

Short Bursts of Activity May Cut Your Cancer Risk

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July 28, 2023

People who do 4 to 5 minutes of vigorous physical activity daily can reduce their cancer risk by up to 32%, a new study published in [JAMA Oncology](#) says.

Researchers at the University of Sydney, Australia, studied data from wearable fitness devices worn by more than 22,000 "non-exercisers," then examined their health records for 6 or 7 years.

The scientists found that people who did 4 to 5 minutes of "vigorous intermittent lifestyle physical activity" (VILPA) had a "substantially" lower cancer risk than people who did no VILPA.

Examples of VILPA are vigorous housework, carrying heavy shopping bags around the grocery store, bursts of power walking, and playing high-energy games with children. The activities could occur in 1-minute bursts, instead of all at once.

The study found that a minimum of around 3.5 minutes of daily VILPA was linked to an 18% reduction in cancer rates, compared to no VILPA. The study said 4.5 minutes of daily VILPA was linked to a 32% reduction in cancers related to physical activity, including lung, kidney, bladder, and stomach cancers.

"We know the majority of middle-aged people don't regularly exercise, which puts them at increased cancer risk, but it's only through the advent of wearable technology like activity trackers that we are able to look at the impact of short bursts of incidental physical activity done as part of daily living," Emmanuel Stamatakis, PhD, the lead author of the study and a professor at the University of Sydney's Charles Perkins Centre, said in a [news release](#).

Study participants had an average age of 62 and reported that they didn't exercise in their spare time. VILPA, a concept coined by researchers at the university, was measured by wrist accelerometers that people in the study wore over 7 days at the start of the study, the news release said.

"We are just starting to glimpse the potential of wearable technology to track physical activity and understand how unexplored aspects of our lives affect our long-term health — the potential impact on cancer prevention and a host of other health outcomes is enormous," Stamatakis said.

Sources:

JAMA Oncology: "Vigorous Intermittent Lifestyle Physical Activity and Cancer Incidence Among Nonexercising Adults."

EurekAlert!: "Short bursts of daily activity linked to reduced cancer risk."