

## **Exercise May Cut the Risk of 13 Cancers**

Running, walking, swimming, playing tennis and other activities may be even better for you than you know. A new study that examined data from 1.44 million people ages 19 to 98 has found that leisure-time physical activity is associated with a lower risk of 13 types of cancer, from breast cancer to myeloid leukemia.

### Another reason to exercise

The findings should encourage inactive adults to exercise, said Steven Moore, an investigator with the U.S. National Cancer Institute and lead author of the study. Moore said the results apply to the general population as well as people with a history of smoking and those who are overweight and obese. Health care providers have long recommended exercise to their patients, but that advice was often aimed at improving heart or emotional health, or lowering weight. The new study expands the ways in which exercise appears to be beneficial.

### 7 percent lower risk

The study, published in the journal JAMA Internal Medicine, found that physical activity was associated with a lower risk of these cancers:

- Colon
- Breast
- Endometrial
- Esophageal adenocarcinoma
- Liver
- Gastric cardia
- Kidney
- Myeloid leukemia

Physical activity also is associated with lower risks of cancers of the head, neck, rectum and bladder, although the link isn't as strong. Exercise also is associated with reduced risks for lung cancer for current and former smokers.

The findings don't draw a direct cause-and-effect relationship between exercise and lower cancer risk, but the association was statistically significant, the authors said. "In aggregate," the study says, "higher levels of physical activity were associated with a 7 percent lower risk of total cancer."

### Looking for a link

In a statement announcing the study's results, the National Institutes of Health suggested the link between exercise and cancer risk may be tied to metabolic pathways, or chemical reactions in cells. The statement said researchers also think there may be a connection to inflammation in the body, immune function and oxidative stress, which is an imbalance between free radicals and the body's ability to repair the damage they do.

The study was done by researchers from the National Cancer Institute, which is part of the National Institutes of Health, and the American Cancer Society. It relied on self-reported data in which people described their physical activity routines.

#### What exercise qualifies

The median level of activity – the level at which half the respondents reported more activity and half reported less – was 150 minutes of moderate-intensity activity each week. That’s the amount recommended for adults by the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. The CDC defines moderate intensity activity as:

- Walking briskly
- Water aerobics
- Bicycling slower than 10 miles an hour
- Tennis (doubles)
- Ballroom dancing
- General gardening

More vigorous exercise includes activities such as running, bicycling faster than 10 miles an hour, swimming laps, jumping rope, hiking uphill or with a backpack, and aerobic dancing. “Health care professionals counseling inactive adults should promote physical activity as a component of a healthy lifestyle and cancer prevention,” Moore said.

The study is available on the [JAMA network site](#).

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