**Why that brisk walk may NOT be enough: Exercising for more than 12 hours a week gives the best protection against heart attacks, strokes, cancer and diabetes**

* **12 hours is five times higher than the minimum activity suggested by the British Government and the World Health Organisation**
* **Official guidelines fall well short of a truly healthy lifestyle, they say**
* **But others argue health guidance has to be realistic, with some polls suggesting 44 per cent of people in Britain do no regular exercise at all**

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Exercising for more than 12 hours a week gives you the best chance of avoiding heart attacks, strokes, cancer and diabetes, experts claim.

That is five times higher than the minimum activity suggested by the British Government and the World Health Organisation.

The researchers claim official guidelines fall well short of a truly healthy lifestyle - and in fact people should be doing much more exercise.

Officials advise that adults undertake 150 minutes of moderate exercise a week, such as brisk walking or gardening, or 75 minutes of vigorous exercise such as running or cycling.

But a major study suggests this is woefully inadequate, and people should be doing either six and a quarter hours of vigorous activity or 12 and a half hours of moderate exercise.

The research team, from the US and Australia, investigated the impact of exercise on risk for five common conditions - heart disease, strokes, diabetes, breast cancer and bowel cancer.

And they found that the optimum exercise level for avoiding this risk was between five and seven times higher than currently recommended.

Others, however, point out that health guidance has to be realistic.

Very few people even hit the current guidelines - with polls suggesting that 44 per cent of people in Britain do no regular exercise at all.

Some 58 per cent of women and 65 per cent of men in England are either overweight or obese – a problem that is are expected to rise over the coming decades.

So health officials are focusing their efforts on getting people to exercise at all, rather than persuading them to spend hours and hours a week doing so.

Many experts have even called for the guidelines to be reduced, particularly for older people, because they might find the existing targets too daunting.

But the authors of the new research, from the University of Washington and the University of Queensland, stressed that people do not necessarily have to spend all their time in the gym.

Instead they should try to be physically active at work, do more vigorous housework and gardening, and walking or cycle rather than getting the bus.

The scientists, whose work was published in the British Medical Journal, concluded that the current guidelines need an overhaul.

‘People who achieve total physical activity levels several times higher than the current recommended minimum levels have a significant reduction in the risk of the five diseases studied,’ they wrote.

The team analysed the results of 174 studies published between 1980 and 2016 examining the associations between total physical activity and the five diseases.

They found that for all five diseases risks went down as exercise went up.

They found that most health gains occurred at a total weekly activity level of between 12 and 16 hours of moderate activity, or between six and eight hours of vigorous exercise.

At this level, heart disease risk dropped by a fifth, compared to doing less than 150 minutes a week. Stroke, diabetes and colon cancer risk dropped by a sixth and breast cancer risk by about a twentieth.

Above this level, the benefits started to plateau.

‘Our findings have several important implications,’ the researchers wrote.

‘They suggest that total physical activity needs to be several times higher than the current recommended minimum level.

‘Taking into account all domains of physical activity increases opportunity for promoting physical activity.

‘With population ageing, and an increasing number of cardiovascular and diabetes deaths since 1990, greater attention and investments in interventions to promote physical activity is required.’

Dr Oliver Monfredi, lecturer in cardiovascular medicine at the University of Manchester, said: ‘What is clear is that in terms of protecting oneself from the development of these five common and potentially life limiting illnesses, undertaking any level of exercise is protective, more is better, and should be encouraged by health care professionals, politicians and charities alike, to decrease the burden of these debilitating illnesses in society today.’

Dr Justin Varney, national lead for adult health and wellbeing at Public Health England, said:

‘Currently one in five adults do less than 30 minutes of activity per week and they will gain the most that getting more active.

‘It is never too late to start and every little helps, with any ten minutes of physical activity improving your health.

‘The current guidelines are based on based on evidence that considers a broad spectrum of conditions and advise all adult to aim for at least 150 minutes of physical activity per week and accompany this with muscle strengthening activities -such as yoga, carrying heavy bags or in the gym – on two days.’

Read more: <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/health/article-3731733/Why-brisk-walk-NOT-Exercising-12-hours-week-gives-best-protection-against-heart-attacks-strokes-cancer-diabetes.html#ixzz4NQlPOg2C>   
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