

Running Improves Health

By Greg Arnold, DC, CSCS, August 21, 2008, abstracted from "Reduced Disability and Mortality among Aging Runners: A 21-Year Longitudinal Study" in the August 11/15 issue of the Archives of Internal Medicine

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www.nowfoods.com/HealthLibrary/HealthArticles/HealthNotes/M103304.htm?cat=Sports%20Nutrition

According to the National Center for Health Statistics, 31% of American adults participate in regular leisure-time activity, but 39.5% do not participate in any leisure-time physical activity¹. Studies have shown that exercise [helps with mental health](#)² and [benefits adults over 60](#)³. The American Heart Association, American College of Sports Medicine⁴ and the National Institutes of Health⁵ all recommend at least 30 minutes of exercise per day for healthy adults aged 18-65 and 60 minutes per day for children⁶. The President's Council on Physical Fitness now offers an Adult Fitness test⁷ to help American adults gauge their fitness levels.

Now a recent study⁸ has found that exercise in the form of running can help with overall health and lower disability levels.. Eight-year⁹ and 13-year¹⁰ follow-up studies showed the benefits of running in patients aged 50 to 72 years. Building on these findings, 538 runners chosen from a nationwide running club, the 50+ Runner Association, were compared to 423 controls who were taken from the Stanford University Lipid Research Clinics Prevalence Study (LRC)¹¹. All patients completed yearly questionnaires containing information on demographic variables, medical history, exercise habits and the Health Assessment Questionnaire Disability Index (HAQ-DI)^(12, 13, 14).

While the researchers observed disability to increase in both groups over the 21-year follow-up, those in the running group "had significantly lower" disability levels at all points measured compared to controls. Specifically, after 21 years, runners had a mean HAQ-DI score of nearly 0.2, equivalent to having mild functional disability in 1 to 2 of the 8 areas of daily activity. As for the controls, their HAQ-DI scores approached 0.5, equivalent to moderate functional disability in 2 of the 8 areas or complete inability to perform in at least 1 area of daily functioning. At 19 years of follow-up, 15% of runners had died compared to 34% of controls. When looking at the amount of running being done, those in the running group averaged about 190 minutes of running per week.

For the researchers, "Vigorous exercise (running) at middle and older ages is associated with reduced disability in later life and a notable survival advantage." If you do decide to take up an exercise or running program, make sure you including supplements to improve your recovery including [a multivitamin](#)¹⁵ and [L-Carnitine](#)¹⁶.

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