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Being in a book group could boost health as much as exercise;  
Being in one of more **social clubs** could be as good for pensioners as regular exercise, a study in BMJ Open suggests  
  
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Being in a book group 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 suggests retirees who are part 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 participant was asked how many different organisations, clubs, or societies they belonged to and also answered questions on their physical health and quality of **life**.

Study author Dr Niklas Steffens, of The University of Queensland in Australia, said physical activity and group memberships seemed to have a similar level of effect. 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.

"The number of groups that retirees are members of is a predictor of both their subsequent quality of**life** and their likelihood of dying; being as good a predictor as physical activity," researchers said.

**LANGUAGE:** ENGLISH