

More time living in better cardiovascular health may lower risk of chronic diseases, mortality

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The longer you lead a healthy lifestyle during midlife, the less likely you are to develop certain diseases in later life.

The more time a person doesn't smoke, eats healthy, exercises regularly, maintains healthy blood pressure, blood sugar and [cholesterol levels](#) and maintains a normal weight, the less likely they are to develop diseases such as hypertension, diabetes, [chronic kidney disease](#) and [cardiovascular disease](#) or to die during [early adulthood](#).

The American Heart Association (AHA) had recommended a renewed focus on prevention to reduce the development of risk factors for cardiovascular disease (CVD) as part of its 2020 Impact Goal to improve population [cardiovascular health](#) (CVH) by 20 percent and reduce CVD mortality by 20 percent. While unhealthy lifestyle behaviors are associated with higher risks for certain diseases and death, the association of the duration in which people maintain a [healthy lifestyle](#) with the risk of disease and death had not yet been studied.

Using data from the Framingham Heart Study (FHS), researchers from Boston University School of Medicine observed participants for approximately 16 years and assessed the development of disease or death. They found that for each five-year period that participants had intermediate or ideal cardiovascular health, they were 33 percent less likely to develop hypertension, approximately 25 percent less likely to develop diabetes, chronic kidney disease and cardiovascular disease, and 14 percent less likely to die compared to individuals in poor cardiovascular health.

"Our results indicate that living a longer period of time in adulthood with better cardiovascular health may be potentially beneficial, regardless of age. Overall, our findings underscore the importance of promoting healthy behaviors throughout the life-course," explained corresponding author Vanessa Xanthakis, Ph.D., FAHA, assistant professor of medicine at BUSM and Investigator for FHS.

The researchers hope this study will help people understand the importance of achieving an ideal cardiovascular health early in life and motivate them to maintain a healthy lifestyle. "On the community-level, this will overall help reduce morbidity and mortality associated with diseases such as hypertension, diabetes, chronic kidney disease and death during late adulthood."

These findings appear online in the journal *JAMA Cardiology*.

Provided by Boston University School of Medicine

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