

Walking at this speed can significantly cut your risk for Type 2 diabetes, researchers say

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Walking at a certain speed can significantly lower your risk of Type 2 diabetes, a new study found.

There's a reason why walking is a favorite among health experts. It has been shown time and time again to have numerous physical and mental health benefits — from boosting metabolism to improving blood pressure and maintaining mobility and many more.

Walking is accessible, low-impact and easy to work into your everyday routine. It's also generally very safe for most people and has a lower risk of injuries or overdoing it compared to other forms of more intense exercise.

There's also strong evidence that walking can lower your risk of heart disease, certain cancers, and Type 2 diabetes. Type 2 diabetes is one of the most prevalent and expensive chronic diseases in the United States.

38 million or 1 in 10 Americans have diabetes, and approximately 90 to 95% of them have Type 2 diabetes, according to the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. 97 million Americans have prediabetes — that's about 30% of the U.S. population.

Physical activity is an important part of managing and preventing diabetes. Studies have shown that walking after meals can help keep your blood sugar steady, TODAY.com previously reported, and working walking into your daily routine can help with managing weight.

That's why the American Diabetes Association recommends walking 10,000 steps every day or for at least 30 minutes daily. But it begs the question, does speed matter? How fast do you need to walk in order to lower your risk of type 2 diabetes? Does walking faster make a difference?

Research has shown that more time spent walking per day is associated with a lower diabetes risk, and it's known that walking at a faster pace can help improve those benefits, NBC News reported. However, it wasn't previously clear what speed people should aim for, up until now.

Finally, researchers have come up with an ideal walking pace for lowering diabetes risk. A new analysis shows that walking at least 2.5 miles per hour can significantly cut your risk of Type 2 diabetes.

The findings, published this week in the British Journal of Sports Medicine, show that the risk of Type 2 diabetes decreased significantly at a walking speed of 4 km/h or 2.5 mph and above.

In the study, walking speeds were defined as the following:

- Easy or casual walking: less than 2 mph
- Average or normal walking: 2 to 3 mph
- Fairly brisk walking: 3 to 4 mph
- Brisk or striding walking: greater than 4 mph

Researchers analyzed 10 studies conducted between 1999 and 2022 exploring the association between walking speed and the risk of developing Type 2 diabetes among adults. The studies included participants from the U.S., Japan, and the United Kingdom.

The findings showed that once people reach the minimum speed of 2.5 mph, their Type 2 diabetes risk continues to drop as they increase their walking speed. Specifically, researchers found that every 0.6 mph increase in pace was associated with a 9% lower risk

of Type 2 diabetes.

Compared with people who walked slower or at a casual speed, those who walked at a normal speed of 2–3 mph had a 15% lower risk of Type 2 diabetes. Walking at a fairly brisk pace of 3–4 mph was associated with a 24% lower risk of Type 2 diabetes, while walking at a brisk or striding pace (over 4 mph) was associated with a 39% reduced risk of Type 2 diabetes.

In short, the faster you walk, the lower your diabetes risk.

"While current strategies to increase walking time and to increase steps per day may be a good approach to reduce the risk of Type 2 diabetes, it's also better to encourage people to walk at faster speeds," the study's lead author, Ahmad Jayedi, a nutrition researcher at Semnan University of Medical Sciences in Iran, told NBC News.

Brisk walking can help reduce body fat, which in turn lowers the risk of Type 2 diabetes. But Jayedi told NBC News that said reductions in body fat didn't fully explain the lower diabetes risk among participants in his analysis.

Walking at faster speeds can help lower insulin resistance, Jayedi said. Insulin resistance occurs when the body develops a tolerance to insulin, a hormone made by the pancreas that's essential for life and regulating blood glucose (sugar) levels, [per the Cleveland Clinic](#).

According to the [Physical Activity Guidelines for Americans](#), adults should get at least 150 minutes of moderate-intensity aerobic activity and 2 days of muscle strengthening activity per week, or at least 75 minutes of vigorous-intensity physical activity per week. Aerobic activity can include brisk walking, riding a bike, jogging, or going on the elliptical — ideally it should be spread throughout the week.

The right walking speed for you may depend on several factors including your age, fitness level, health status and abilities, Amanda Paluch, an epidemiologist and kinesiologist at the University of Massachusetts Amherst, told NBC News.

People can still reap the benefits of walking if it's slower than 2.5 mph, and may still be able to reduce their risk of Type 2 diabetes compared to no walking at all, NBC News reported.

Jochen Kressler, a professor of exercise and nutritional sciences at San Diego State University, told NBC News that the analysis didn't look at whether slow walking reduced the risk of diabetes compared to not walking.

Walking more slowly is still better than nothing at all, according to experts.