

Study finds association between physical activity, lower risk of fracture

November 6 2019, by David J. Hill



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Regular physical activity, including lighter intensity activities such as

walking, is associated with reduced risk of hip and total fracture in postmenopausal women, according to new research from the University at Buffalo.

Published Oct. 25 in *JAMA Network Open*, the study is the most comprehensive evaluation of physical activity and fracture incidence in older [women](#).

The study included more than 77,000 participants in the Women's Health Initiative, who were followed up over 14 years. During follow-up, 33% of participants reported experiencing at least one fracture.

The women who did the highest amount of physical activity—which was approximately 35 minutes or more of daily recreational and household activities—had an 18% lower risk of hip fracture and 6% lower risk of total fracture.

The study is one more among several papers—all using data from the Women's Health Initiative—published by UB researchers within the past few years that highlights the [health benefits](#) of being active, even at levels that are lower than the current physical activity guidelines.

"These findings provide evidence that fracture reduction is among the many positive attributes of [regular physical activity](#) in [older women](#)," said Jean Wactawski-Wende, Ph.D., study co-author and dean of the University at Buffalo School of Public Health and Health Professions.

"Fracture is very common in [postmenopausal women](#), and is associated with loss of independence, physical limitations and increased mortality," Wactawski-Wende said.

In fact, the researchers note, approximately 1.5 million [fractures](#) occur in U.S. women each year, creating \$12.7 billion in health care costs.

About 14% of these fractures are in the hip. Mortality after a hip fracture is as high as 20%.

"Modest activities, including walking, can significantly reduce the risk of fracture, which can, in turn, lower the risk of death," Wactawski-Wende said.

Non-recreation physical activity—examples include yardwork and [household chores](#) such as sweeping the floors or folding laundry—also was inversely associated with several types of fracture.

The research has important implications for public health, considering that these lighter intensity activities are common among older adults.

The main message, says study first author Michael LaMonte, Ph.D., research associate professor of epidemiology and environmental health at UB, is "sit less, move more, and every movement counts."

More information: Michael J. LaMonte et al, Association of Physical Activity and Fracture Risk Among Postmenopausal Women, *JAMA Network Open* (2019). [DOI: 10.1001/jamanetworkopen.2019.14084](https://doi.org/10.1001/jamanetworkopen.2019.14084)

Provided by University at Buffalo

Citation: Study finds association between physical activity, lower risk of fracture (2019, November 6) retrieved 3 May 2024 from <https://medicalxpress.com/news/2019-11-association-physical-fracture.html>

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