

Taking more steps every day can help ward off diabetes

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Simply taking more steps every day not only helps ward off obesity but also reduces the risk of diabetes, finds a study published in the British Medical Journal today.

While several studies have shown that physical activity reduces body mass index and [insulin resistance](#) - an early stage in the development of diabetes - this is the first study to estimate the effects of long-term changes in daily step count on [insulin sensitivity](#).

A popular guideline is to do 10,000 steps every day, though a more recent recommendation is 3,000 steps, five days a week.

The research, by the Murdoch Childrens Research Institute, Melbourne, involved 592 middle aged adults who took part in a national study to map diabetes levels across Australia between 2000 and 2005.

At the start of the study, participants completed a detailed diet and lifestyle questionnaire and underwent a thorough health examination. They were also given a pedometer and instructed how to use it. Participants were monitored again five years later.

Other [lifestyle factors](#), such as diet, alcohol and smoking were taken into account.

A higher daily step count over five years was associated with a lower body mass index, lower waist to hip ratio, and better insulin sensitivity.

These associations were independent of dietary energy intake and appeared to be largely due to a change in adiposity (fatness) over the five years, say the authors.

The authors estimate that, in their setting, a sedentary person who takes a very low number of daily steps but who was able to change behaviour over five years to meet the popular 10,000 daily step guideline would have a threefold improvement in insulin sensitivity compared with a similar person who increased his or her steps to meet the more recent recommendation of 3,000 steps for five days a week.

They conclude: "These findings, confirming an independent beneficial role of higher daily step count on [body mass index](#), waist to hip ratio, and insulin sensitivity, provide further support to promote higher [physical activity](#) levels among middle aged adults."

Provided by British Medical Journal

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