

# Study: Exercise does not accelerate artery plaque buildup more often seen in fitness enthusiasts

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Exercising, even at extreme levels, does not accelerate the calcium buildup in arteries more often seen in marathoners and fitness enthusiasts, according to [new research](#) published in *JAMA Cardiology* from UT Southwestern and the Cooper Institute.

The study, which analyzed more than 8,700 participants from 1998–2019, provides important insight on whether people whose heart scans detect higher calcium should modify their [exercise regimen](#) to slow the plaque buildup in arteries.

A person's calcium level helps predict risk for [heart attack](#) and stroke from a cardiovascular condition called atherosclerosis. Although previous research has shown highly active people are at greater risk of more calcium in their arteries, researchers had not determined whether exercise would accelerate the levels.

Dr. Ben Levine, a UT Southwestern cardiologist and co-author on the study, says the findings are "reassuring" to fitness enthusiasts with high calcium scores who want to reap the benefits of exercise without increasing their risk of heart disease.

**More information:** Kerem Shuval et al, Physical Activity and Progression of Coronary Artery Calcification in Men and Women, *JAMA Cardiology* (2024). [DOI: 10.1001/jamacardio.2024.0759](https://doi.org/10.1001/jamacardio.2024.0759)

Provided by UT Southwestern Medical Center

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