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Book clubs 'as good as the gym for long **life'**  
  
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JOINING a book or bridge club could be just as good for your health as doing regular exercise past the age of 60, research suggests.

The findings, published online in BMJ Open, suggest retirees who are members of **social clubs** are likely to live for longer.

Researchers examined more than 400 English adults over the age of 50 for six years after retirement. Each was asked how many clubs or societies to which they belonged and answered questions on their health and quality of **life.** The study found that 6.6 per cent of the sample died in the first six years after they had finished working.

Retirees who had two group memberships before retirement had a 2 per cent risk of **death** in the first six years of retirement if they maintained those memberships, a 5 per cent risk if they gave one up and a 12 per cent risk if they left both groups.

Researchers also assessed whether changes in physical activity levels affected risk of **death**. They found that if a person exercised vigorously once a week after retirement they had a 3 per cent chance of dying in the next six years. Those who exercised less than once a week had a 6 per cent risk of**death** within six years, while those who stopped all vigorous exercise had an 11 per cent risk of**death** in the timeframe.

However, the study did not prove cause and effect. Those in failing health might have been more likely to drop out of clubs, and to exercise less frequently.

**LANGUAGE:** ENGLISH