

[IMAGE]

Why Handgrip Strength Matters

By Editorial Staff

Do you have trouble opening pickle jars, holding relatively light items or even turning doorknobs?

Something as simple as handgrip strength could be a great measure of your overall health? In fact, weak handgrip strength – regardless of your age – may be a clue that serious health issues need to be addressed.

First, how is handgrip strength measured? The common method is by squeezing a "dynamometer" with one hand; generally your dominant hand. If the force you can apply for a certain period of time exceeds a certain number of pounds, you've got good grip strength; lower than that and your grip strength is poor. Here's why it matters, according to the latest research.

Writing in *BMJ Open*, researchers suggest, based on their investigation, that people with handgrip strength less than that of healthy people (matched in terms of sex, age and body height, so as not to skew results) have an increased mortality risk. Interestingly, grip strength only needs to be slightly below "normal" for the increased risk to kick in; while grip strength above "normal" does not appear to reduce mortality risk.

The study authors don't suggest people train their handgrip strength to increase their longevity; it's more that poor handgrip strength may be cause for further investigation by a health care professional. So if you struggle to open that proverbial pickle jar or otherwise feel your handgrip strength is low, talk to your doctor.

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