Be Active For Fitness Now and A Strong Mind Strong Later

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There are many health benefits associated with being physically fit, and here's another. Folks who exercised and stayed fit early in life through middle age have a better chance of reducing their risk of dementia when they become older, according to study findings published in the journal Annals of Internal Medicine and reported by Medical News Today.

Simply defined, dementia is a progressive loss of cognitive function, the ability to think, learn and process and comprehend new information and ideas. Most often, cognitive function is associated with memory and the ability to retain verbal language skills.

For the study, researchers had almost 19,500 non-elderly adults take a treadmill test between 1971 and 2009 to gauge their baseline fitness levels. Then, scientists checked Medicare data of participants who reached eligibility to get benefits between January 1, 1999 and December 31, 2009. Scientists did this to evaluate the association between aerobic fitness levels. (A high level of cardiorespiratory fitness permits continuous physical activity without a decline in performance and allows for rapid recovery following fatiguing physical activity.)

Researchers found that those patients who were fit earlier in life had a much lower chance of developing dementia as compared with those who were sedentary. "The magnitude and direction of the association were similar with or without previous stroke, suggesting that higher fitness levels earlier in life may lower risk for dementia later in life, independent of cerebrovascular disease," scientists concluded.

Although another researcher said that it remains difficult to get people to exercise, study authors suggested that these research results should motivate people to increase their levels of physical activity because Americans have a real fear of developing Alzheimer's disease.

African-American and Latino seniors are more likely to get Alzheimer's or another dementia than whites. Click here to read more.

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