

Steps every day could lead to longer life

3 September 2021, by Denise Mann



Miami publicist Robin Diamond is "step-obsessed."

She aims for 10,000-plus steps every day using her Apple watch and even bought a treadmill during the COVID-19 quarantine to make sure she reaches her daily goal. The 43-year-old has lost 15 pounds since April 2019 and feels better than ever before.

"Walking saved my sanity and restored my body," she said.

Now, a new study suggests that all those steps may also add years to her life.

Folks who took about 7,000 steps a day had a 50% to 70% [lower risk](#) of dying from all causes during after 11 years of follow-up when compared with people who took fewer steps each day. These findings held for Black and white middle-aged men and women.

And quicker steps weren't necessarily any better, the study showed. Step intensity, or the number of

steps per minute, didn't influence the risk of dying.

The study, led by Amanda Paluch, an assistant professor at the University of Massachusetts' department of kinesiology, appears in the Sept. 3 issue of the journal [JAMA Network Open](#).

"Step-counting devices can be useful tools for monitoring and promoting activity in the general public and for patient-clinician communication, Paluch said. "Steps per day is a simple, easy-to-monitor metric and getting more steps/day may be a good way to promote health."

She added, "7,000 steps/day may be a great goal for many individuals who are currently not achieving this amount. We also found in our study that accumulating a greater number of steps/day was associated with an incremental lower risk of mortality until leveling off at approximately 10,000 steps/day."

Two physicians with no ties to the study looked favorably at the findings.

"This is a very nice study with a great message: "Live longer, walk more," said Dr. Guy Mintz, Northwell Health's director of [cardiovascular health](#) at the Sandra Atlas Bass Heart Hospital in Manhasset, N.Y. "There's no need to join a gym, no need to purchase equipment, just start walking."

The research wasn't designed to say how, or even if, taking more steps reduced the chances of dying.

But "exercise can reduce cardiovascular risk by improving [blood pressure](#), reducing cholesterol, improvement of hyperglycemia [blood sugar] in diabetes, and contributing to weight reduction," said Mintz.

Dr. Michael Massoomi is a big fan of step counting. He is a clinical assistant professor of medicine within the division of cardiology at the University of Florida in Gainesville.

There is no one-size-fits-all magic number, he said. "Instead of focusing on 10,000 steps per day, as many groups call for, focus on doing more than you did the day before," he said. "If you get less than 5,000 steps a day, try to increase it to 6,000 in the next few weeks."

This can mean adding a 20-minute walk into your daily schedule, said Massoomi.

You don't need anything fancy or expensive to help count steps either, he said. There are many free apps for smartphones that work extremely well.

In an accompanying editorial, Nicole Spartano, a research assistant professor of medicine in endocrinology, diabetes, nutrition, and weight management at Boston University School of Medicine, pointed out that the step counter used in the new study isn't commercially available.

"It is unclear the extent to which steps measured on these activity monitors compare with [steps](#) measured by common consumer devices, including smartwatches, pedometers and smartphone applications," she wrote.

The new study looked at the risk of dying, but other outcomes matter, such as quality of life and mental health. "I hope to encourage investigators and research funders to focus on these understudied topics that will provide evidence to support a national step guideline," Spartano wrote.

More information: Amanda E. Paluch et al, Steps per Day and All-Cause Mortality in Middle-aged Adults in the Coronary Artery Risk Development in Young Adults Study, *JAMA Network Open* (2021). [DOI: 10.1001/jamanetworkopen.2021.24516](https://doi.org/10.1001/jamanetworkopen.2021.24516)

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