

Outwit the Grim Reaper by walking faster

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Men aged 70 and older can elude the Grim Reaper by walking at speeds of at least 3 miles (or 5km) an hour, finds a study in the Christmas issue published in the British Medical Journal today.

The authors say that for the first time they have estimated the speed at which the Grim Reaper usually walked: about 1.8 miles per hour. He never walked faster than 3 miles per hour.

The Grim Reaper is a well known mythological and literary figure who personifies death. To assess his role in [mortality](#) and walking speed, a team of researchers based at Concord Hospital in Sydney, Australia analysed the walking patterns of 1,705 men aged 70 and over who were participating in The Concord Health and Ageing in Men Project (CHAMP).

The men lived in the [inner city](#) and suburbs of Sydney and they were recruited from January 2005 to June 2007. The CHAMP study included a high proportion of [immigrants](#) and only 50% of the participants were born in Australia, 20% were born in Italy and the other main countries of birth were Great Britain, Greece and China.

The researchers assessed participants' walking speed at baseline and survival over the five-year study period.

A total of 266 deaths were observed during the follow-up. The results show that their average walking speed was 0.88 metres per second (m/s). No men with walking speeds of 1.36 m/s (3 miles or 5km per hour) or

above had contact with the Grim Reaper.

The authors conclude that the results support their theory "that faster speeds are protective against mortality because fast [walkers](#) can maintain a safe distance from the Grim Reaper."

Provided by British Medical Journal

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