary person's risk of early death, says a new study. The researchers also found that the risk of early death due to lack of exercise is double that posed by obesity and does not necessarily depend on being obese or overweight.



334,000 men and women took part in a large European study looking at the links between cancer and diet which also measured many other variables such as exercise and BMI. When they analyzed the data, the researchers found that compared with the number of deaths linked to obesity, twice as many were linked to lack of physical activity, and just a modest increase in physical activity could make a difference, especially among inactive people.

The study was reported in the American Journal of Clinical Nutrition. The head researcher Dr. Ulf Ekelund says the study delivers a simple message: *"just a small amount of physical activity each*

day could have substantial health benefits for people who are physically inactive.

Is Exercise Effective in Lowering Risk of Early Death Among All Weight Groups?

The links between early death and physical inactivity were observed across all levels of overweight and obesity measures - both in terms of overall BMI and central or abdominal obesity. The study classed 22.7% of participants as inactive because they reported having no recreational activity and were occupied in sedentary jobs. **The analysis found that doing exercise that burned just 90-110 calories a day... the equivalent of a daily 20-minute brisk walk... was enough to move an individual from the inactive to the moderately inactive group and reduce their risk of early death by 16-30%.**

The team noted that while the effect of this was greatest among participants of normal weight, but the analysis showed this also benefited overweight and obese participants.

Prof. Ekelund noted that while 20 minutes of brisk walking a day can make a difference, we should really do more, as "physical activity has many proven health benefits and should be an important part of our daily life."

Physical activity and all-cause mortality across levels of overall and abdominal adiposity in European men and women: the European Prospective Investigation into Cancer and Nutrition Study (EPIC), Ulf Ekelund, et al., *Am J Clin Nutr*, doi:10.3945/ajcn.114.100065, published online 14 January 2015,

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