

# Becoming active in middle age still offers health benefits

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(HealthDay)—Becoming physically active in middle age may provide comparable health benefits to long-term participation in leisure-time physical activity (LTPA), according to a study published online March 8 in *JAMA Network Open*.

Pedro F. Saint-Maurice, Ph.D., from the National Cancer Institute in Rockville, Maryland, and colleagues used data from 315,059 adult AARP members living in six states (California, Florida, Louisiana, New Jersey, North Carolina, or Pennsylvania) or two [metropolitan areas](#) (Atlanta and Detroit) who participated in the National Institutes of Health-AARP Diet and Health Study (1995 to 1996). All-cause, cardiovascular disease (CVD)-related, and cancer-related mortality were followed through 2011. Baseline interviews were conducted to gather data on LTPA (hours per week).

The researchers identified 10 LTPA trajectories (maintaining, increasing, and decreasing LTPA across time). During the study period, 71,377 deaths due to all causes, 22,219 deaths due to CVD, and 16,388 deaths due to cancer occurred. Participants who maintained the highest levels of LTPA had lower all-cause (hazard ratio [HR], 0.64), CVD-related (HR, 0.58), and cancer-related (HR, 0.86) [mortality rates](#) compared with participants who were consistently inactive during adulthood. A benefit was also seen for adults who were less active throughout most of the adult life course but increased LTPA in later adulthood (40 to 61 years of age), with lower risks seen for all-cause (HR, 0.65), CVD-related (HR, 0.57), and cancer-related (HR, 0.84) mortality.

"Inactive adults may be encouraged to be more active, whereas [young adults](#) who are already active may strive to maintain their activity level as they get older," the authors write.

**More information:** [Abstract/Full Text](#)

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