

More steps a day keep the doctor away

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Landmark research by The George Institute for Global Health has found that exercise can save lives, with an increase in the number of steps walked each day having a direct correlation with long term mortality.

Study author Professor Terry Dwyer said this was the first time research had been able to make the link between exercise, measured directly through pedometers, and reduced mortality over time in people who appeared healthy at the outset.

'Inactivity is a major public health problem, with conditions like obesity costing the economy tens of billions of dollars every year,' Prof Dwyer said. 'This shows more clearly than before that the total amount of activity also affects [life expectancy](#).

'Previous research measured physical activity by questionnaire only, but these results are more robust and give us greater confidence that we can prevent death from major diseases by being more active. This study should greatly encourage individuals to ensure they do [regular exercise](#) and prompt governments to create more opportunities for [physical activity](#) in communities.'

The study monitored 3,000 Australians over 15 years and was conducted in collaboration with the Menzies Research Institute in Tasmania. The participants were given pedometers and data was collected at the beginning and again approximately five years later during the trial to measure the number of steps they took each day. Participants were an average age of 58.8 years old at commencement and the major end point was death due to any cause.

The study, which was published in the journal *PLOS ONE*, found that a sedentary person who increased his or her steps from 1,000 to 10,000 per day had a 46% lower mortality risk.

Professor Dwyer said the association between daily steps and mortality was largely independent of factors such as Body Mass Index (BMI) and smoking:

'Exercise should now be seen as a potential means of increasing longevity. We know through this research, that daily step count is inversely associated with all-cause mortality. People who increase their daily [steps](#) appear to have a substantial reduction in [mortality](#) risk.'

'Pedometers and activity devices are growing in popularity so the ability to measure and realise the benefits of exercise are at everyone's fingertips and we should all take advantage.'

More information: Terence Dwyer et al. Objectively Measured Daily Steps and Subsequent Long Term All-Cause Mortality: The Tasped Prospective Cohort Study, *PLOS ONE* (2015). [DOI: 10.1371/journal.pone.0141274](https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0141274)

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