

Health Insights

(Formerly Live Well Work Well)

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10,000 Steps a Day: Not a Magical Formula for Preventing Weight Gain

For years now, 10,000 steps a day has become the gold standard for people trying to improve their health, and recent research shows some benefits can come from even just 7,500 steps. But if you're trying to prevent weight gain, a new Brigham Young University study suggests no number of steps alone will do the trick.

Researchers from BYU's Exercise Science Department, along with colleagues from the Nutrition, Dietetics & Food Science Department, studied 120 freshmen over their first six months of college as they participated in a step-counting experiment. Participants walked either 10,000, 12,500, or 15,000 steps a day, six days a week, for 24 weeks while researchers tracked their caloric intake and weight.

The goal of the study was to evaluate if progressively exceeding the recommended step count of 10,000 steps per day (in 25% increments) would minimize weight and fat gain in college freshmen students. In the end, it didn't matter if the students walked more than even 15,000 steps; they still gained weight. Students in the study gained on average about 3.5 lbs. over the study period.

Although weight was not affected by the increased steps, there was a positive impact on physical activity patterns, which "may have other emotional and health benefits," study authors said. "The biggest benefit of step recommendations is getting people out of a sedentary lifestyle," Bailey. "Even though it won't prevent weight gain on its own, more steps is always better for you."

Brigham Young University. "10,000 steps a day: Not a magical formula for preventing weight gain: Even far eclipsing 10K steps didn't prevent weight gain for college freshmen studied." ScienceDaily. www.sciencedaily.com/releases/2020/02/202013160107.htm (accessed February 20, 2020).



Understanding COPD

Currently the third-leading cause of death in the United States, Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease (COPD) has no cure and the damage it causes is irreversible. Fortunately, a majority of COPD cases can be avoided through simple lifestyle changes.

COPD is a lung disease in which the airways are partially obstructed, making it difficult to breathe. COPD develops slowly, and it may take many years before symptoms are noticed. It is usually diagnosed in those middle-aged or older. COPD is not contagious; however, there are several risk factors that greatly increase your chance of developing it, such as:

- **Smoking:** Former or current smokers are at the greatest risk and account for 90% of those suffering from COPD.
- **Pollution:** Intense or prolonged exposure to air pollution can cause irreversible lung damage.
- **Genetics:** Studies have shown that some people may have a genetic predisposition to the development of respiratory conditions, including COPD.

- **History:** People who have a history of frequent or severe lung infections, especially during childhood, may be at an increased risk.

Common symptoms associated with COPD include a phlegm-producing cough that won't go away, shortness of breath, wheezing, chest tightness and frequent throat clearing.

Not smoking is the most effective way to prevent the development of COPD, and the best way to slow or stop its progression. You should also reduce your exposures to other lung irritants such as pollution, dust, and certain cooking or heating fumes. Try to stay inside when the outside air quality is poor.

COPD's effect on your lungs cannot be reversed, but there are things you can do to feel better and slow future damage. Medicine and pulmonary rehabilitation are often used to help relieve symptoms, allowing patients to breathe easier and stay active.

Why Poor Sleep May Increase Heart Risk in Women

Women who sleep poorly tend to overeat and consume a lower-quality diet, according to a new study from researchers at Columbia University Irving Medical Center. The findings provide new insight into how poor sleep quality can increase the risk of heart disease and obesity and points to possible interventions for improving women's heart health.

The researchers analyzed the sleep and eating habits of an ethnically diverse group of 495 women, ages 20 to 76. The study looked at sleep quality, the time it took to fall asleep, and insomnia. The women also reported on the types and amounts of foods they typically eat throughout the year, allowing researchers to measure their typical dietary patterns.

Similar to previous studies of sleep and diet, the study found that those with worse overall sleep quality consumed more of the added sugars associated with obesity and diabetes. Women who took longer to fall asleep had higher caloric intake and ate more food by weight. And women with more severe insomnia symptoms consumed more food by weight and fewer unsaturated fats than women with milder insomnia.

"Our interpretation is that women with poor-quality sleep could be overeating during subsequent meals and making more unhealthy food choices," says Aggarwal.

"Given that poor diet and overeating may lead to obesity – a well-established risk factor for heart disease – future studies should test whether therapies that improve sleep quality can promote cardiometabolic health in women," says Aggarwal.

Columbia University Irving Medical Center. "The skinny on why poor sleep may increase heart risk in women." ScienceDaily. www.sciencedaily.com/releases/2020/02/202017085214.htm (accessed February 20, 2020).



Optimism Linked to Lower Stroke Severity, Inflammation

Stroke survivors with high levels of optimism had lower inflammation levels, reduced stroke severity, and less physical disability after three months, compared to those who are less optimistic, according to a new study. In a small study of 49 stroke survivors, researchers examined the relationship among optimism, inflammation, stroke severity, and physical disability for three months after a stroke.

“Our results suggest that optimistic people have a better disease outcome, thus boosting morale may be an ideal way to improve mental health and recovery after a stroke,” said Yun-Ju Lai, Ph.D., M.S., R.N., the study’s first author and a postdoctoral fellow in the neurology department at The University of Texas Health Science Center at Houston.

This pilot study is a secondary analysis of data collected from a repository of neurological diseases. Outcomes included optimism levels from the revised Life Orientation Test, a standard psychological tool for measuring optimism; stroke severity evaluation through the National Institutes of Health Stroke Scale, and levels of inflammatory markers. As optimism levels increased, stroke severity and the inflammatory markers IL-6 and CRP decreased even after considering other possible variables.

“Patients and their families should know the importance of a positive environment that could benefit the patient,” Lai said. “Mental health does affect recovery after a stroke.”

American Heart Association. “Optimism linked to lower stroke severity, inflammation.” ScienceDaily. www.sciencedaily.com/releases/2020/02/202012084408.htm (accessed February 20, 2020).



Banana Nut Bread Recipe

- 7 ripe medium bananas, mashed
- 4 Tbsp butter, 2 oz, softened
- ½ C 4 oz unsweetened apple sauce
- 1 C (6 ½ oz) light brown sugar
- 2-½ C unbleached all purpose flour
- 4 large egg whites
- 1-½ tsp baking soda
- 1 tsp vanilla extract
- ½ tsp salt
- ¾ C chopped walnuts



Preheat oven to 350°F. Grease two 8x5 inch loaf pans with baking spray. In a medium bowl, combine flour, baking soda and salt with a wire whisk. Set aside.

In a large bowl cream butter and sugar with an electric mixer. Add egg whites, apple sauce, and vanilla, and beat at medium speed until thick. Scrape down sides of the bowl. Add ⅓ of the flour mixture and blend at low speed until combined, repeating until all of the flour mixture has been mixed in. Do not over mix. Fold in the walnuts. Pour batter into loaf pans and bake on the center rack for 50 to 52 minutes, or until a toothpick inserted in the center comes out clean. Let the pan cool at least 20 minutes, bread should be room temperature before slicing.

Serving: 1 slice. Each serving provides: Calories- 104, Carbohydrates- 19.5g, Protein- 1.5g, Fat- 4g, Dietary Fiber- 1g, Saturated Fat- 1.5g, Sodium- 100mg, Sugars- 10.5g, Cholesterol- 5mg

Gina Homolka. “Makeover Banana Nut Bread Recipe.” Skinnytaste, November 19, 2019. <https://www.skinnytaste.com/makeover-banana-nut-bread-3-pts/>.