

Move your body for five minutes every hour to counteract lockdown inactivity

22 March 2021



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A study which looked at activity levels before and during the COVID-19 pandemic has found lockdown restrictions significantly reduced light activity associated with socializing and work.

The study, published recently in *BMJ Neurology* and led by King's College London, examined how [activity levels](#) changed in study participants with muscular dystrophy and other inheritable myopathies. The sample included people with a range of physical abilities, from highly independent to assisted mobility, including 41 wheelchair users, who are often underrepresented in research. However, the authors say the findings are likely to be relevant to adults of various abilities and backgrounds because many people have lost their usual daily routine during lockdown.

The study is unique because it used accelerometers to measure physical activity before and during lockdown as part of an ongoing longitudinal [physical activity](#) study from 2019 to 2020. The accelerometers measured activity intensity, frequency and time in vigorous, moderate, light and inactive categories.

Researchers found there was a significant reduction in daily activity intensity during lockdown. Before lockdown, participants did a mean of 84.5 minutes per day of light activity and had a relatively low frequency of hourly movement. During lockdown, light activity reduced by a mean of 25 minutes per day and frequency of hourly movement reduced by a median of 11%. Moderate and vigorous activity did not change significantly during lockdown, but this might be explained by low baseline levels in this group.

In lockdown, the reduction in light activity time and frequency of movement was explained by restrictions on going to work, leisure pursuits and socializing. This light activity within daily routine is not exercise-focused so it can be difficult for individuals to detect these subtle light activity losses. However, light activity and regular movement throughout the day are associated with improved [health outcomes](#) for everyone, regardless of health conditions.

Sarah Roberts-Lewis, the study lead and a Neurological Physiotherapist at King's College London, said; "Even people who don't do much exercise have been impacted by lockdown inactivity. During COVID-19 lockdown, our study detected an extra hour per day of inactivity in disabled and independent adults with neuromuscular diseases. Moving less is detrimental to health. Reduced activity can be especially harmful for those with neuromuscular conditions, disabilities or advanced age."

"The reduction in light activity measured in this study is likely to be similar for anybody whose daily routine has been restricted by lockdown. Based on our findings, we suggest people move their bodies for 5 minutes each hour during the day. Additionally, spend 30 minutes each day doing some extra light activity, like yoga or chair exercises. The World Health Organisation activity guidelines state 'every move counts'; they provide

suggestions about [light](#) activities suitable for all abilities. Simple changes can help with reconditioning during and after [lockdown](#)."

More information: Sarah F Roberts-Lewis et al. COVID-19 lockdown impact on the physical activity of adults with progressive muscle diseases, *BMJ Neurology Open* (2021). DOI: [10.1136/bmjno-2021-000140](https://doi.org/10.1136/bmjno-2021-000140)

Provided by King's College London

APA citation: Move your body for five minutes every hour to counteract lockdown inactivity (2021, March 22) retrieved 24 July 2022 from <https://medicalxpress.com/news/2021-03-body-minutes-hour-counteract-lockdown.html>

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