

Walking can lower risk of heart-related conditions as much as running

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Walking briskly can lower your risk of high blood pressure, high cholesterol and diabetes as much as running can, according to surprising findings reported in the American Heart Association journal *Arteriosclerosis, Thrombosis and Vascular Biology*.

Researchers analyzed 33,060 runners in the National Runners' Health Study and 15,045 walkers in the National Walkers' Health Study. They found that the same energy used for [moderate intensity](#) walking and vigorous intensity running resulted in similar reductions in risk for [high blood pressure](#), high cholesterol, diabetes, and possibly coronary heart disease over the study's six years.

"Walking and running provide an ideal test of the health benefits of moderate-intensity walking and vigorous-intensity running because they involve the same muscle groups and the same activities performed at different intensities," said Paul T. Williams, Ph.D., the study's principal author and staff scientist at Lawrence Berkeley National Laboratory, Life Science Division in Berkeley, Calif.

Unlike previous studies, the researchers assessed walking and running expenditure by distance, not by time. Participants provided activity data by responding to questionnaires.

"The more the runners ran and the walkers walked, the better off they were in health benefits. If the amount of energy expended was the same between the two groups, then the health benefits were comparable,"

Williams said.

Comparing energy expenditure to self-reported, physician-diagnosed incident hypertension, [hypercholesterolemia](#), diabetes and coronary heart disease, researchers found:

- Running significantly reduced risk for first-time hypertension 4.2 percent and walking reduced risk 7.2 percent.
- Running reduced first-time [high cholesterol](#) 4.3 percent and walking 7 percent.
- Running reduced first-time diabetes 12.1 percent compared to 12.3 percent for walking.
- Running reduced [coronary heart disease](#) 4.5 percent compared to 9.3 percent for walking.

"Walking may be a more sustainable activity for some people when compared to running, however, those who choose running end up exercising twice as much as those that choose walking. This is probably because they can do twice as much in an hour," Williams said.

Study participants were 18 to 80 years old, clustered in their 40s and 50s. Men represented 21 percent of the walkers and 51.4 percent of the runners.

"People are always looking for an excuse not to exercise, but now they have a straightforward choice to run or to walk and invest in their future health," Williams said.

Provided by American Heart Association

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