

Housework is not always a healthy exercise alternative

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(Medical Xpress)—Housework may not be as healthy as people think – and those who include domestic chores as part of an activity regime tend to be heavier, according to research by the University of Ulster Sports Academy.

In the Sport NI survey, over 4,600 people were asked to rate the amount and intensity of their physical activity at home, in work, for personal transport, in sport and recreation.

The research found that [housework](#) accounted for a significant proportion of the total amount of moderate to vigorous intensity activity reported.

Those reporting the highest amount of housework were actually heavier than people reporting other forms of moderate intensity exercise.

Although it is acknowledged that any activity is better than none, the study suggests that those undertaking domestic chores may be making the assumption that it is moderate intensity and contributes to the 150 minutes per week of moderate intensity physical activity recommended in UK guidelines.

When questioned for the survey, less than 43 per cent of respondents reported meeting or exceeding the government guidelines and these individuals reported 11 to 73 per cent of their weekly moderate intensity activity tally came from doing housework.

The research was led by Professor Marie Murphy, Head of the Ulster Sports Academy at the University of Ulster's Jordanstown campus.

"Housework is physical activity and any physical activity should theoretically increase the amount of calories expended," explained Professor Murphy.

"But we found that housework was inversely related to leanness, which suggests that either people are overestimating the amount of [moderate](#)

[intensity](#) physical activity they do through housework, or are eating too much to compensate for the amount of activity undertaken."

Women and older people questioned in the Sport NI Sport and Physical Activity Survey (SAPAS) reported included higher levels of housework.

For women, exclusion of housework from the list of their weekly physical activities meant that only one in five met current activity recommendations.

Professor Murphy continued: "When talking to people about the amount of [physical activity](#) they need to stay healthy, it needs to be made clear that housework may not be intense enough to contribute to the weekly target and that other more intense activities also need to be included each week."

The team of researchers included Dr Paul Donnelly (Sport Northern Ireland), Dr Gavin Breslin (University of Ulster), Professor Simon Shibli (Sheffield Hallam University) and Alan M Nevill (University of Wolverhampton).

The research, entitled 'Does Housework Keep You Healthy? The Contribution of Domestic Physical Activity To Meeting Current Recommendations' is published today in BioMed Central's open access journal, *BMC Public Health*.

Provided by University of Ulster

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