

Study shows everyday activities aren't enough to protect against stroke

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Research conducted at the University of Gothenburg shows that the physical activities we do as we go about our lives, at work or in the home, aren't enough to protect us from having a stroke. However,

exercising in our free time and using active modes of transport are associated with a decreased risk of stroke. The study is [published](#) in *JAMA Network Open*.

"Physical activity during leisure time and as transportation is becoming increasingly important now that many jobs and domestic activities are becoming more sedentary," says lead author of the study Adam Viktorisson, researcher at Sahlgrenska Academy at the University of Gothenburg, Sweden.

Twenty-year follow-up

The research study covered 3,614 people from the region of Västra Götaland, 269 of whom suffered a [stroke](#) in the 20 years spanned by the study. Three months after the stroke, 120 of these had died or were dependent on help to carry out activities of daily living.

Physical activity data was gathered from surveys. Some participants were also given a pedometer to wear. Physical activity during leisure time or for transportation showed a link to the objective measurements from the pedometers, while physical activity at work did not.

Occupational physical activity did not protect

The health benefits of physical activity are well known, but earlier studies tend to mainly focus on physical activity during leisure time. Research in recent years has shown that physical activity at work can instead have negative health impacts, increasing the risk of cardiovascular disease.

"How and when we carry out physical activity seems to play a crucial role in determining its [health benefits](#). In our study, [leisure time](#) and

transport related [physical activities](#) were associated with a lower risk of stroke, whereas activities during work time or in the household were not," Viktorisson points out.

"Physically demanding jobs are often linked to stress, little opportunity for recovery, air pollution and generally poorer socioeconomic conditions, which can counteract the positive effects of physical activity."

Promote public health

The study used data from the INTERGENE cohort at the University of Gothenburg. Study participants were surveyed and data was collected from 2001 to 2004, encompassing both clinical data and questionnaire data. The researchers hope that these results will bring greater awareness and lead to changes in [public health](#) policy to encourage physical activity in society.

"Encouraging people to be physically active in their daily lives, for example by walking, cycling and doing other types of exercise, can be an important strategy in reducing the number of strokes and improving the prognosis of people who suffer a stroke," says Viktorisson.

More information: Adam Viktorisson et al, Domain-Specific Physical Activity and Stroke in Sweden, *JAMA Network Open* (2024). [DOI: 10.1001/jamanetworkopen.2024.13453](#)

Provided by University of Gothenburg

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