

# Can exercise prevent a severe stroke?

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A new study shows that people who are physically active before suffering a stroke may have less severe problems as a result and recover better compared to those who did not exercise before having a stroke. The research is published in the October 21, 2008, print issue of *Neurology*, the medical journal of the American Academy of Neurology.

Researchers reviewed the medical records of 265 people with an average age of 68 who had a stroke and were able to walk on their own. Other stroke risk factors and other diseases and conditions that might interfere with their ability to exercise were considered.

The participants were interviewed after filling out a questionnaire about their exercise habits and the number of hours they were active during a one-week period.

The study found that the top 25 percent of people who exercised the most were two-and-a-half-times more likely to suffer a less severe stroke compared with people who were in the bottom quarter of the group. The most active also had a better chance of long-term recovery.

"Exercise is one possible risk factor for stroke that can be controlled. Staying fit doesn't have to be a scheduled regimen. For the people in this study, exercise included light housework, taking a walk outside, lawn care, gardening or participating in a sport," says study author Lars-Henrik Krarup, MD, of the Bispebjerg University Hospital in Copenhagen, Denmark.

Krarpur says the study also suggests the importance of stroke awareness programs and prevention campaigns.

Source: American Academy of Neurology

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