

Moderate Physical Activity Reduces Cardiovascular Deaths by 50%



According to new research presented at the ESC, moderate physical activity is associated with a greater than 50 percent reduction in cardiovascular death in over-65s.

The 12-year study was conducted with 2500 adults between the ages of 65 to 74 years and found that moderate physical activity reduced the risk of an acute cardiovascular event by more than 30%. The higher the levels of physical activity, the greater the reduction in risk.

While the role of physical activity in preventing cardiovascular disease (CVD) is fairly well-established, little is known about its effects on the risk levels for the elderly. This current study assessed the association between leisure time physical activity and CVD risk and mortality in 2456 men and women aged 65 to 74 years who were enrolled into the National FINRISK Study between 1997 and 2007.

Data was collected through the use of a self-administered questionnaire on physical activity and other health related behaviour, clinical measurements (blood pressure, weight and height), and laboratory measurements including serum cholesterol. Self-reported physical activity was classified as follows:

Low: reading, watching TV or working in the household without much physical activity.

Moderate: walking, cycling or practising other forms of light exercise (fishing, gardening, hunting) at least four hours per week.

High: recreational sports (for example running, jogging, skiing, gymnastics, swimming, ball games or heavy gardening) or intense training or sports competitions at least three hours a week.

Researchers adjusted for other risk factors including blood pressure, smoking and cholesterol) and social factors. Patients with coronary heart disease, heart failure, cancer, or prior stroke at baseline were excluded from the analysis.

Study findings showed that moderate and high leisure time physical activity were associated with a 31 percent and 45 percent reduced risk of an acute CVD event, respectively. Moderate and high leisure time physical activity were associated with a 54 percent and 66 percent reduction in CVD mortality.

Professor Antikainen said: "Our study provides further evidence that older adults who are physically active have a lower risk of coronary heart disease, stroke, and death from cardiovascular disease. The protective effect of leisure time physical activity is dose dependent – in other words, the more you do, the better. Activity is protective even if you have other risk factors for cardiovascular disease such as high cholesterol."

She concluded: "Physical exercise may become more challenging with ageing. However, it is important for older people to still get enough safe physical activity to stay healthy after their transition to retirement."

Source: [ESC](#)

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