

More steps-per-day linked to significant reductions in diabetes and high blood pressure

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Middle-aged people who walked the most steps-per-day over an average of 9 years had a 43% lower risk of diabetes and a 31% lower risk of high

blood pressure, compared to those with the fewest steps, according to preliminary research presented at the American Heart Association's Epidemiology and Prevention | Lifestyle and Cardiometabolic Health Scientific Sessions 2020.

In addition, among the women in the study, each 1,000-step interval resulted in a 13% lower risk of obesity, and those with the highest step count were 61% less likely to be obese, compared to women who walked the least. However, there was no association between a lower risk of obesity and the number of daily [steps](#) walked for men in the study.

"Walking is a widely accessible form of physical activity, and steps-per-day is an easy measurement and motivator that most people understand and can easily measure given the booming industry of wearable technologies or smartphones," said lead study author Amanda E. Paluch, Ph.D., an assistant professor at the University of Massachusetts in Amherst, Massachusetts.

The study results were based on data from 1,923 participants in the national Coronary Artery Risk Development in Young Adults (CARDIA) study, in which men and women wore accelerometer devices in 2005-2006 for at least 10 hours or more per day for a minimum of four days. An accelerometer is a wearable device that measures physical activity such as walking.

The participants' average age was 45; 58% of the group were women; and 41% were black. The average follow-up time was nine years.

The researchers said, "The results of our study add to the growing evidence about the importance of regular physical activity for improving heart health, and that preventive efforts can be effective, even as middle-aged adults move into older adulthood."

Based on the current findings, Paluch said she and her team want to expand their research and examine how walking speed might affect heart health risks. The bottom line is that adding more steps to [everyday life](#) may feel more accessible to people who want to live healthier.

"Diabetes and high blood pressure are not inevitable. Healthy lifestyle changes, such as attaining and maintaining a healthy body weight, improving diet and increasing physical activity can help reduce diabetes risk. This study shows that walking is an effective therapy to decrease risk," said Robert H. Eckel, M.D., a former president of the American Heart Association and professor of medicine, emeritus and Charles A. Boettcher II Chair in Atherosclerosis, emeritus at the University of Colorado Anschutz Medical School in Aurora, Colorado.

"For people who find the idea of a daily, extended exercise period and [physical activity](#) regimen daunting, shifting the focus to accumulating steps throughout the day may help them become more active," said Paluch. "The more steps, the better."

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