

**Editorial Routine House Work May Improve Heart Health**

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Editor

House work may be as good as formal exercise when it comes in reducing the risk for heart attack and stroke, Swedish researchers say.

For people 60 and older, just keeping busy with daily activities can reduce the risk of cardiovascular problems by nearly 30 percent and even prolong life, they added. Being on your feet and active cuts the time spent sitting around, pointed out lead researcher Elin Ekblom-Bak, of the Swedish School of Sport and Health Sciences and the Karolinska Institute, in Stockholm.

“Sitting is mainly replacing time you spend in daily activity and vice versa,” Ekblom-Bak said. A recent study found long periods of sitting actually resulting to increase the risk for diabetes, cardiovascular disease and death, she noted. “The results of this study showed that activities of daily life are as important as regular intentional exercise for older adults for cardiovascular health and longevity,” she said. But it doesn’t mean formal exercise isn’t important. “We saw that those who exercised regularly and that also had a daily physically active life had the lowest risk of all,” Ekblom-Bak explained.

A time, people spend in exercising, however, is only a small part of the day, which leaves a lot of time for daily activities or sitting, she added. For the new study, researchers collected data on more than 3,800 men and women in Sweden who were born 1937 and 1938. Participants were asked about their lifestyle, which included information on their diet, whether they smoked or drank alcohol, and how physically active they were.

The participants were also asked how often they took part in activities, such as gardening, do-it-yourself projects, car maintenance and blackberry picking over the past year. They were also asked about any exercise they did. To see how heart healthy they were, the researchers examined the participants and took blood samples to assess levels of fat and sugar. They also checked for high levels of blood clotting factor, which is linked to a raised heart attack and stroke risk.

During more than 12 years of follow-up, 476 of the participants died from or experienced a first heart attack or stroke, and 383 died from other various causes. People whose daily activities kept them moving

reduced their risk of a heart attack or stroke by 27 percent and the risk of dying from any causes by 30 percent, compared to people who spent the least amount of time on their feet.

High stress can be associated with increased risk of heart disease.

“The reason for this labor-linked risk is unclear, but might be related to higher stress levels,” Phillips said. In one study, researchers looked at 250 patients who had suffered a first stroke and 250 who had suffered a first heart attack or other type of heart event. They were compared to a control group of 500 healthy people. Stroke and heart patients were more likely to have physically demanding jobs than those in the control group, researchers found. After adjusting for age, sex and a number of lifestyle and health factors, they concluded that having a less physically demanding job was associated with a 20 percent lower risk of a heart event or stroke.

Panagiotakos said the increased risk of stroke and heart events among people with physically demanding jobs may be due to mental stress, while exercise helps reduce stress. He also said people with physically demanding trends to have lower incomes, which might limit their access to health care.

The study suggests that leisure-time exercise might be important to “balanced out” the physical stress encountered in laborious jobs, “This delicate interaction between work and leisure-time activity warrants further research in order to appropriately guide public health,”

In a second study presented at the same meeting, researchers looked at more than 14,000 middle-aged men who did not have heart disease and were followed for about three years on average. The investigators found that physically demanding works was a risk factors for developing coronary heart, disease. They also found that men with physically demanding jobs who also did moderate to high levels of exercise during their leisure time had an even greater risk (more than four fold higher) of developing coronary heart disease.