

Script – Broadcast – Every Step Counts

INTRO

It's no secret that walking is good for you. In fact, medical experts say it's better than running. Walking improves fitness, reduces pain, eases depression and fatigue, and helps with circulation and posture, and more.

It's especially good for older adults. According to a [study](#) published in the journal *Circulation*, older adults who walk three to four miles a day — 6,000 to 9,000 steps — are 40 to 50% less likely to suffer a heart attack or stroke than those who walk a mile (2,000 steps) a day.

This study focused on cardiovascular disease (CVD) risk and the findings were the result of eight studies using data from 20,000 people in the United States and 42 other countries. Their average age was 63 with 52% being women.

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For years, the targeted goal was 10,000 steps, which originated in the 1960s from a marketing campaign to promote the Tokyo Olympics. While the American Heart Association still recommends 10,000 steps a day, the organization says that just a mile of walking can also provide health benefits.

According to Nancy Dagefoerde, a nurse practitioner with OSF Cardiovascular Institute, for people 60 and older, the more steps taken, the lower their risk for CVD. The study found no connection between steps taken and the risk of CVD in younger adults.

(((SOT)))

Nancy Dagefoerde, a nurse practitioner, OSF Cardiovascular Institute

"Heart health or cardiovascular risk increases as we age. So, if a person is sedentary, they're adding to that risk, and it's also important for balance and movement in general and just overall health and reduction of health problems. That's why it is especially important for older people." (:23)

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If 6,000 steps still seem like a lot, don't worry. Dagefoerde says the important thing is to get started and work your way up gradually.

You can choose between a slow walk and a brisker pace. Dagefoerde says the benefit of walking slowly is it burns more calories and is easier on the joints. Brisk walking helps fight developing heart disease, cancer and dementia.

And if walking isn't your thing, don't sweat it. Dagefoerde recommends other exercises that are just as helpful including water programs, dance classes, chair exercises, using a recumbent bike or try walking in place indoors.

The bottom line is to get moving. Start by having a conversation with your doctor about the best way to begin any type of walking program.