

A Sedentary Lifestyle Comes with Major Health Risks

As we continue to weather this winter season, and as outdoor activities are few and far between, health care professionals want to remind you to keep moving, despite the season. According to a large-scale [study](#) published in the Journal of the American Medical Association (JAMA), inactivity can be worse for you than smoking, diabetes or having heart disease.

Researchers studied more than 122,000 patients who underwent treadmill training over a 23 year span. The data showed that those who lived sedentary lifestyles had an exponentially higher risk of death than their more active peers.

Dr. Darrel Gumm is an interventional cardiologist for OSF HealthCare Cardiovascular Institute.

“I think it’s a real wakeup call,” said Dr. Gumm of the study. He continued, “We shouldn’t be so shocked that exercise is good, because we’ve been saying that for a long time. But now when we compare it to doing nothing. Those people who don’t do anything more than get up and walk around during the day, that are truly sedentary, it is up to a 500% difference, and we’re talking about cardiovascular death. So it’s really a big deal.”

The data also shows that the benefits of exercise were seen across all ages and in both men and women. Despite this, a majority of Americans aren’t getting enough exercise. Data from the [Centers for Disease Control](#) says only 23% of Americans are adequately active.

“It’s the classic couch potato. Sitting and snacking on some chips and watching TV. Really not doing as much. And many people think, ‘I walk around at work. I’m required to do this and do that,’ but that still isn’t the same as continuous aerobic exercise that would go for 20, 30, 40 minutes. Doing that three to five times a week pays off a huge benefit,” explained Dr. Gumm.

Dr. Gumm adds that there is also strong data to indicate that if people maintain core strength in their 60s and 70s, they will statistically be much more likely to live independently in their 80s and 90s.

He recommends that speaking with your primary care physician about starting an exercise program should be your first step, and to start any exercise program gradually. Dr. Gumm also says following a heart healthy diet will add to the benefits of exercise. But the main message is to get up and get active.

“What’s my bottom line? How do we summarize it all? Get moving! That’s what’s going to pay off.”