

Flexibility may help middle-aged individuals live longer

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Flexibility exercises are often included in the exercise regimens of athletes and exercisers. New [research](#) in the *Scandinavian Journal of Medicine & Science in Sports* suggests that levels of flexibility may affect survival in middle-aged individuals.

After analyzing data on 3,139 people (66% men) aged 46–65 years, investigators obtained a body flexibility score, termed Flexindex. This score was derived from a combination of the passive range of motion in 20 movements (each scored 0–4) involving 7 different joints, resulting in a score range of 0–80.

Flexindex was 35% higher in women compared with men. During an average follow-up of 12.9 years, 302 individuals (9.6%) comprising 224 men and 78 women died. Flexindex exhibited an inverse relationship with [mortality risk](#) and was nearly 10% higher for survivors compared with non-survivors in both men and women.

After taking age, body mass index, and health status into account, men and women with a low Flexindex had a 1.87- and 4.78-times higher risk of dying, respectively, than those with a high Flexindex.

"Being aerobically fit and strong and having good balance have been previously associated with low mortality. We were able to show that reduced body flexibility is also related to poor survival in middle-aged men and women," said corresponding author Claudio Gil S. Araújo, MD, Ph.D., of the Exercise Medicine Clinic—CLINIMEX, in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil.

He added that as flexibility tends to decrease with aging, it may be worth paying more attention to flexibility exercises and routinely including assessments of body [flexibility](#) as part of all health-related physical fitness evaluations.

More information: Reduced body flexibility is associated with poor survival in middle-aged men and women: a prospective cohort study, *Scandinavian Journal of Medicine and Science in Sports* (2024). DOI: [10.1111/sms.14708](https://doi.org/10.1111/sms.14708)

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