

Walking may cut stroke risk in older men

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British study suggests the number of weekly hours walked, not how fast, is what matters.

(HealthDay)—Older men may reduce their risk of stroke by taking a daily walk. And that walk doesn't have to be especially brisk, British researchers report.

The new study suggests that [walking](#) for an hour or two might lower the risk of stroke by as much as one-third, and walking three hours or more daily might cut the risk by two-thirds.

"Stroke is a major cause of death and disability and it is important to find ways to prevent stroke, especially in older people who are at high risk," said lead researcher Barbara Jefferis, a senior research associate in the department of primary care and population health at University College London.

This study suggests that maintaining an active lifestyle, specifically by walking, could prevent stroke in older adults, she said.

"Getting into the habit of walking every day for at least an hour could protect against stroke," Jefferis said. "Walking could be for transport, such as doing errands and going to the shops, walking around indoors as well as walking for leisure, such as walking in a park."

Moreover, it doesn't seem to matter how fast a man walks. Just walking does the trick, regardless of pace, she said.

The report was published Nov. 14 in the online edition of the journal *Stroke*.

Dr. Ralph Sacco, chairman of neurology at the University of Miami Miller School of Medicine, said this is yet another study that confirms the benefits of exercise in regard to stroke prevention.

Sacco said [physical activity](#) in general, not just walking, is important in reducing [stroke risk](#) for both men and women.

"All forms of physical activity, including walking, can promote ideal [heart] health and reduce stroke risk," he said.

Study author Jefferis also spoke out in favor of a variety of activities.

"We know that physical activity has benefits for a wide range of mental and physical health outcomes," she said. "Aiming for 150 minutes per week of [moderate physical activity](#), which includes walking at a brisk pace or light gardening, or 75 minutes per week of vigorous activities, such as jogging or tennis ... would protect against heart disease and diabetes, as well as protecting against stroke."

Although the study found an association between greater weekly walking time and lower stroke risk in men, it did not establish a cause-and-effect relationship.

For the study, Jefferis's team collected data on nearly 3,500 healthy men aged 60 to 80 who were taking part in a larger heart study involving 24 British towns. The men were asked how far they walked each week.

The researchers divided the men into five groups: those who walked zero to three hours a week, four

to seven hours a week, eight to 14 hours a week, 15 to 21 hours a week and more than 22 hours a week.

During the next 10 years, men who walked eight to 14 hours a week cut their risk for stroke by about one-third compared to men who walked zero to three hours a week, the researchers found.

For men who walked more than 22 hours a week, the risk for stroke dropped by about two-thirds, they found.

Among all the men, 42 percent walked for more than eight hours a week and 9 percent walked more than 22 hours a week, according to the report.

Men who walked zero to three hours a week had strokes at a rate of 80 per 1,000 men over 10 years. Meanwhile, those who walked eight to 14 hours a week had strokes at a rate of 55 per 1,000 men, the researchers said.

The benefit of walking was seen regardless of how fast the [men](#) walked. "The protective effects of spending more time walking on risk of [stroke](#) weren't explained by differences in walking pace," Jefferis said.

More information: To learn more about stroke, visit the [American Stroke Association](#).

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