

Exercising to government standards could lower your death risk

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Following federal government recommendations on exercise might lead to a longer life for all adults, according to a new study nearly 250,000 Americans.

“Our study provides evidence that adults who adhere to the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services’ 2008 Physical Activity [Guidelines](#) reduce their mortality risks compared with adults who don’t meet the recommendations, and adults who have chronic health

conditions may benefit even more,”said Charlotte Schoenborn, at the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention’s National Center for Health Statistics. She is lead author of the study appearing in the online and in the May issue of the American Journal of Preventive Medicine.

The researchers evaluated data from the 1997–2004 National Health Interview Survey linked to mortality records for deaths that occurred between 1997 and 2006. The survey contained information from 242,397 adults who responded to items about how often they engaged in aerobic and strength-training activities.

To meet the HHS physical activity guidelines, adults should do moderate-intensity aerobic [exercise](#) at least 150 minutes per week or vigorous-intensity aerobic exercise at least 75 minutes per week. They should also perform strengthening exercises at least twice a week.

About 46 percent of the adults in the study had at least one chronic health condition, such as diabetes, cancer or respiratory problems. In the adults with chronic illness, the study found that 24 percent met the aerobic guidelines compared with about 27 percent who followed the guidelines and had none of these health problems.

In addition, 12 percent of adults with chronic conditions met both the aerobic and strengthening guidelines compared with almost 19 percent of those without chronic conditions, according to the authors.

By the end of the study period, researchers reported there were 12,192 deaths among participants who lived at least two years after their interviews.

Adults who met the combined physical activity guidelines had lower risks of dying compared to those who were not as physically active. While the risks were 27 percent lower among those without chronic

health conditions, those with an illness saw their risks reduced by almost 50 percent. The authors concluded, “adhering to the levels of physical activity recommendation has substantial survival benefits.”

Georgia Frey, associate professor in the Kinesiology Department at Indiana University, said people are willing to meet the current guidelines, but need assistance in making changes.

“More education is needed to promote the benefits of physical activity beyond weight loss, primarily from the medical profession,” Frey said. “Medical practitioners should prescribe regular physical activity just as they would other treatments and inform patients about how to access valid professional, physical activity resources to assist with the process of becoming active. [Physical activity](#) really is a magic pill.”

More information: Schoenborn CA, Stommel M. Adherence to the 2008 Adult Physical Activity Guidelines and mortality risk. *Am J Prev Med* 40(5), 2011.

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