

# Fighting High Blood Pressure With Fitness

May 21, 2012

---

Regular exercise and physical fitness may significantly lower a person's risk of high blood pressure, even if the individual has a family history of the condition, according to a study published in the journal *Hypertension* and reported by [HealthDay News](#).

For the study, researchers followed almost 6,300 people between ages 20 to 80 for five years. All the study participants were highly fit. A third of the group had at least one parent with high blood pressure (also called hypertension).

Researchers found that participants who displayed high levels of fitness had a 42 percent lower risk of developing high blood pressure, regardless of family history. Moderately fit people had a 26 percent lower risk. And among fit people, having a family history of hypertension increased the risk for the condition by only 16 percent.

In contrast, people with who did not regularly exercise and had a family history of hypertension had a 70 percent higher risk for high blood pressure.

"The results of this study send a very practical message, which is that even a very realistic, moderate amount of exercise—which we define as brisk walking for 150 minutes per week—can provide a huge health benefit, particularly to people predisposed to hypertension because of their family history," study author Robin Shook said in an American Heart Association statement.

The American Heart Association recommends at least 30 minutes of moderately intense physical activity, such as brisk walking, five days a week.

"The correlations between fitness levels, parental history and risk are impossible to ignore," Shook said. "This awareness can serve the clinician and the patient as they work together to find effective and reasonable ways to avoid the diseases that have affected their family members, in some cases for generations."