

# Fit over-fifties are lowering heart disease odds

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(Medical Xpress) -- Even a moderate increase in exercise when you are in your fifties can help your heart health according to a study published today by researchers from UCL Epidemiology and Public Health.

The study shows [inflammation](#) in the body – which is thought to contribute to heart disease – remains lower in people in the transition to retirement who embrace an active lifestyle, with at least 2.5 hours a week of moderate physical activity (enough to raise your heart rate),

than in those who stay less active. This is great news for retirees, who often celebrate their new-found freedom with a whole range of activities, from gardening to DIY to countryside walks.

In the study, over 4,000 people from the Whitehall II cohort were quizzed on their [exercise](#) routines and had levels of inflammation measured to gauge their heart health over a ten year period.

Dr Mark Hamer, UCL Epidemiology and [Public Health](#), said: “Previous studies looking at how exercise protects the heart have only been carried out for short periods of time. Our ten year study reveals for the first time the long-term effects of leading an active lifestyle on inflammation and heart disease.

“It’s great news that people who spring into retirement and become more active are actually making a big difference in helping their hearts grow old healthily.”

British Heart Foundation Senior Cardiac Nurse Maureen Talbot said: “Donning your gardening gloves, or picking up a paint brush, can still go a long way to help look after your heart health, as exercise can have a big impact on how well your heart ages.

“This research highlights the positive impact changing your exercise habits can have on the future of your [heart health](#) – and that it’s never too late to re-energise your life. However it’s important not to wait until you retire to get off the couch, as being active for life is a great way to keep your heart healthy.”

Jack Oldman, aged 87, who plays table tennis through the BHF Hearty Lives Hull project, said: “I play at my club twice a week and still compete in my local league. If I couldn’t play sport I don’t know what I’d do.

“The worst thing you could do when you retire is to sit down and watch telly all day. I keep busy with sports and my vegetable patch and it seems to be keeping me going well - doctors have told me I’ve got a great heart for my age.”

**More information:** [circ.ahajournals.org/content/e ...  
.112.103879.abstract](https://circ.ahajournals.org/content/e112.103879.abstract)

Provided by University College London

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