

# A little exercise goes a long way for severely obese

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A little exercise goes a long way toward helping severely obese individuals improve their quality of life and complete important daily tasks, according to researchers at the Duke Diet and Fitness Center.

In a pre-program assessment where patients reported, on average, just under one hour of exercise per week, individuals who were more active reported better overall-quality of life. They also reported improvements in their ability to perform daily tasks as measured on a physical functioning scale.

"Things that many people take for granted like tying one's shoes, getting dressed, or simply moving around were easier for those who reported routine exercise," says Martin Binks, Ph.D., research director at the Duke Diet and Fitness Center, a residential weight loss program at Duke University Medical Center. He presented the research, which included more than 1,200 participants, at the Obesity Society's annual scientific meeting in Phoenix AZ.

Other quality of life improvements associated with higher activity levels included the ability to complete basic daily tasks, such as getting up from chairs, using the stairs, dressing and undressing, and improved physical symptoms like feeling short of breath.

"These folks weren't reporting high levels of activity yet they still felt better," he said. "This supports what we've been teaching for years - no amount of exercise is too little to have an impact. And it's beneficial no

matter what you weigh."

That's important news for the severely obese population, in which the benefits of exercise have not been studied as extensively as in mild or moderately overweight populations. At the same time, Binks hopes news that even a little activity offers benefits may spur some severely obese people to be more active.

"When you are 100 pounds overweight, as the average participant in our program is, people often feel defeated. They have trouble moving, and they think 'why bother.' This study shows why they should bother. It shows the value of starting to move no matter how overweight you are."

Becoming even more active can lead to greater weight loss success, overall health, and better quality of life, says Binks, but he stresses, "every little bit counts when it comes to quality of life improvements."

Source: Duke University Medical Center

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