

Better sleep can help women fight serious illness experts find

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(Medical Xpress) -- Just a small amount of activity is enough to improve sleep quality among post-menopausal women and reduce their risk of life-threatening illnesses experts at our Department for Health have found.

Researchers, who worked in collaboration with Pennington Biomedical Research Centre in Baton Rouge, Louisiana and the School of Medicine at the University of Pittsburgh, found that [women](#) who do even half of the recommended daily amount of [exercise](#) benefited from a better night's sleep.

Good quality sleep is a key factor in helping to reduce stress which in turn can reduce the risk of serious illness such as cardiovascular disease, diabetes and types of cancer.

Prior to menopause, women have a markedly lower risk for cardiovascular disease and all disease-related mortality compared to men. However, once menopause is complete, women rapidly catch up to men and exceed their pre-menopausal counterparts.

The study looked at the impact of measured doses of activity and found that activities such as housework and gardening as well as playing with children can all contribute to getting the required amount of exercise a day and therefore better quality sleep.

The findings are part of the Dose Response to Exercise in Women Study (DREW) – a large clinical trial performed to examine the effect of 50%, 100%, and 150% of recommended [physical activity](#) dose on fitness in women.

The target population of the study was postmenopausal, overweight or obese, sedentary women with high blood pressure.

Professor Conrad Earnest recently joined the University of Bath from Louisiana where he worked on the study with Dr Christopher Kline the lead author of the paper; Effects of Different Doses of Physical Activity on Cardiorespiratory Fitness Among Sedentary, Overweight or Obese Postmenopausal Women With Elevated Blood Pressure which is published in the *British Medical Journal* this week.

Professor Earnest said: “One of the goals of the DREW study was to examine whether half the current physical activity recommendations, which are nearly identical in the US and the UK, would be effective in improving fitness, which is highly correlated in men and women to reduce mortality risk at any age.

“Fundamental to this study is the idea of ‘dose’. Specifically, even low dose exercise improves [sleep quality](#), which is just one of the benefits of

increased activity.

“A brief walk for 15 minutes benefits sleep. Also tasks such as gardening, cutting the lawn, cleaning and playing with children also help with [sleep](#) quality. In essence, a little goes a long way.”

Provided by University of Bath

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