



Even Low Levels of Exercise Have Major Health Benefits

New study shows that even weekly exercise below recommended levels has major health benefits. Just 30 minutes of walking three days a week has an impact.

In the study, a brisk 30-minute walk three days a week was enough to drive down blood pressure and improve overall fitness in a group of healthy sedentary adults.

For optimum health, adults are recommended to engage in 30 minutes of moderately strenuous exercise on at least five days of the week. But few people achieve this level of weekly activity, often citing lack of time as the reason.

Dr Mark Tully, from the University of Ulster in Northern Ireland, and colleagues designed a study to see if exercising at a level lower than the recommended one would boost overall fitness and heart health.

A total of 106 healthy but sedentary adults between the ages of 40 and 61 participated in the 12-week study. The subjects were randomly assigned a brisk 30-minute walk three days a week (44 subjects), a brisk 30-minute walk five days a week (42 subjects) or told not to change their lifestyle (the non-walking control group).

After 12 weeks, Dr Tully's team found that blood pressure and waist and hip girth fell significantly in the three-day walkers and five-day walkers. In contrast, no changes occurred in the non-walking control group.

The team said: "These results may encourage people who feel they do not have time to exercise on five days each week to consider finding time to commit to a lower weekly target of exercise."

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