

Moderate Physical Activity Cuts Dementia

Senior women were found to be less likely to develop mild cognitive impairment or dementia when they did more daily walking and moderate-to-vigorous physical activity, according to a new study led by the Herbert Wertheim School of Public Health and Human Longevity Science at University of California San Diego. Women are at a higher risk of developing dementia than men, and therefore account for a majority of the affected population.

The Journal of the Alzheimer's Association reported that, among women aged 65 or older, each additional 31 minutes per day of moderate-to-vigorous physical activity was associated with a 21% lower risk of developing mild cognitive impairment or dementia. The risk was also 33% lower with each additional 1,865 daily steps.

"Given that the onset of dementia begins 20 years or more before symptoms show, the early intervention for delaying or preventing cognitive decline and dementia among older adults is essential," said senior author Andrea LaCroix, Ph.D., M.P.H., Professor at the Herbert Wertheim School of Public Health and Human Longevity Science at UC San Diego.

While there are several types, dementias are a debilitating neurological condition that can cause loss of memory and impair the ability to think, problem solve, or reason. Mild cognitive impairment is an early stage of memory loss or thinking problems that is not as severe as dementias.

According to the United States Department of Health and Human Services, dementia affects more than 5 million people in this country. That number is expected to double by 2050. "Physical activity has been identified as one of the three most promising ways to reduce risk of dementia and Alzheimer's disease. Prevention is important because once dementia is diagnosed, it is very difficult to slow or reverse. There is no cure," said LaCroix.

For this study, the researchers sampled data from 1,277 women as part of two Women's Health Initiative (WHI) ancillary studies: the WHI Memory Study (WHIMS) and the Objective Physical Activity and Cardiovascular Health (OPACH) study. The women wore research-grade accelerometers and went about their daily activities for up to seven days to obtain accurate measures of physical activity and sedentary periods. The activity trackers showed the women averaged 3,216 steps, 276 minutes in light physical activities, 45.5 minutes of moderate-to-vigorous physical activity and 10.5 hours of sitting per day.

The study findings showed that longer or more frequent periods of sitting were associated with higher risk of mild cognitive impairment or dementia. "Older adults can be encouraged to increase movement of at least moderate intensity and take more steps each day for a lower risk of mild cognitive impairment and dementia," said Nguyen. "The findings for steps per day are particularly noteworthy because steps are recorded by a variety of wearable devices increasingly worn by individuals and could be readily adopted."

The authors indicated that further research is needed among large diverse populations that include men.

University of California - San Diego. (2023, January 25). More steps, moderate physical activity cuts dementia, cognitive impairment risk. ScienceDaily. Retrieved June 29, 2023 from www.sciencedaily.com/releases/2023/01/230125085831.htm



Mental Health Moment

Physical Activity

Research shows that those who are physically active are likely to live longer, healthier lives. Physical activity can lead to many benefits:

- Weight maintenance
- Improved mental health
- Reduced blood pressure
- Reduced stress
- Improved blood sugar regulation
- Stronger bone density

In addition, a person who has hypertension, diabetes, or a history of smoking can greatly benefit from including regular physical activity in their daily routine.

There are three main components to a well-balanced program of physical activity:

- **Aerobic activity:** Get at least 150 minutes of moderate-intensity aerobic activity (e.g., briskly walking) or 75 minutes of vigorous-intensity aerobic activity (e.g., running) every week.
- **Muscle strengthening:** Incorporate muscle-strengthening exercises at least two days a week. For the purposes of general training, focus on two to three upper body, lower body, and abdominal exercises.
- **Flexibility training:** Stretch for just a few minutes after a workout or before bed. Flexibility training is frequently neglected, resulting in increased tightness as you age and become less active.
- **As with any change** to your health and wellness regime, it's important to talk to your doctor before you start exercising.

Commitment to a regular physical activity program is more important than the intensity of your workouts. Choose exercises you are likely to pursue and enjoy, such as:

- Walking or running
- Rowing
- Biking
- Swimming

Life is full of responsibilities that can pull you in multiple directions, and sometimes exercise takes a back seat to other obligations. However, letting your fitness slip can create serious health risks down the road and make bad fitness habits even harder to break later on.

Where can I learn more? For more information about exercise programs, please contact your doctor.

Exercise and Mental Health

It's common knowledge that physical exercise is good for your body—but did you know it can also boost your mental health? Research continues to confirm that exercise reduces anxiety, depression, and negative moods. Include exercise as part of your everyday routine to reap the physical and mental benefits and improve your overall well-being.

Connecting Body and Mind

People who exercise regularly often report having better mental and emotional well-being. Consider the following mental health benefits of exercise:

- **Mood boost:** Exercise triggers the production of mood-boosting chemicals in the brain: endorphins, serotonin, dopamine, and oxytocin.
- **Better sleep:** Regular exercise can help regulate your sleep patterns and reduce the time it takes to fall asleep. Aim to have your workout completed at least one to two hours before bed so your brain has enough time to wind down.
- **Reduced stress:** Physical activity is linked to lower physiological reactivity toward stress, which makes it a helpful coping strategy.
- **Higher self-esteem:** When exercise becomes a habit, you may feel more powerful or confident. You may also feel accomplished when you meet your fitness goals.
- **Stronger resilience:** Exercise is a healthy way to build resilience and cope with mental or emotional challenges instead of turning to negative behaviors or harmful coping mechanisms.

Getting Started

Adults should do moderate-intensity aerobic activity for at least 150 minutes each week and muscle-strengthening activities two times per week. It may seem overwhelming at first, but if you break it down, that's 30 minutes of moderate exercise five times a week.

Even if you don't have time for the full 30 minutes of exercise, find something that works for you. Any physical activity is better than none. Consider these tips for incorporating exercise into your routine:

- Start with short exercise sessions and slowly increase your time. The goal is to commit to moderate physical activity and build it into your daily routine.
- Find an activity you enjoy and incorporate it into your routine for a body and mind boost.
- Schedule workouts when your energy is the highest.
- Exercise with a friend or loved one to make it more enjoyable and help you stick to the routine.



Chicken Rice Bowl

Ingredient List:

- 1 Tablespoon vegetable oil
- 1 cup chopped onion
- 1-pound boneless, skinless chicken breast, cut into bite-sized pieces
- 3 cloves garlic, minced or ¾ teaspoon garlic powder
- 2 Tablespoons minced jalapeno pepper
- 1 ½ cups chopped bell pepper
- 3 cups (28-oz can) diced or crushed tomatoes, including juice
- ½ cup corn or other vegetables (fresh, frozen, or canned, drained and rinsed)
- 1 ½ teaspoon cumin
- 1 teaspoon chili powder
- ¼ teaspoon salt
- 2 cups cooked brown rice
- ½ cup chopped fresh cilantro

Directions:

1. In a large skillet, sauté onion in oil over medium heat until softened, about 5 minutes. Add chicken and cook until no longer pink, about 10 minutes.
2. Add garlic, jalapeno pepper, and bell pepper and stir until softened, about 5 minutes. Add remaining vegetables, cumin, chili powder, and salt. Simmer until heated through and vegetables are cooked.
3. Serve over rice and sprinkle cilantro on top before serving.
4. Refrigerate leftovers within 2 hours.

Total Calories per 1 cup serving: 220, Total Fat 4.5g, Total Carbohydrate 29g, Protein 17g

U.S. National Library of Medicine. (n.d.). Rice with chicken and vegetables. MedlinePlus. <https://medlineplus.gov/recipes/rice-with-chicken-and-vegetables/>



August Quiz

Moderate Physical Activity Cuts Dementia

1. Among women aged 65 or older, each additional ___ minutes per day of moderate-to-vigorous physical activity was associated with a ___ percent lower risk of developing mild cognitive impairment or dementia.
2. Which of the following are one of the most promising ways to reduce the risk of dementia.
 - a. Physical Activity
 - b. Brain Puzzles
 - c. A Healthy Diet
 - d. Being Social

Physical Activity

3. What is the recommended duration of moderate-intensity aerobic activity per week for adults?
 - a. 50 minutes
 - b. 100 minutes
 - c. 150 minutes
 - d. 200 minutes
4. How many days per week should muscle-strengthening exercises be incorporated into a well-balanced exercise program?
 - a. 1 day
 - b. 2 days
 - c. 3 days
 - d. 4 days

Mental Health Moment

5. What chemicals are produced by exercise that are responsible for feelings of happiness?
 - a. Endorphins, serotonin, dopamine, and oxytocin
 - b. Acetylcholine, histamine, serotonin, and adrenaline
 - c. Melatonin, cortisol, dopamine, and oxytocin

See page 5 for quiz answers

Healthy Habits Calendar

August 2023 - Moderate Physical Activity Cuts Dementia

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
		1 Welcome to August! Start the <i>Try Something New Challenge</i> .	2	3 Thirsty Thursday: Remember to drink lots of water.	4	5 Service Saturday: Do a random act of kindness for someone you know.
6	7 Meatless Monday: Eat a vegetarian or vegan meal.	8	9 Book Worm Wednesday: Take some time to read a book.	10	11 Fitness Friday: Go on a walk or run for 30 minutes.	12
13 Self-care Sunday: Take time to write in a journal for your mental health.	14	15 Tasty Tuesday: Share a healthy snack with a friend or colleague.	16	17 Challenge Check-In: What is something new you tried?	18 Fun Friday: Play a sport or participate in another activity with friends or family.	19
20	21 Mindful Monday: Start your day off with some meditation or deep-breathing exercises.	22	23	24 Thoughtful Thursday: Donate to a charity or volunteer at a local organization.	25	26 Selfie Saturday: Hang out with some family or friends and take a picture to remember it by!
27 Self-care Sunday: Set out your clothes in preparation for work tomorrow.	28	29	30 Workout Wednesday: Take the stairs or park farther away from your building today.	31		

Challenge: Try Something New!

According to research from the University of Washington, new experiences help maintain positive emotions and curb negative ones. Doing or seeing something new releases dopamine in our brain, a chemical that makes us feel good and rewarded.

This challenge encourages you to try new things. For example, starting a hobby you've always wanted to try, buying a new game, experimenting with unique food from the grocery store, or spending time with different friends.

Idea Bank:

- Eat a new food
- Visit a museum
- Talk to a stranger
- Make a new recipe for dinner
- Volunteer
- Do a random act of kindness
- Take a hike on an unfamiliar trail
- Attend a concert or a play
- Learn a different skill or hobby
- Meditate
- Go a day or week without watching TV
- Call a friend or family member you haven't spoken to in a while
- Play a new game

How did you meet your goal this week? If you tried something new, write down how it was or what you would change.

Goal: I will try _____ new thing(s) each day/week/month!

Week 1

Week 2

Week 3

Week 4

Answers to Quiz:

- Q1: 31,21 | Q2: a. Physical Activity | Q3: c. 150 minutes
 Q4: b. 2 days | Q5: a. Endorphins, serotonin, dopamine, and oxytocin