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Dip in Dead Sea may help diabetics: study

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Floating in the Dead Sea for just 20 minutes may help diabetics lower blood sugar levels, according to a study by Israeli researchers highlighted in Haaretz on Tuesday.

The research was carried out by scientists from Ben Gurion University and Soroka Medical Centre in Beersheva, both in Israel's Negev desert, the paper said.

In the experiment, 14 people with Type 2 diabetes, aged 18 to 65, showed a significant drop in blood glucose levels after sitting for 20 minutes in a pool of Dead Sea water.

Glucose levels dropped on average from 163 to 151 milligrams per decilitre (mg/dl) -- 13.5 percent -- immediately afterwards, according to the report.

Blood sugar dropped even further to 141.3 mg/dl after an hour's dip in the water.

The bathing experience did not appear to have any negative effect on other blood values such as levels of insulin, cortisone hormones or c-peptide, the researchers said.

A control group of six healthy individuals did not register any changes in blood sugar levels.

Professor Shaul Sukenik, who led the research at Ben Gurion, described

the results as "promising."

"In the event that the findings are confirmed in further studies, a drop in blood glucose levels will allow diabetics who bathe in the Dead Sea to use less medication," he told the newspaper.

"We cannot determine this on the basis of the current study, but the findings do suggest this," he said.

The research team is now trying to raise funds to broaden the research to examine the effect of a daily dip in the Dead Sea across a three-week period, the paper said.

The findings will be published in this month's edition of the Israel Medical Associations journal, HaRefua.