



Forget 10,000 steps! A brisk ten-minute walk is just as good if you want to stay fit and healthy, says Public Health England

- Brisk ten-minute walk, around 1,000 steps, can increase mortality by 15 per cent
- One in five middle-aged adults in England are classed as 'physically inactive'
- This means they do less than 30 minutes of exercise each week

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235
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It's hailed as the magic number to reach every day if you want to stay fit and healthy.

But health officials say we don't have to notch up 10,000 steps... a brisk ten-minute walk could be just as good.

They want people to increase the intensity of their walking, rather than just focus on the distance.

Just ten minutes of brisk walking – around 1,000 steps – can cut our chances of an early death by up to 15 per cent, according to new guidance from Public Health England and the Royal College of GPs.

One in five middle-aged adults in England are physically inactive, meaning they do less than 30 minutes of physical activity a week. Nearly a third – 31 per cent – blame not having enough time, while around a quarter say they are too tired to exercise regularly.

Health officials say a daily brisk walk is a simple and effective way to increase heart rate and improve overall health.

The official recommendation for adults is to carry out 150 minutes a week of moderate to vigorous physical activity. Doing this much exercise has been linked to a reduced risk of type 2 diabetes, cardiovascular disease and some cancers.

In a Public Health England poll of 3,000 adults, 87 per cent said they already walk more than ten minutes a day – although only 54 per cent said they walk at a brisk pace.

The Government agency has now created an app – Active 10 – which measures time spent and the intensity of walking, as well as distance.

Professor Paul Cosford, medical director of PHE, said: 'Managing all the pressures of everyday life can mean that exercise takes a back seat, but building a brisk walk into your daily routine is a simple way to get more active.'

'Taking a brisk ten-minute walk each day will get your heart pumping, improve your mood and lower the risk of serious health issues.' It comes after a study found older people who walk at a brisk pace were 53 per cent less likely to die from a heart attack or stroke than those who dawdle.

For those of any age, keeping up a fast or average speed – between 3 and 4.3mph – cut the risk of death from any cause by more than 20 per cent over a 15-year period, researchers found.

Professor Helen Stokes-Lampard, chairman of the Royal College of GPs, said: 'Small, often simple, lifestyle changes can have a really positive impact on our health.'

'There has been a substantial rise in patients who have developed multiple long-term conditions in recent years, and many of these, including type 2 diabetes and heart disease, are linked to not being active enough.'

Most fitness trackers, such as the Fitbit, encourage users to walk 10,000 steps a day. It is believed the concept originated in Japan in the run-up to the 1964 Tokyo Olympics when a pedometer – called ‘Manpo-Kei’, which translates as ‘10,000 steps meter’ – became popular among the health-conscious.

A spokesperson for Fitbit said the device can be worn to help people achieve this target.

She said: 'Fitbit starts users off with a 10,000 step goal as it adds up to about five miles a day for most people, which includes about 30 minutes of daily exercise – satisfying the recommendation of at least 150 minutes of moderate exercise per week.'

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