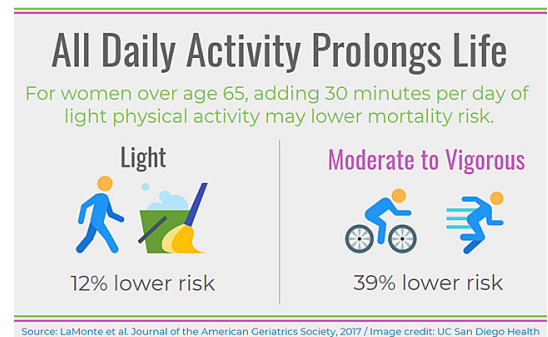


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Cross Off That “To Do” List, Study Shows All Daily Activity Can Prolong Life

For women over age 65, adding 30 minutes per day of light physical activity may lower mortality risk

That “to do” list of chores and errands could actually provide a variety of health benefits, according to researchers at the University of California San Diego School of Medicine. The study, published in the *Journal of the American Geriatrics Society*, found women over age 65 who engaged in regular light physical activity had a reduction in the risk of mortality.



“Every movement counts,” said Andrea LaCroix, PhD, senior author of the study and professor in the Department of Family Medicine and Public Health at UC San Diego School of Medicine. “A lot of what we do on a daily basis is improving our health, such as walking to the mail box, strolling around the neighborhood, folding clothes and straightening up the house. Activities like these account for more than 55 percent of how older individuals get their daily activity.”

The 6,000 women in the study, ages 65 to 99, were followed for up to four and a half years. They wore a measuring device called an accelerometer on their hip around-the-clock for seven days while going about their daily activities. The study found that 30 minutes of light physical activity per day lowered mortality risk by 12 percent while an additional 30 minutes of moderate activity, such as bicycling at a leisurely pace or brisk walking, exhibited a 39 percent lower risk.

“Improving levels of physical activity both light and moderate could be almost as effective as rigorous regular exercise at preventing a major chronic disease,” said LaCroix, chief of the Division of Epidemiology at UC San Diego School of Medicine. “We don’t have to be running marathons to stay healthy. The paradigm needs to shift when we think about being active.”

The study also found that the benefit of light physical activity extended to all subgroups examined, including different racial/ethnic backgrounds, obese and non-obese women, women with high and low functional ability and women older and younger than age 80.

“Older people expend more energy doing the same kinds of activities they did when younger, so their daily movement has to accommodate for this,” said LaCroix. “Think of it as taking a pill (activity level) at different doses (amounts of time) depending on the age of the patient. It’s not one size fits all.”

Current national public health guidelines recommend 150 minutes of moderate to vigorous physical activity a week for adults. The guidelines recommend persons 65 and older follow the adult guidelines to the degree their abilities and conditions allow.

“Our study shows, for the first time using device-measured light physical activity in older women, that there are health benefits at activity levels below the guideline recommendations. With the increasing baby boomer population in the United States, it is imperative that future health guidelines recommend light physical activity in addition to more strenuous activity,” said LaCroix. “When we get up from the couch and chair and move around, we are making good choices and contributing to our health.”

Co-authors include: Michael LaMonte, University at Buffalo; David Bucher and Lesly Tinker, University of Illinois; Eileen Rillamas-Sun and Chongzhi Di, Fred Hutchinson Cancer Research Center; Kelley Evenson, University of North Carolina; John Bellettiere, University of California San Diego; Cora Lewis, University of Alabama; I-Min Lee, Harvard University; Rebecca Seguin, Cornell University; Oleg Zaslovsky, University of Washington; Charles Eaton, Brown University; and Marcia Stefanick, Stanford University.

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