Forget 10,000 Steps a Day. You Don't Need That Many

New research shows that fewer steps per day can also result in numerous health benefits. Here's what to aim for.

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Does walking 10,000 steps every day seem daunting? A review of over 30 studies found that walking just 7,000 steps a day has substantial health benefits. In fact, those 7,000 steps can lower your overall risk of death by 47%, including a 37% decreased risk of cancer mortality and a 47% lower risk of dying from cardiovascular disease.

After analyzing the data and publishing the results in The Lancet Public Health, researchers noted three key findings:

> "First, even modest daily step counts were associated with health benefits. Second, 7,000 steps per day was associated with sizeable risk reductions across most outcomes, compared with the reference of 2,000 steps per day. Third, even though risk continued to decrease beyond 7,000 steps per day, it plateaued for some outcomes. Notably, the dose-response relationship might differ by outcomes, participant age and device type."

Physical activity offers numerous health benefits, including improved muscle strength, lower blood pressure, improved cholesterol and even lower risk of cancer. Despite this, a 2024 study found that nearly one third (31%) of adults worldwide, approximately 1.8 billion people, did not meet the recommended levels of physical activity in 2022.

Although many people who use fitness trackers aim to take 10,000 steps a day, that target number is not based on sufficient evidence. In fact, the number likely originated from a Japanese marketing campaign for a pedometer in the 1960s, according to a 2019 study.

For the current study, lead author Melody Ding, MPH, PhD, professor of public health at the University of Sydney, along with a team of researchers, reviewed 31 studies on the impact of step

count on cardiovascular disease, type 2 diabetes, cancer, dementia, depressive symptoms and early death.

The study found that people who walked 7,000 steps per day had a 47% lower risk of death from all causes compared with those who walked 2,000 daily steps, which researchers considered the minimum possible step count for adults. What's more, adults who were more active had a 25% lower risk of cardiovascular disease and a 38% lower risk of dementia.

"More than 7K doesn't do harm and may even offer some additional benefits," Ding told CNN via email. "If one is already very active and doing 10K+ a day, they definitely don't need to hold back and go back to 7K!"

Additionally, those who walked 7,000 steps a day compared with 2,000 steps experienced the following health benefits:

- 25% lower risk of heart disease;
- 14% lower risk of type 2 diabetes;
- 22% lower risk of depression;
- 28% lower risk of falls;
- 6% lower risk of cancer incidence (though this difference was deemed "nonsignificant").

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention recommends that people should get 150 minutes per week of moderate-intensity activity or 75 minutes of vigorous activity per week, ideally spread out over multiple days. Moderate activity includes brisk walking, dancing or slow bicycling, while vigorous activity includes running, swimming laps and fast cycling.

"Accumulating daily steps offers a broad range of health benefits. Even low step counts, such as 4K, offer health benefits than lower step counts," Ding said.

"The message that every step counts for those who are able should be emphasized as a core public health message, regardless of the specific quantitative target," researchers wrote.

To read more, click #Physical Activity. There, you'll see headlines such as "More Evidence Links

Physical Activity With Improved Cancer Survival," "Daily Physical Activity, Even at Light Intensities, Linked to Lower Cancer Risk" and "Physical Activity May Reduce Risk of Falls for Older Cancer Patients."

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