

Study: Men Must Exercise Harder Than Women to Prevent Stroke

Health experts' recommendations to "move more, eat less" may not apply equally to men and women. In fact, men need to exercise harder than women—at least enough to break a sweat—to slash their risk of strokes and possibly other cardiovascular disorders.

That's the latest word from an internationally respected stroke researcher who tells Newsmax Health that men who exercise too little may simply be wasting their time, when it comes to boosting their cardiovascular health.

"I agree with research concluding exercise reduces the danger," says Michelle McDonnell, a rehabilitation professor in the school of health sciences at the University of South Australia in Adelaide, Australia. "Exercise is vital."

But exercise guidelines—typically recommending 150 minutes of activity weekly—aren't a one-size-fits-all proposition.

"Depending on who you are, your exercise requirements may be different," she notes. "Men should exercise harder than women to get the same benefits. We aren't sure why."

McDonnell's conclusions are based on studies she has conducted involving exercise and strokes published in leading medical journals including the American Heart Association publication *Stroke*.

Her largest study involved 27,000 Americans, ages 45 and older, with both sexes equally represented. McDonnell's team found men who exercise at least four times weekly—moderately or vigorously—reduce their stroke risk by 20 percent, compared

to those who were inactive. For women, higher levels of activity did not significantly lower stroke risk.

“Our research shows men need to exercise at vigorous intensity—enough to work up a sweat—four times a week,” she explains. “There was no relationship between vigorous activity and stroke risk in women.”

One-third of the study’s participants were classified as “inactive” – defined as exercising less than once weekly. Study volunteers were tracked for almost six years to determine how many would later strokes. Exercise regimens were self-reported.

“Stroke-lowering benefits of physical activity are related to the impact on other risk factors,” McDonnell explains. “Exercise reduces blood pressure, weight, and diabetes. If exercise were a pill, you’d be taking one pill to treat different conditions.”

The American Stroke Association ranks high blood pressure as the No. 1 risk factor for stroke. Others include smoking, excessive alcohol consumption, obesity, diabetes, lack of physical activity, high cholesterol, illegal drug use, and atrial fibrillation or other heart conditions.

The society tallied 33 million strokes worldwide in 2010, with stroke blamed for 129,000 American deaths in 2014—the nation’s No. 5 cause. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention estimates an American dies of a stroke every four minutes.

Stroke is a key risk factor for heart disease. In fact, coronary heart disease and stroke share many risk factors. Not surprisingly, the American Heart Association makes anti-stroke policies a key prong in campaigns against heart disease.

The association advises people to lower their risk of both by exercising more, eating fewer calories, changing risky behaviors, and being aware it’s easier to stay on track when

guided by trained health professionals.

McDonnell identifies three common excuses for not exercising: lack of energy, interest, or motivation. But exercise, she insists, saves lives.

Past studies have shown women who walk for longer (more than two hours weekly) and at a brisk pace “were less likely to suffer stroke than those who walked at an easy pace.” One American study showed women walking briskly for 30 minutes a day cut stroke risk by more than 20 percent.

Another study involving of 11,130 men—by epidemiologist Dr. I-Min Lee of the Harvard School of Public Health—found brisk hour-long walks five days a week cut stroke risk in half. Even brisk 30-minute daily walks slashed stroke risk by almost a quarter (24 percent).

“Our findings support the Surgeon General’s recommendation [of] at least 30 minutes of moderate intensity physical activity on most days of the week,” says Dr Lee.

McDonnell agrees.

“Science makes it clear that exercise reduces stroke risk—whatever your sex,” she adds. “But to be sure it works, males must ensure they sweat.”

For the original article, visit .