

# Self-paced walking test useful for evaluating progress in lifestyle intervention programs

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The self-paced walking test, known as the 400-meter walk test, is effective in measuring improved physical function in postmenopausal women who have lost weight through healthy physical activity and dietary changes, according to collaborative research conducted by The University of Texas Health Science Center at Houston (UTHealth) and The University of Pittsburgh.

"The 400-meter self-paced walk test is a simple, cost-efficient and effective test [clinicians](#) or researchers can use to evaluate progress in a weight loss or physical activity program," said Kelley Pettee Gabriel, Ph.D., lead investigator and assistant professor at The University of Texas School of Public Health Austin Regional Campus, a part of UTHealth. Results from this study are published in the July issue of *Menopause*.

Researchers used the 400-meter self-paced walking test to examine its feasibility in evaluating physical function progress in middle-aged women. Higher body weight is related to poor physical function.

According to Gabriel, the test has traditionally been used in adults 65 and older and walk times have been shown to be related to cardio-respiratory fitness. Longer walk times are associated with increased [risk of heart disease](#) and death.

Researchers were able to track weight-loss progress of participants by using the walk test and comparing walk times at the beginning and end

of the 48-month study. Faster walk times were related to reductions in body weight and other [body composition](#) measures.

The 400-meter walk test requires participants to walk 10 laps along a hallway with cones set 20 meters apart at a pace that could be maintained for the full 10 laps.

"Given that the only requirements for performing this test are adequate space to set up the course and a trained staff member to administer it, the course could be particularly useful in medically underserved settings to cost-effectively triage individuals to further care," said Gabriel.

Provided by University of Texas Health Science Center at Houston

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