

[IMAGE]

## Exercise: A Life Extender

By Editorial Staff

As we age, most people start to think (voluntarily or involuntarily) about their mortality: *How long will I live? What can I do to stay healthy and live longer?* Sometimes, we ponder these and similar questions to the point of obsession. Why overthink things when one of the best ways to increase longevity is under your control? We're talking about exercise, and an ever-growing body of research suggests it can be a real life saver ... or at least life extender.

The latest case in point: a multi-year study involving more than 115,000 older adults (ages 65-74) that evaluated how participants' adherence to the U.S. Dept. of Health & Human Services' *Physical Activity Guidelines for Americans* impacted mortality. Participants self-reported their leisure time physical activity, and researchers tracked deaths that occurred over the study period. [The physical activity guidelines recommends that adults ages 65 and older participate in, among other activities, two or more days of muscle-strengthening activities (MSA) and 150 minutes or more of moderate-to-vigorous aerobic physical activity (MVPA) or 75 minutes or more of vigorous activity, or an equivalent combination.]

In nearly eight years of follow-up, more weekly MSA episodes (2-4 and 4-6, but not 7-28) was associated with a lower mortality risk compared with fewer than two weekly MSA episodes. More weekly MVPA minutes (10-149, 150-300 and more than 300) were also all associated with a lower mortality risk vs. fewer than 10 weekly minutes. Meeting both guidelines (muscle strengthening and aerobic activity) reduced mortality risk compared to meeting neither guideline.

With the massive baby boomer population rapidly approaching their senior years (by 2030, all 73 million baby boomers will be age 65 or older), keeping older adults healthy is no more important than now. One of the best ways: consistent exercise that meets the physical activity guidelines. Don't wait until it's too late to start exercising! If you can't seem to motivate yourself, ask your doctor for help outlining an exercise strategy you can stick with for the long haul.

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