



## Fact Sheet

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### **Relationship of Walking to Mortality among U.S. Adults with Diabetes**

Millions of Americans are faced with the daily challenges of living with diabetes. A serious and lifelong condition, diabetes can cause an array of devastating and life-threatening complications, such as heart disease, stroke, and kidney failure. For people with diabetes, physical activity has been shown to improve insulin effectiveness, lower blood sugar, and reduce the risk of heart disease. A new study by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) found that brisk walking on a regular basis can also lengthen the lives of people who have diabetes. The following is a summary of the report.

#### **Background**

- More than 17 million Americans are estimated to have diabetes. About one third of them are not aware they have the disease. Most (90-95 percent) have type 2, or adult-onset, diabetes, which is related to obesity and physical inactivity.
- Many people with diabetes suffer from disabling conditions, such as visual impairment, foot ulcers, and irregular heartbeat, that make vigorous physical activity difficult and less feasible than moderate-intensity activities.
- While physical inactivity increases the risk for developing type 2 diabetes, few studies have examined the long-term impact of physical activity among people who already have type 2 diabetes.
- CDC studied 2,896 adults aged 18 years and older with diabetes to determine the long-term impact of physical activity, specifically walking, on mortality from heart disease and all other causes. Researchers followed the study group over an 8-year period.

## Key Study Results

- Walking lengthened the life of people with diabetes regardless of age, sex, race, body mass index, length of time since diagnosis, and presence of complications or functional limitations.
- Among the study group, 62 percent reported doing any leisure-time physical activity; 46 percent reported walking for exercise.
- People with diabetes who walked for exercise at least 2 hours a week lowered their mortality rate from all causes by 39 percent.
- Among adults with diabetes, one death a year may be prevented for every 61 people who walk at least 2 hours per week.
- Risk of death from heart disease could be reduced by 34 percent by walking at least 2 hours per week. One cardiovascular death a year might be preventable for every 145 people persuaded to walk at least 2 hours a week.
- People with diabetes who engage in at least 2 hours of any leisure-time physical activity a week had a 29 percent lowered mortality risk compared with people who are inactive. Walking 3 to 4 hours a week reduced mortality 54 percent.
- While the study found that walking at moderate-intensity levels reduced mortality, no reduction in mortality was associated with more intense levels of walking, indicating that vigorous levels of exercise are not as beneficial for people with type 2 diabetes.

The complete report appears in the June 2003, issue of *Archives of Internal Medicine*.