

Walk Away from Heart Disease

RESEARCH SHOWS THAT WALKING MORE LEADS TO FEWER HEART ATTACKS FOR PEOPLE WITH PREDIABETES.

BY DENISE DAMRON

TAKING 2,000 EXTRA STEPS A DAY, ROUGHLY equivalent to 20 minutes of moderately-paced walking, could help people with prediabetes cut their risk of heart attack and stroke by 10 percent, according to a recent study from the University of Leicester in the UK. Those who add another 2,000 steps further could reduce their risk by another 8 percent.

For example, those in the study who added 20 minutes of walking per day to their existing walking routine reduced their risk by 10 percent. But when they added 40 minutes per day to their existing routine, they lowered their risk by 18 percent.

Cardiovascular disease is the most harmful consequence of prediabetes and the primary cause of death in those with type 2 diabetes. An estimated 30 million Americans have prediabetes, a condition where blood glucose is above normal levels but not high enough to diagnose as diabetes, according to Leann Olansky, MD, a staff physician in the Department of Endocrinology, Diabetes and Metabolism at the Cleveland Clinic, who was not involved in the study.

The study, published in the March 22, 2014 issue of *The Lancet*, focused on 9,306 adults in 40 countries who had

prediabetes and at least one cardiovascular risk factor. According to Dr. Olansky, while previous studies have shown that diabetes and moderate exercise could slow the progression of prediabetes to diabetes, this is the first study to quantify the extent to which a change in walking behavior can modify the risk of heart disease, stroke and cardiovascular-related deaths.

“Many people with prediabetes will go on to develop diabetes. What this study showed is that at this stage the process may still be reversible, especially with changes in lifestyle,” Dr. Olansky says. ■■

POINT OF CONTACT

To learn more about prediabetes, visit the American Diabetes Association at diabetes.org.