

# Just 8 Minutes of Exercise a Day Is All You Need

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You can get all the exercise you need in just 8 minutes a day if you work out a bit harder, according to [a new study](#) in the *European Heart Journal*.

Just 54 minutes of vigorous exercise per week provides the most bang for your buck, researchers found, lowering the risk of early death from any cause by 36%, and your chances of getting heart disease by 35%.

Scientists examined data from fitness trackers worn by more than 71,000 people studied in the United Kingdom, then analyzed their health over the next several years.

While more time spent exercising unsurprisingly led to better health, the protective effects of exercise start to plateau after a certain point, according to the study.

A tough, short workout improves blood pressure, shrinks artery-clogging plaques, and boosts your overall fitness.

Vigorous exercise helps your body adapt better than moderate exercise does, leading to more notable benefits, says study author Matthew Ahmadi, PhD, a postdoctoral research fellow at the University of Sydney.

"Collectively, these will lower a person's risk of cardiovascular disease. Exercise can also lower body inflammation, which will in turn lower the risk for certain cancers," he says.

The CDC [recommends](#) at least 150 minutes of "moderate intensity" exercise each week, such as walking at a brisk pace. Or you could spend 75 minutes each week doing vigorous exercise, like running, it says. The CDC also recommends muscle strengthening activities, like lifting weights, at least 2 days per week.

But only 54% of Americans actually manage to get their 150 minutes of aerobic activity in each week, according to the [most recent data](#) from the National Center for Health Statistics. Even fewer — just 24% — also squeeze in the two recommended strength workouts.

So 8 minutes a day instead of 30 minutes could persuade busy people to get the exercise they need.

"Lack of time is one of the main reasons people have reported for not engaging in exercise," says Ahmadi.

Vigorous exercise doesn't mean you have to run, bike, or lift weights. Scientists consider a physical activity "vigorous" if it's greater than 6 times your resting metabolic rate, or MET. That includes [all kinds of strenuous movement](#), including dancing in a nightclub or carrying groceries upstairs.

"All of these activities are equally beneficial," says Ahmadi.

He recommends aiming for 2-minute bouts of a heart-pumping activity, spread throughout the day for the most benefit in the least amount of time. If you wear a smartwatch or other device that tracks your heart rate, you'll be above the threshold if your heart is pumping at 77% or more of your max heart rate (which most fitness trackers help you calculate).

No smartwatch?

"The easiest way a person can infer if they are doing vigorous activity is if they are breathing hard enough that it's difficult to have a conversation or speak in a full sentence while doing the activity," Ahmadi says. In other words, if you're huffing and puffing, then you're in the zone.

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## Sources

Matthew Ahmadi, PhD, postdoctoral research fellow, University of Sydney.

*European Heart Journal* : "Vigorous physical activity, incident heart disease, and cancer: how little is enough?"

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