

DIABETES

Low-intensity physical activity for prevention of diabetes mellitus in old age

“Any type of physical activity (even low-intensity physical activity performed at least once a week) is related to reduced risk of developing diabetes mellitus among individuals aged ≥ 70 years,” says Panayotes Demakakos (University College London, UK), author of a study in *Diabetologia*.

Many individuals aged ≥ 50 years engage mostly in low-intensity physical activity and are unable to meet, or fail to comply with, the official recommendations of 30 min of moderate-intensity physical activity for 5 days a week.

As part of an ongoing epidemiological project to explore the social and psychological causes of diabetes mellitus, Demakakos *et al.* aimed to determine whether small amounts of weekly low-intensity physical activity reduce the risk of developing type 2 diabetes mellitus, and if this association is dose-dependent, in all age groups.

The investigators prospectively followed 7,466 individuals aged ≥ 50 years for a mean duration of 45.3 months.

Age-stratified analysis showed that low-intensity physical activity at least once a week was associated with a reduced risk of type 2 diabetes mellitus in individuals aged ≥ 70 years, but not those aged 50–69 years.

“These findings complement and extend what is already known about the protective effect of physical activity and show the importance of physical activity in diabetes prevention at older ages,” concludes Demakakos.

Linda Koch

Original article Demakakos, P. *et al.* Low-intensity physical activity is associated with reduced risk of incident type 2 diabetes in older adults: evidence from the English Longitudinal Study of Ageing. *Diabetologia* **53**, 1877–1885 (2010)