

# Press release: Focus on brisk walking, not just 10,000 steps, say health experts

With an estimated 3 million middle-aged adults physically inactive across the country,[1],[2] Public Health England (PHE) and the Royal College of General Practitioners (RCGP) are encouraging adults to incorporate brisk walking into their days as a way to improve their general health and wellbeing.

As part of the push to get adults doing more moderate intensity physical activity each day, health experts are encouraging people to increase the intensity of their walking, rather than just focus on the distance or number of steps.

Moderate intensity physical activity means getting the heart rate up and breathing faster. Just 10 minutes of brisk walking a day is an easy way for adults to introduce more moderate intensity physical activity into their day and reduce their risk of early death by up to 15%.[3]

To help adults do this, PHE's 'Active 10' app has been created and it is the only app of its kind that combines intensity and time, rather than just distance.

Taking a 10 minute brisk walk each day can help build up towards the UK Chief Medical Officers' (CMO) recommendation of at least 150 minutes per week of moderate to vigorous physical activity. This has been linked to health benefits including a [lowered risk of type 2 diabetes, cardiovascular disease and some cancers.](#)

A new survey by PHE looking at people's perceptions of physical activity found that:[4]

- many adults struggle to fit in exercise. Not having enough time (31%) was the main reason cited, followed by not feeling motivated (27%) and being too tired (25%)
- half of these adults (50%) think more than 240 minutes of exercise per week is required to see general health benefits, nearly double the recommended guidance of at least 150 minutes – and 1 in 7 (15%) think that more than 420 minutes per week is required (an hour per day)
- nearly nine in 10 (87%) say they walk more than 10 minutes per day, however, this drops to just over half (54%) who say they walk briskly for this amount of time

The current physical inactivity crisis also has a societal impact. In adults, physical inactivity contributes to 1 in 6 deaths in the UK[5] and costs the NHS over £0.5 billion per year.[6]

Professor Paul Cosford, Medical Director at PHE, said:

Managing all the pressures of everyday life can mean that exercise takes a back seat, but building a brisk walk into your daily routine is a simple way to get more active.

The Active 10 app gives you a clear picture of the intensity of your walk. Taking a brisk 10 minute walk each day will get your heart pumping, improve your mood and lower the risk of serious health issues like type 2 diabetes, heart disease and some cancers.

Professor Sir Muir Gray, Clinical Adviser for the Active 10 app and One You campaign, said:

The additional health benefits that can be achieved by walking at a brisk pace for periods of 10 minutes or more – as opposed to totting up a certain number of steps throughout the day – are undeniable.

I'd advise anyone of any age and activity level to start to fit in at least one 10 minute brisk walk a day as a simple way to get more active, especially those who may be taking medication for a long term health condition – you will receive even more benefits from walking briskly for 10 minutes or more a day.

Dr Zoe Williams, GP and RCGP Clinical Champion for Physical Activity and Lifestyle, said:

GPs want their patients to be healthy and enjoy life, and there are simple ways in which we can all improve our health. I often encourage my patients to take up more daily physical activity, which can start with just a 10 minute brisk walk – it would be great to see more people doing this across the country.

Moving more is an important step forward to improving the health of the nation and looking after our NHS, which is often overburdened by lifestyle related illness.

Professor Helen Stokes-Lampard, Chair of the Royal College of GPs, said:

Small, often simple, lifestyle changes can have a really positive

impact on our health and wellbeing, so anything that encourages patients to live better, and move more is a good thing. There has been a substantial rise in the number of patients who have developed multiple, long-term conditions in recent years, and many of these, including type 2 diabetes and heart disease, are linked to not being active enough.

While GPs and our teams will always encourage patients to make lifestyle changes that could potentially benefit their long-term health and wellbeing, the responsibility cannot solely lie with healthcare professionals, and patients must also play their part. The RCGP is really pleased to have endorsed the Active 10 app, which empowers patients to make basic lifestyle changes around diet and exercise, such as taking a brisk walk for 10 minutes a day and suggests ways for patients to easily incorporate these into their lives.

Already 600,000 people have downloaded the 'Active 10' app. In a single month, approximately 2 million 'Active 10s' (10-minute brisk walks) were completed by Active 10 users.

'Active 10' is supported by the RCGP and was developed by PHE in collaboration with The University of Sheffield, Sheffield Hallam University and the National Centre for Sport and Exercise Medicine.

Join the 600,000 people who have downloaded 'Active 10' and make the first step towards a healthier you. Search 'Active 10' to download the app for free.

## Background

1. [ONS Mid year Population estimates, mid-2016](#)
2. Public Health England, [Active Lives, 2016 to 2017](#)
3. 10 minutes brisk walking each day in mid-life for [health benefits and towards achieving physical activity recommendations.](#)
4. YouGov surveyed 3007 adults in England aged 40 to 60. Fieldwork was undertaken online between 10 and 16 May 2018. The figures have been weighted and are representative of all English adults (aged 40 to 60).
5. Lee I-M, and others. (2012) Effect of physical inactivity on major non-communicable diseases worldwide: an analysis of burden of disease and life expectancy. *The Lancet* 380: 219 to 229.
6. PHE, [Physical inactivity: economic costs to NHS clinical commissioning groups, 2016.](#)
7. [Public Health England](#) exists to protect and improve the nation's health and wellbeing and reduce health inequalities. We do this through world-leading science, knowledge and intelligence, advocacy, partnerships and providing specialist public health services. We are an executive agency of the Department of Health and Social Care, and a distinct organisation with operational autonomy. We provide government, local government, the

NHS, Parliament, industry and the public with evidence-based professional, scientific expertise and support. Follow us on Twitter: [@PHE\\_uk](#) and Facebook: [www.facebook.com/PublicHealthEngland](http://www.facebook.com/PublicHealthEngland).

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