

A regular walk can cut your risk of major illness, shows research

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New research shows that a regular walk can significantly improve our health.

A regular walking routine significantly reduces the risk of Metabolic Syndrome, a condition which affects one in four people in the UK and can cause heart disease, strokes and cancer.

Metabolic Syndrome is the medical term for a combination of [risk factors](#) including elevated blood pressure and blood sugar, and large [waist circumference](#). The syndrome puts people at significant danger of developing a list of life-threatening and debilitating conditions and

diseases.

Research carried out at the University, published online by the *American Journal* [Mayo Clinic Proceedings](#), has shown that a simple, regular walking routine is enough to reduce people's risk of Metabolic Syndrome from moderate to low risk.

Professor Conrad Earnest, in the University's Department for Health, studied the fitness levels of 38,000 men and women from the [Aerobics Center Longitudinal Study](#), the largest database of its kind in the world, and used statistical models to categorise their fitness levels into low (sedentary); moderate (equivalent to most public health guidelines); and high.

He found that those in the moderate fitness category have a markedly reduced prevalence of Metabolic Syndrome, compared to those in the low fitness category.

Professor Conrad said: "The take home message from this research is twofold. Firstly the biggest reduction in risk of Metabolic Syndrome is when you compare moderate fitness levels to low [fitness levels](#). Secondly, to become moderately fit is as basic as following public exercise guidelines for simple exercise or activity for 30 minutes three to five times a week.

"People don't have to commit to a structured exercise programme, or take up jogging, it's as simple as being more active by getting off the couch or up from your desk and walking on a regular basis. Pretty much anyone can get into the moderate fitness category and the effects on risk are phenomenal."

Patients are diagnosed with Metabolic Syndrome if they fall into a categorical measurement. Even if a patient makes considerable lifestyle

changes and, for example, achieves an outstanding drop in blood pressure they will still be classed with the syndrome if they fall above a certain point.

Professor Earnest's research used a summed 'z score' approach which enables doctors to give their patients credit for improvement, even if they don't move out of the formal measurement for [Metabolic Syndrome](#), and takes into account the cumulative measurement of all the factors related to the syndrome.

The next stage of the research will be to assess what happens when a patient improves their fitness level, or alternatively if they regress.

More information: The paper, entitled "Cross-sectional association between maximal estimated cardiorespiratory fitness, cardiometabolic risk factors and metabolic syndrome for men and women in the Aerobics Center Longitudinal Study," is published online by the [Journal Mayo Clinic Proceedings](#).

Provided by University of Bath

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