

Exercise your right to fight disease

February 4 2019, by Len Canter, Healthday Reporter



(HealthDay)—Research consistently tells you just how important exercise is for health. It can help head off heart disease, stroke, diabetes and many types of cancer, including breast and colon cancers.

A report published in the *New England Journal of Medicine* found that another important prevention factor for an even wider group of cancers is having a body mass index (BMI) below 25. BMI is a measure of body fat that takes into account a person's height and weight. A low BMI means you have less fat on your body.

The report also showed that [health risks](#) can be up to 50 percent higher if you're overweight (with a BMI between 25 and 29.9)—and up to 80 percent higher if you're obese (with a BMI of 30 and over).

Indeed, a high BMI may be to blame for nearly 4 percent of all [cancer](#) cases, according to another study, published in *The Lancet Oncology*.

There's no doubt that diet and [exercise](#) work together to lower BMI. Besides cutting calories, to lose weight you need at least 30 minutes of moderate physical activity most days of the week, and 60 to 90 minutes a day to maintain a loss.

But don't stop there. Other research has found that the more exercise you do, the more you can reduce your risk for many diseases. Indeed, people whose [physical activity levels](#) were several times higher than the recommended minimum had the greatest reductions in risk.

Of course, it's hard for everyday Americans to spend hours a day working out unless you have a treadmill workstation on the job, for instance. But try to take a few three- to five-minute exercise breaks throughout the day, and look for opportunities for more activity on the weekends, from family hikes to ski and camping trips.

More information: The U.S. National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute has ideas about [how to move more](#) to achieve these health benefits.

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