

# Walking prevents premature death

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**MANY of us take our health for granted. We expect to be healthy even if we pay no attention to doing the right things to maintain our well-being.**

We see sickness as misfortune rather than as our failure to do the right things to protect our health. We make no effort to encourage those under our influence — our

friends, our family, and our colleagues — to do the simple things in life to maintain good health such as exercising daily and eating right.

A simple exercise such as walking can make a big difference to our quality and length of life. Many individuals find it daunting to begin an exercise programme as they think they have to start jogging or doing something intense, but there are tremendous health benefits to be gained by simply going out for a walk.

Walking is free, and does not require any training. It is an ideal activity for individuals at any age, and particularly as people get older.

## **SEDENTARY LIFESTYLE**

Many of the ailments and illnesses that afflict us are due to our sedentary lifestyle, which leads to fat accumulation, weakening of the muscles and ligaments around our joints, and degenerative disease (arthritis) all over.

The debility that comes with ageing is also precipitated by our sedentary and unhealthy lifestyles, yet changing some people's habits is always a big challenge.

Regular exercise supports and promotes health even better than medication does. A good walk every day helps to minimise anxiety and stress and reduces blood pressure in all age groups. It also helps to reduce depression in old age.

A new study on the subject published in the October issue of the *American Journal of Preventive Medicine* reviewed data on more than 62,000 men and 77,000 women enrolled in the Cancer Prevention Study II Nutrition Cohort drawn from older individuals in the USA. The researchers examined death from any cause between 1999 and 2013, and 5.8 per cent of the men and 6.6 per cent of the women reported doing no exercise at enrolment into the research in 1999.

These inactive individuals were 26 per cent more likely to die prematurely compared to individuals in the study who walked as a form of exercise.

### **WALK 20 TO 30 MINUTES DAILY**

The research reported that regular walking, even when it is below the minimum recommended levels for physical fitness, is associated with lower rates of death from all causes when compared with inactivity.

Various recommended guidelines call for adults to perform at least 150 minutes of moderate-intensity physical activity each week to achieve optimal health. That translates to a recommended 30 minutes of exercise daily.

However, this new study showed that even 20 minutes of walking daily can boost a person's lifespan. So even if you fall short of the minimum goal of 30 minutes of moderate exercise, you still can benefit by simply walking at an average pace that allows you to cover one mile in 20 minutes.

### **ANY EXERCISE IS BETTER THAN NONE**

Walking is the most common type of physical activity and has been linked to a lower risk of heart disease, diabetes, and breast and colon cancers.

With this study, we also now know that regular walking also reduces mortality in older men and women. Further, the more you walk the better, as the benefit is increased in individuals who meet or exceed the recommended physical activity guidelines.

However, doing any walking is better than doing none as individuals with complete inactivity fared the worst.

For individuals who work in offices, the new paradigm in some countries is to do walking meetings. Instead of sitting in an office for a meeting, take your colleagues for a walk around the block or around any green space nearby, and keep walking and talking for as long as the meeting lasts. This simultaneously provides work as well as health benefits to you all.

### **WALK AROUND THE LIVING ROOM**

Many individuals are challenged on how to find time to exercise in their very hectic lives. After an extremely long and stressful day, their sofa may present a source of refuge. The answer, however, is to find creative

ways to exercise. Therefore, simply walking around the living room while listening to music or while watching television will provide better health benefits than sitting on the couch to watch TV.

Regular walking improves not only physical but mental health, as witnessed by the mood lift many individuals experience after exercise. Even the very old can benefit if you give them a walker with a chair so they can walk, rest, and walk again. They will find that each week they can walk a little further between resting and, after awhile as their muscles and ligaments strengthen, they may no longer need the walker.

So, why are you still sitting there? Get up and walk around the room while you read this newspaper!

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