

Vigorous exercise – is it worth the extra sweat?

The benefits of physical activity are well documented.

Among other things, regular physical activity:

- reduces feelings of depression and anxiety
- reduces the risk of heart disease and diabetes
- helps to maintain healthy bones, muscles and joints
- promotes feelings of well-being.

But how hard do we have to work to get the benefits?

Do we need to be vigorously active or will moderate intensity activity do?



Our research

In a study involving more than 11,000 participants, ALSWH researchers compared the risks of developing high blood pressure (hypertension) and depression in women who reported walking and/or moderate intensity activities only, and in those who also reported doing some vigorous activity. They examined data from the ALSWH cohort of women who were born 1946 to 1951 over a 12 year period.

Women who reported doing 150 minutes per week of only walking and/or moderate activities showed a 20 to 30 per cent reduction in risk of developing hypertension and depression over this period.

The risk was somewhat further reduced in those who reported vigorous activities, but the real added benefits of vigorous activity were only seen in those women who reported doing a lot of activity (one to two hours daily).

Researchers concluded that optimal benefits accrue from 30 to 60 minutes daily of any activity, regardless of intensity.

Doing some activity is better than none, and doing more is better than some.

Doing vigorous activity does add some slight extra benefit for those who enjoy hard work-outs, but 'working out' is not essential.

Choose whatever you enjoy.

Activities such as walking, swimming, gardening, dancing, cycling, strength training, yoga, tai chi and all kinds of sporting and recreational activities will provide health benefits for many years to come.

Publication

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