

4 Ways Walking Adds Years to Your Life

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Want to know the best workout for a longer, healthier future? You don't need a fancy gym or pricey trainer: A growing body of research proves that slipping on a pair of sneakers and going for a stroll is a great way to squeeze more quality years into your time on this planet. And you don't have to commit hours a day to benefit. According to a study published in the journal *PLoS Medicine*, walking for 11 minutes a day is enough to extend your lifespan by 2 years. Meanwhile, research from Australia's University of Sydney shows swapping one hour of sitting for an hour of walking can slash your risk of early death by about 14%—that could mean roughly 9 additional years!

Need even more motivation to start stepping? Read on to learn about the different ways this simple form of exercise can turn back the clock.

1. It counteracts the damage caused by sitting.

You've already heard that staying seated for long stretches can slow your circulation, raising your risk for heart disease, diabetes, and other chronic health issues. But even a short stroll can counteract these harmful effects. In study published in the journal *Experimental Physiology*, researchers found that people who sat at a desk for 6 hours experienced reduced blood flow in their legs—and a 10-minute stroll was enough to reverse the effect.

For even more benefits, stretch your legs at least every hour. Researchers from the University of Utah School of Medicine that people who did a light-intensity activity, such as walking, for 2 minutes each hour had a 33% lower chance of dying during the study than those who didn't.

2. It safeguards your heart.

Walking gets your blood pumping, strengthening your ticker with each step. It can also help you blow off steam and reduce the amount of stress in your life, says James O'Keefe, MD, a

cardiologist and professor of medicine at the University of Missouri-Kansas City. “Walking may protect your heart by as much as running.” In fact, Harvard scientists found that strolling for at least 3 hours a week can reduce your odds of heart attack and cardiac death by 35%.

3. It puts you on a path to a healthy weight.

An hour of brisk walking can torch up to 460 calories, making it an effective slim-down weapon. What's more, it can target the most harmful form of fat: Regular stepping can help shrink belly fat and increase insulin sensitivity, two precursors to diabetes. In fact, research shows that a 30-minute stroll a day can reduce your risk of developing type 2 diabetes by about 30%, while a one-mile daily walk lowers diabetics' odds of dying from the disease by 39%.

4. It can help your body repair its DNA.

Walking and other forms of exercise can help put the brakes on the aging process. In a study from Germany's Saarland University, researchers found that regular walking increases activity of telomerase, an enzyme that helps the body mend its DNA. This effect could help you live longer, says study author Sanjay Sharma, MD. He estimates that just 25 minutes of brisk walking or slow jogging a day could buy you 7 additional years of life.