

Daily steps add up for midlife women's health

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Moving 6,000 or more steps a day—no matter how—adds up to a healthier life for midlife women. That level of physical activity decreases the risk of diabetes and metabolic syndrome (a diabetes precursor and a risk for cardiovascular disease), showed a study published online this month in *Menopause*, the journal of the North American Menopause Society.

Although other studies have shown the value of structured exercise in lowering [health risks](#) such as diabetes, [high blood pressure](#), and heart disease, this study has shown that habitual physical activity—whether it comes from exercising or just activities of daily living—has the power to improve women's health.

In Passo Fundo, Brazil, 292 women who were 45 to 72 years old wore pedometers and recorded their daily steps. They also had [health checks](#) such as cholesterol and blood sugar and waist and hip measurement (to gauge abdominal obesity, which is a risk for diabetes and cardiovascular disease). Women who took 6,000 or more steps per day were considered active and those who took fewer inactive.

The active women were much less likely than the inactive ones to be obese and have [metabolic syndrome](#) or frank diabetes, whether or not they had gone through menopause—when these risks usually go up—and whether or not they were using hormone therapy.

For midlife women, it looks like the journey to health begins with 6,000 steps!

More information: The study, "Association between habitual physical activity and lower cardiovascular risk in premenopausal, perimenopausal, and postmenopausal women: a population-based study," by Veronica Colpani, PT, Karen Oppermann, MD, PhD, and Poli Mara Spritzer, MD, PhD, was supported by a grant from

Conselho Nacional de Desenvolvimento Científico e Tecnológico and will be published in the May issue of *Menopause*.

Provided by The North American Menopause Society

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