

Christmas Day stroll helps fight festive fat

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(Medical Xpress) -- A traditional Christmas Day family walk could help reduce fat levels in the blood, according to scientists at the University of Glasgow.

In a study funded by the British Heart Foundation (BHF), researchers from the Institute of Cardiovascular and Medical Sciences, found that exercising may actually change the structure of [blood fats](#), allowing the body to easily get rid of them.

Thirty minutes of [exercise](#) or more has previously been shown to reduce the amount of fatty particles - or lipids - in the blood for a day or two afterwards, though it is unclear how this happens.

Dr. Jason Gill led the small study which involved asking overweight men to walk on a treadmill for two hours. The men then had their rate of production and breakdown of [blood lipids](#) measured before and after the exercise.

The researchers found that while exercise did not slow down production of blood lipids, it significantly increased their clearance from the bloodstream. The lipids transported in the blood come from two sources: from the food that we eat and from our liver, which can turn our fat stores into circulating lipids.

Lipids are essential for our bodies, but high levels of some types of lipid in the bloodstream can cause ill health - for example too much 'harmful' LDL cholesterol increases our risk of heart attack and stroke.

Dr. Gill said: "We can think of the level of lipids in our blood as being like the level of water in a bath. To reduce the water level you can either turn off the tap, or increase the size of the plughole to let it drain out. For blood lipids this is equivalent to producing less, or breaking them down more.

"Our research suggests that exercise works at the 'plughole' end of the process, increasing the body's

ability to break down the fats faster. We think this might occur through structural changes to the lipid particles making them more amenable to clearance from the blood.

"The lipid lowering effect of each exercise session lasts for a couple of days, so it is important to undertake regular physical activity to maximise the benefits."

Professor Jeremy Pearson, Associate Medical Director at the BHF said: "This was a small study, and we need more research to confirm its findings, but it does give us a clue to how some of the benefits of exercise might take place. What's in no doubt is that being active has very real benefits to our health.

"During the [Christmas](#) period many of us indulge more than usual, so it's vital to balance that with healthy habits - the festive walk is a great healthy tradition for many families. And as the short term drop in lipids lasts for a day or two after exercise, even the last minute dash for presents on Christmas Eve has its benefits!"

Throughout the year adults should aim to be active daily. Over a week activity should add up to at least 2.5 hours of moderate intensity activity in bouts of 10 minutes or more. One way to achieve this is to do 30 minutes on at least five days a week.

More information: For tips on how to have a heart healthy Christmas visit bhf.org.uk/healthychristmas

The research, Effects of Moderate Exercise on VLDL1 and Intralipid Kinetics in Overweight/Obese Middle-Aged Men, by Iqbal Al-Shayji, Muriel Caslake and Jason Gill is published in the *American Journal of Physiology Endocrinology and Metabolism*. [doi:10.1152/ajpendo.00498.2011](https://doi.org/10.1152/ajpendo.00498.2011)

Provided by University of Glasgow

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