

Exercise can reduce heart failure risk at any age

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(HealthDay)—Starting to exercise later in life can still reduce risk of heart failure, and even modest increases in activity could provide some protection, researchers say. The study was presented earlier this month at the annual meeting of the American Heart Association, held from Nov. 7 to 11 in Orlando, Fla.

Chiadi Ndumele, M.D., M.H.S., a preventive cardiologist and assistant professor of medicine at the Johns Hopkins University School of Medicine in Baltimore, and colleagues studied the exercise habits of about 11,000 American men and women in a 20-year government study on aging and [heart disease](#). All were between the ages of 45 and 64. None had heart disease at the start of the study. Activity levels were assessed on two consecutive visits over six years.

The researchers found that, compared to those who were inactive at both visits, people who met or exceeded recommended [physical activity levels](#) of 150 minutes of moderate exercise or 75 minutes of vigorous exercise per week at both visits were 33 percent less likely to develop [heart failure](#). Those who were consistently getting modest amounts of exercise—less than 149 minutes of moderate activity or less than 74 minutes of vigorous activity a week—had a 20 percent lower risk. But the researchers also found that inactive people who got moving to reach recommended physical activity levels at some point during the study reduced their risk of heart failure—by 22 percent. Inactive people who increased their [activity levels](#) to about 30 minutes of walking four times a week reduced their risk by 12 percent.

"Many people get discouraged if they don't have the time or ability to exercise vigorously, but our findings demonstrate that every little bit of movement matters and that picking up exercise later in life is decidedly better than not moving at all," first author Roberta Florido, M.D., a cardiology fellow at Hopkins, said in a university news release.

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