

# How many daily steps do you need to lose weight?

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It's clear that staying active is key to being healthy, and fitness trackers

and smartwatches have become popular tools for tracking activity.

But just how many steps does someone need to take to lose [weight](#)?

That's not such a simple a question.

While evidence is limited on exactly how many steps a day it takes to lose weight, experts say to get about 150 to 300 minutes of moderate- to vigorous-intensity exercise weekly, said [Amanda Paluch](#), an assistant professor in the department of kinesiology and Institute for Applied Life Sciences at the University of Massachusetts, Amherst.

That's about an average of 22 minutes per day on the low end and 45 minutes on the high end, Paluch said.

"And we do know that for [weight loss](#) and weight maintenance, you really need to get to that higher end," Paluch said.

"We do need to exercise more often at this moderate to vigorous intensity to really see weight loss," Paluch added, but "we really haven't figured out how much that equates to in terms of steps per day."

## Tracking steps

That doesn't mean a person shouldn't track their steps.

"These types of devices can really help us with tracking and goal-setting," Paluch said.

[Harvard Health](#) cited a review of recent studies that found people who were overweight or obese and who had chronic health conditions were helped in losing weight by wearing fitness trackers.

In the reviewed studies, participants had weekly goals for steps or minutes walked and were most successful when those programs lasted at least 12 weeks.

## **Those 10,000 steps**

The idea of getting 10,000 steps is not new, but proving that number works is more challenging.

Yet, a study published in the journal *Obesity* found that getting 10,000 steps per day, with about 3,500 of those as moderate to [vigorous physical activity](#) for at least 10 minutes at a time, was found to be associated with enhanced weight loss in a behavioral intervention that included a calorie-restricted diet.

Another study, published recently in the journal *JAMA Internal Medicine*, found that for every 2,000 steps a study participant logged, their risk of early death dropped by between 8% and 11%, up to 10,000 steps. Researchers also found that 9,800 steps per day showed the greatest benefit.

And a recent study published in the journal *Nature Medicine*, found walking 10,000 steps a day reduced the risk for dementia, heart disease and cancer.

More walking or running equals more calories burned, Dr. Chip Lavie, medical director of cardiac rehabilitation and prevention at John Ochsner Heart and Vascular Institute in New Orleans [said](#) about the study when it was published.

"Generally, we say 100 calories are burned per mile walked or run," Lavie noted.

## Getting started on walking to lose weight

Don't get discouraged if you get only modest weight loss. Even that can have big benefits. Losing just 5% to 10% of total weight can improve [blood pressure](#), [blood sugar](#) and blood cholesterol, according to the [U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention](#).

Walking can also reduce the risk of obesity, [heart disease](#), diabetes, high blood pressure and depression, according to the [Mayo Clinic](#), which says most Americans walk about 3,000 to 4,000 steps per day.

Figure out how much you walk, then add 1,000 extra steps every two weeks, the Mayo Clinic suggests, by walking the dog, hiking together as a family or parking farther away from your destination.

## Setting the pace

Pacing can also make a difference.

"We do know that intensity does tend to matter for weight loss. So, getting in more [brisk walking](#), that's really where we feel confident that if you do enough of it that could support weight loss," Paluch said.

This could be done in short intermittent bouts or in longer organized workouts.

It may be that for a particular person the goal isn't the [steps](#) but the minutes of physical activity. Or it could be counting the miles per day and being aware of how many they achieve at a brisk pace.

Even with robust exercise, in most cases, diet is crucial for weight loss, Paluch noted.

"Physical activity can provide lots of additional improvements in other health factors, but without any nutritional program, it's very difficult to lose weight," Paluch said. "They really go hand in hand when we think about weight loss. It is the combination of being active and following a structured diet."

SOURCE: Amanda Paluch, assistant professor, department of kinesiology, Institute for Applied Life Sciences, University of Massachusetts, Amherst

**More information:** Seth A. Creasy et al, Pattern of Daily Steps is Associated with Weight Loss: Secondary Analysis from the Step-Up Randomized Trial, *Obesity* (2018). [DOI: 10.1002/oby.22171](https://doi.org/10.1002/oby.22171)

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