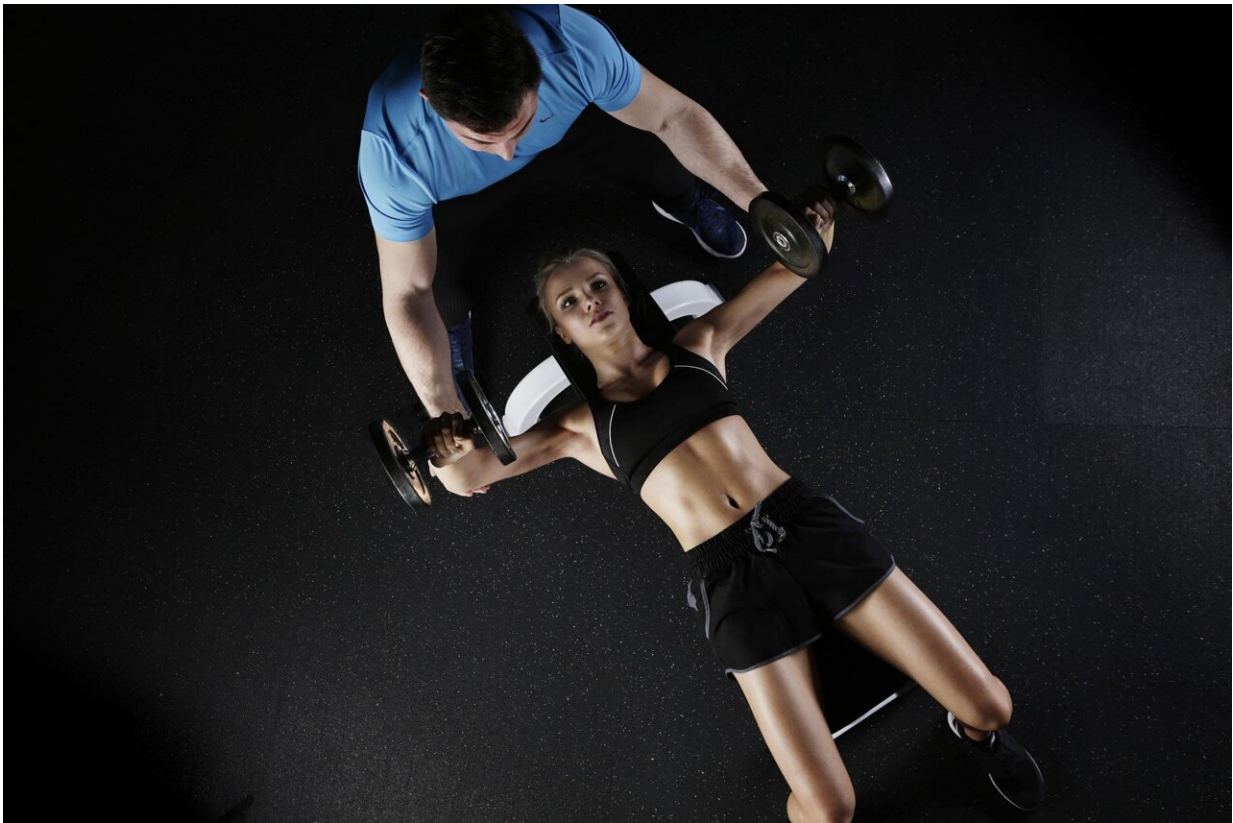


# Feeling worse is normal after a single session with a health coach

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One appointment with a health coach does not make you feel better. On the contrary, your health as perceived by you may even deteriorate, a University of Gothenburg study shows.

Health coaching is a growing area. It has been successfully enlisted in what is known as primary prevention, averting disease before it arises, and improving people's own management of several [chronic diseases](#).

Most studies in this area have addressed extensive, multisession health-coaching measures. However, there has been no research on outcomes of a streamlined approach, with people visiting a health coach just once.

Taking part in the current study were randomly selected 50-year-olds in Alingsås (a town in Västra Götaland County), randomly allocated into two groups. One group had an hour-long session involving an experienced health coach carrying out the usual health profile assessment, while the other group received no treatment at all. Of the 105 participants in the study, 52 were given one appointment each with a health coach.

## **Control group felt better**

Twelve months later, changes in all the participants' perceived health-related quality of life were investigated using standardized, comprehensive questionnaires covering overall well-being, physical and [mental health](#), social functioning, training behavior, and more.

"We thought seeing a health coach would bring a certain improvement, so the opposite result surprised us," says Ronny Gunnarsson, Professor of Family Medicine at Sahlgrenska Academy, University of Gothenburg, who is responsible for the study.

"The changes in the [control group](#) were more favorable in terms of general health, and also emotional and mental health, than those in the group who had been to see a health coach. No other differences between the groups were observed," Gunnarsson states.

## Changes require more visits

The conclusion from the study, published in the *Scandinavian Journal of Primary Health Care*, is that a single visit to a health coach does not improve the perceived health-related quality of life, or exercise level, in 50-year-olds in Sweden. On the contrary, it can make their perceived health-related quality of life worse.

One possible explanation is that just one session with a health coach is enough to inform patients about their health limitations, but not to influence their behaviors. Left without appropriate tools for improving their health, the individual then gets a bad conscience.

"One visit is enough to understand your shortcomings, but more are needed to make [lifestyle changes](#). If you're going to meet a health coach, you should have a series of sessions. That's how we interpret our results," Gunnarsson says.

**More information:** Sofia Ryd et al, The effect of a single visit to a health coach on perceived health in 50-year old residents in a high-income country—a randomised controlled trial, *Scandinavian Journal of Primary Health Care* (2022). [DOI: 10.1080/02813432.2022.2057035](https://doi.org/10.1080/02813432.2022.2057035)

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