# Daytime Activity Plus Breaks From Sitting May Help Control Blood Pressure

When individuals—especially women—combined short walking breaks with morning exercise, they reduced their blood pressure levels.

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Exercise and breaks in sitting are known to reduce hypertension. But a mix of morning exercise and short walking breaks throughout the day may be more beneficial in controlling blood pressure (BP), particularly among overweight or obese women, suggests a new study published in the journal Hypertension, reports Reuters.

For the study, researchers in Australia recruited 67 men and women between ages 60 and 74 who were overweight or obese. Nearly four in 10 individuals suffered from hypertension. Participants underwent three different exams, which were separated by a minimum of six days. In addition, scientists measured heart rate, BP and other blood markers during each test.

One testing scenario required participants to sit uninterrupted for eight hours. The second one required them to sit for an hour, walk at moderate intensity for 30 minutes on a treadmill and sit for the next six and a half hours. In the last setup, participants sat for an hour, walked 30 minutes on a treadmill, returned to sitting and took three-minute walking breaks on a treadmill every 30 minutes for the rest of the day.

During testing, the treadmill was set at two miles per hour, with an incline for the 30-minute morning walking program and no incline for the three-minute walking breaks. Study participants were also asked to avoid performing any activities that might raise their blood pressure while they sat.

As a group, recruits experienced an average reduction in BP (of about 1 mm/Hg) when the test included exercise. Researchers saw the greatest decline when participants tackled the 30-minute treadmill exercise in the morning and walked for three-minute intervals throughout the day.

However, scientists noted that only women reaped the additional benefit of these activities. Female participants produced lower levels of epinephrine—a hormone that raises blood pressure—under both test conditions that included physical activity.

Upcoming studies may look at sex differences in blood pressure response alone. Additional research would focus on specific circulatory function and glucose regulation for men and women who want to reduce their blood pressure, among other factors.

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