Walking, Strength Training Tied to Lower Risk of Death From Cirrhosis

Researchers have presented findings from the first large cohort of people followed over a lengthy period to assess this connection.

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People who routinely walk and engage in strength training have a lower risk of death from cirrhosis than sedentary individuals. This is according to the first study to follow participants over a prolonged period of time to compare their physical activity with their rate of death from cirrhosis.

“The benefit of exercise is not a new concept, but the impact of exercise on mortality from cirrhosis and from liver cancer has not yet been explored on this scale,” Tracey Simon, MD, the lead researcher of the study and an instructor of medicine at Harvard Medical School and Massachusetts General Hospital, said in a press release.

Presenting their findings at Digestive Disease Week in San Diego, researchers prospectively followed 68,449 women from the Nurses’ Health Study and 48,748 men from the Health Professionals Follow-up Study. All the participants began the follow-up period without any diagnosis of liver disease. Then, every two years between 1986 and 2012, the participants provided detailed accounts of their exercise habits, including the type and intensity of physical activity.

The participants who were in the top quintile of weekly walking distance had a 73% lower risk of cirrhosis-related death compared with those in the bottom quintile. This risk reduction was even more pronounced when the researchers looked at the combination of walking and engaging in weight training.

“In the U.S., mortality due to cirrhosis is increasing dramatically, with rates expected to triple by the year 2030. In the face of this alarming trend, information on modifiable risk factors that might prevent liver disease is needed,” said Simon. “Our findings support further research to define the optimal type and intensity of physical activity to prevent adverse outcomes in patients at risk for cirrhosis.”

To read a press release about the study, click here.

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