

Study: Regular Exercise May Help Stave Off Alzheimer's

Regular exercise at any age may afford some measure of protection from Alzheimer's disease and other dementias, a new study suggests.

A group of University of Kentucky researchers have demonstrated a positive correlation between fitness and blood flow to areas of the brain where plaques and tangles, the first hallmarks of Alzheimer's disease pathology are usually first detected.

The researcher put 30 men and women ages 59-69 through treadmill fitness assessments and ultrasounds of the heart. Then they received brain scans to look for blood flow to certain areas of the brain.

The results showed blood flow to critical areas of the brain—and so the supply of oxygen and vital nutrients—was higher in those who were more physically fit.

Since people who exercise frequently often have reduced arterial stiffness, a condition that occurs with aging and can result in less blood flow to the body, including the brain. Since regular physical fitness is associated with reducing this factor, it helps maintain blood flow to the brain, which could help stave off dementia, he adds of the study, which appears in *NeuroImage*.

"Can we prove irrefutably that increased fitness will prevent Alzheimer's disease? Not at this point," Johnson says. But, he adds, "This is an important first step towards demonstrating that being physically active improves blood flow to the brain and confers some protection from dementia, and conversely that people who live sedentary lifestyles, especially those who are genetically predisposed to Alzheimer's, might be more

susceptible.”

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