

Exercise Reduces Mortality Risk - More Exercise is Better, But only up to a point

The 2008 physical activity guidelines for Americans suggested that minimums of either 75 vigorous-intensity or 150 moderate-intensity minutes per week of aerobic activity would improve health, and that even greater benefits could come from twice that much exercise. This is not surprising, yet there had never been clear evidence of how much health can be improved by higher exercise levels or whether there may be health risks from too much exercise. Recent research results, however, have found strong evidence that increased physical activity beyond those baseline recommendations do reduce the risk of death further, but not as much as expected. Additionally, no further reductions in mortality rates were found for people exercising beyond a certain threshold, although extreme high exercise levels never added risk.

This research analyzed self-reported exercise and health outcomes across decades for over 600,000 people (ages 21-98), including 116,686 deaths, from six National Cancer Institute Cohort Consortium studies. Compared to folks reporting no leisure time physical activity, even those who exercised less than the recommended minimum minutes were 20% point. Those exercising 1 to 2 times the minimum were 31% less likely to die, 2 to 3 times the minimum produced a 37% mortality reduction, and 3 to 5 times the minimum produced the maximum observed benefit a 39% lower mortality rate. Similar benefits were seen specific to mortality from heart disease and cancer. However, no additional benefits in mortality rates were observed for even greater levels of exercise (up to 10 or more times the minimum recommended).

Because there is no risk from intense activity, this collectively suggests that adults should exercise at least the suggested amount, preferably more, to maximize their life expectancy.

Editorial: Exercise is healthy and lack of exercise is unhealthy. This study quantifies how much exercise is needed to improve the chances of living longer. It turns out that almost any level is better than none. It is important to point out that this is a population study and does not mean that extreme exercise is indicated for everyone. Your exercise program is ideally guided by your Physician and relative to your general health.

In the growing world of personal fitness and activity trackers it will be much easier to quantify the actual levels of activity and relate to longevity and other key health factors.

Bibliography

[Yang M](#), [Kenfield SA](#), [Van Blarigan EL](#), [Batista JL](#), [Sesso HD](#), [Ma J](#), [Stampfer MJ](#), [Chavarro JE](#)
[Cancer Prev Res \(Phila\)](#). 2015 Jun;8(6):545-51