

Walking around is the simplest way to shorten hospital stay

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A new study from the University of Haifa has found that walking around the ward during hospitalization significantly reduces the length of the older patient's stay. "Given the over-occupancy of many hospitals, this finding can be of great importance," the researchers stated.

Walking around the ward during hospitalization reduces the length of geriatric patients' stay in internal wards. This has been shown in a new study by Dr. Efrat Shadmi and Dr. Anna Zisberg of the University of Haifa's Department of Nursing, funded by the Israeli Science Foundation and published in the journal [Archives of Internal Medicine](#).

The study surveyed 485 [participants](#) aged 70 and up, who were hospitalized for at least two days in the internal wards of a [hospital](#) in Israel. The participants' physical condition was examined by means of [questionnaires](#) and those who were confined to a bed or immobile were excluded from the study. Those who were not restricted in mobility were asked about their [physical activity](#) during the course of their hospitalization, and based on their answers were divided into two study groups: those who remained in bed or seated next to it and those who walked around their rooms and the ward.

The study found that all of the patients who walked around shortened their hospital stay by an average day and a half compared with those who did not exercise physical mobility. The study also found that those who walked around the ward on the first day of hospitalization shortened their stay more than the others. The researchers stated that they found

this to be relevant regardless of the patients' [health status](#).

According to the researchers, older patients might mistakenly believe that when they are hospitalized they must stay in bed. Studies of [older adults](#) have shown, however, that the opposite is true. "The muscle's reserve capacity' can decompose quite quickly in older people. If they shift from a mode of mobility – even if it was minimal – to a state of almost complete immobility, and even for just a few short days of hospitalization, they could very quickly lose their muscle 'reserves', resulting in more difficulties functioning and other complications. This study, along with other new studies in the area, shows that walking really does pay off," the researchers stated.

They also noted that the study results show that simple intervention to encourage walking in the geriatric internal wards ought to be seriously considered, so as to shorten the length of the geriatric patient's [hospital stay](#). "Given the over-occupancy of many hospitals, this finding can be of great importance," they concluded.

Provided by University of Haifa

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