Latinos Who Walk More Have Lower Risk for Diabetes

Daily brisk walks decreased the risk for type 2 diabetes.

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A new study found that increased daily walking could lower the risk for type 2 diabetes in Latino adults. Nearly 10% of the U.S. population—26 million individuals—is affected by diabetes; another 91.8 million have prediabetes.

For this study, published in the International Journal of Behavioral Nutrition and Physical Activity, researchers analyzed the number of daily steps taken by over 6,600 Latino adults ages 18 to 74; the average age was 39 years. On average, participants walked 8,154 steps per day; 12 minutes per day were spent walking at a brisk pace or faster (more than 100 steps per minute).

Researchers found that a greater amount of brisk walking correlated with a lower risk for type 2 diabetes. Adults who spent at least 17 minutes per day walking briskly had a 31% lower risk for type 2 diabetes. What's more, those already at high risk for diabetes, such as people with prediabetes and people with obesity, experienced the most risk reduction by ramping up their daily step count.

Carmen Cuthbertson, PhD, the study's lead author, said she and her coauthors focused on steps per day because they are both easy to understand and to track because most smartphones have built-in activity trackers.

"Many activity trackers nudge you upon reaching 10,000 steps per day. At that level of stepping, we estimated a 13% lower risk of diabetes," Cuthbertson said in a UNC-Chapel Hill news release. "We also found that walking at a brisk walk pace or faster was especially beneficial for lowering the risk of diabetes. Our message is that people should take as many steps as possible throughout the day at any walk pace, trying to work in a brisk walk for part of the day to gain the greatest benefit."

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