

Can't work out during the week? 'Weekend warriors' still benefit

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(HealthDay)—Daily exercise may be the ideal, but even weekend

workouts might prolong your life, a new study suggests.

In a study of more than 3,400 men and women over age 40, researchers found those who exercised one or two days a week had the same low death rates as those who exercised more frequently.

"One of the main concerns to increasing physical activity is limited time, particularly multiple days a week," said lead researcher Eric Shiroma. He's a staff scientist and epidemiologist at the U.S. National Institute on Aging.

At the study's start, participants wore activity monitors for a week. The researchers classified them as "[weekend](#) warriors" if they exercised only one or two days a week, or as regularly active folks who spread their exercise out over the week. All were tracked for about six years.

Although the regular exercisers had about 50% more moderate and vigorous workouts than the weekend exercisers, the [health benefits](#) were similar.

"We found that weekend warriors had a similar mortality benefit compared to more frequent exercisers," Shiroma said.

The weekend warriors had health benefits similar to those who met goals set out in the Physical Activity Guidelines for Americans—at least 150 to 300 minutes of moderate-to-vigorous activity a week, he said.

However, this study can't prove that it was exercise that reduced death rates, said Dr. David Katz, director of Yale University's Yale-Griffin Prevention Research Center.

"Does exercising on weekends reduce mortality, or are healthier individuals with lower near-term mortality risk more likely to have the

energy and inclination to be physically active for recreation?" Katz asked. "The likelihood is that both are true."

Other studies have found similar results, said Katz, who wasn't involved in this new research. All physical activity is good [physical activity](#), whether done throughout the week or clustered into a weekend, he added.

"Being active, and whenever your routine permits, will almost certainly wind up making you healthier and more vital," Katz said.

The findings support the importance of exercise in staying alive longer, said Samantha Heller, a senior clinical nutritionist and exercise physiologist at NYU Langone Health in New York City. "But [regular exercise](#) does a lot more than keep us alive."

Regular exercise improves sleep, [blood pressure](#), mental function, bone health, muscle strength and heart health, she said. It also reduces the risk of certain cancers, heart disease, type 2 diabetes and anxiety, she noted.

"The issue is how to motivate people who are sedentary to get their fannies moving," said Heller, who wasn't involved in the study.

Being a weekend warrior is good for those with busy work weeks. It is important, however, to note that long days of sitting have adverse effects on health, she said.

The recommendations to achieve optimal [health](#) benefits vary depending on one's goals. Ideally, "we should aim for a minimum of 30-60 minutes [daily] five days a week, or 25-50 minutes [daily] six days a week," Heller said.

Schedule [exercise](#) in your calendar, Heller recommended. "If you wait to

find the time, it will never happen."

If you sit all day, set an alarm to get up and move every hour or so, Heller advised. Take a few minutes to do knee lifts, jumping jacks, stretches, arm swings, walk around the block or use stairs, Heller said. "Encourage your colleagues to join you," she added.

"Exercise should be as much a part of your daily routine as brushing teeth or eating a meal," Heller said.

The report was published in April in the *Journal Medicine & Science in Sports & Exercise*.

More information: The U.S. National Library of Medicine offers more information on [exercise](#).

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