

6-9 minutes: Daily vigorous exercise for even a short time helps insulate against cognitive decline, study finds

People who spent “even small amounts of time in more vigorous activities — as little as 6 to 9 minutes — compared to sitting, sleeping or gentle activities had higher cognition scores,” said study author John Mitchell, a Medical Research Council doctoral training student at the Institute of Sport, Exercise and Health at University College London, in an email.

Moderate physical activity is typically defined as brisk walking or bicycling or running up and down stairs. Vigorous movement, such as aerobic dancing, jogging, running, swimming and biking up a hill, will boost your heart rate and breathing.

The study, [published \[January 23\] in the Journal of Epidemiology & Community Health](#), found doing just under 10 minutes of moderate to vigorous exertion each day improved study participants’ working memory but had its biggest impact on executive processes such as planning and organization.

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There was bad news as well: Spending more time sleeping, sitting or engaged only in mild movement was linked to a negative impact on the brain. The study found cognition declined 1% to 2% after replacing an equivalent portion of moderate to vigorous physical activity with eight minutes of sedentary behavior, six minutes of light intensity or seven minutes of sleep.

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