

# Exercise reduces heart disease risk in depressed patients

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Symptoms of mild to minimal depression were associated with early indicators of heart disease in a research letter published today in the *Journal of the American College of Cardiology*, but the study found regular exercise seems to reduce the adverse cardiovascular consequences of depression.

Depression has been linked to an increased risk of [heart disease](#) and other physical ailments, and [depression](#) is commonly associated with worse outcomes for patients with heart disease and other conditions. In addition, as many as 20 percent of people hospitalized with a heart attack report symptoms of depression, while patients with heart disease have three times the risk of developing depression compared to the general population.

Researchers from Emory University Hospital in Atlanta set out to learn more about the relationship between depressive symptoms and heart disease. They studied 965 people who were free of heart disease and who had no prior diagnosis of an affective, psychotic or anxiety disorder. Researchers used questionnaires to evaluate patients for depression and levels of physical activity. They also looked at several early indicators of heart disease.

Researchers found arterial stiffening and inflammation—the early heart disease indicators—that accompany worsening depressive symptoms were more pronounced in people who were inactive. The indicators were less common in subjects engaging in regular [physical activity](#).

"Our findings highlight the link between worsening depression and cardiovascular risk and support routinely assessing depression in patients to determine [heart disease risk](#). This research also demonstrates the positive effects of exercise for all patients, including those with [depressive symptoms](#)," said study author Arshed A. Quyyumi, M.D., co-director of the Emory Clinical Cardiovascular Research Institute in Atlanta. "There are many patients with heart disease who also experience depression - we need to study whether encouraging them to exercise will reduce their risk of adverse outcomes."

Provided by American College of Cardiology

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