

# One good way to help beat COVID-19: Exercise

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(HealthDay)—Exercise guards against a host of chronic diseases that can

plague people as they age, but can it also protect against severe cases of COVID-19?

New research suggests that's so: Being physically active reduced COVID-19 patients' risk of hospitalization, [intensive care unit](#) (ICU) admission and death, and even being just somewhat active provided some protection.

"This is a wake-up call for the importance of healthy lifestyles and especially [physical activity](#)," said study author Dr. Robert Sallis. He's a family and sports medicine physician at the Kaiser Permanente Fontana Medical Center.

The "study truly shows how important that is during this pandemic and beyond," Sallis said in a Kaiser Permanente news release. "People who regularly exercise had the best chance of beating COVID-19, while people who were inactive did much worse."

For the study, Sallis and his colleagues analyzed data from more than 48,000 Kaiser Permanente Southern California adult patients, median age 47, who were diagnosed with COVID-19 between January and October 2020. The patients also had their physical activity levels assessed at least twice between March 2018 and March 2020.

Of those patients, just over 6% were consistently active, about 14% were consistently inactive and the remainder were inconsistently active.

The researchers found that nearly 9% of the patients were hospitalized, just over 2% were admitted to the ICU and 1.6% died.

Those who were consistently inactive were twice as likely to be hospitalized, 1.7 times more likely to be admitted to the ICU, and nearly 2.5 times more likely to die than those who were consistently active, the

findings showed.

Other than being older than 60 or having a history of organ transplant, consistent inactivity was associated with the highest risk for death from COVID-19, according to the study published April 13 in the *British Journal of Sports Medicine*.

Even patients who were inconsistently active had a lower risk of severe COVID-19 than those who were consistently inactive, suggesting any amount of physical activity can be beneficial.

"What surprised me the most from this study was the strength of the association between inactivity and poor outcomes from COVID-19," said study co-author Deborah Rohm Young, from the Kaiser Permanente Southern California Department of Research & Evaluation.

"Even after we included variables such as obesity and smoking in the analysis, we still saw inactivity was strongly associated with much higher odds of hospitalization, ICU admission and death, compared with [moderate physical activity](#) or any activity at all," she added.

Sallis recommended that walking 30 minutes a day, five days a week at a moderate pace will give you a tremendous protective effect against COVID-19.

Walking at a moderate pace means you're too winded to sing, but can still talk.

"I continue to believe that exercise is medicine that everyone should take, especially in this era of COVID-19," Sallis concluded.

**More information:** The U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention outlines how to [protect yourself and others from COVID-19](#).

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