

Ten Health Benefits of Walking in the Winter

Source: [SAGA](#)

It may be cold outside but that's no excuse to stay indoors. Recent studies have uncovered plenty of health benefits to go for a winter walk.

It will boost your brain:

The fitter your legs, the fitter your mind. That's according to a brand new UK study, which found that increased levels of walking, targeted to improve long-term leg power, may have a positive impact on mental ageing.

Scientists at King's College London studied 324 healthy female twins over a decade. In general, the twin who had stronger legs at the start of the study had better sustained her powers of cognition and experienced fewer age-related brain changes at the end of the 10-year period

It's better for you than the gym:

Well, that's the conclusion of researchers from the London School of Economics, who claim regular brisk walking is the best exercise for maintaining a healthy weight.

Having analyzed data from the annual Health Survey for England, researchers found that adults who regularly walk briskly for more than 30 minutes tend to have a lower body mass index and smaller waist than those who take part in sports or exercise at the gym. The results were particularly pronounced in the over-50s.

You'll lower your risk of heart disease and Osteoporosis:

Caught a glimpse of winter sun? Get outside for a walk and you'll boost your levels of vitamin D. Obtained primarily through sun exposure, vitamin D is vital for maintaining a healthy heart and bones.

People with the lowest blood levels of the vitamin are twice as likely to die prematurely as those with the highest, according to a recent US study.

It can speed up cancer recovery:

Walking one mile each day at a moderate pace could reduce breast cancer patients' risk of dying from the disease by 40 per cent, while those with prostate cancer could reduce risk of death by almost a third, says research for Macmillan Cancer Support and the Ramblers. What's more, that daily walk can also reduce the impact of some of the side effects of treatment.

You'll live longer:

A brisk 20-minute walk each day could be all you need to significantly reduce your chances of early death, according to a study of 334,000 European adults.

Researchers at the University of Cambridge found that twice as many deaths may be attributable to lack of exercise, compared with the number of deaths caused by obesity. But just a modest increase in physical activity – walking instead of driving to the shops, for example – could be enough to boost your health and longevity.

It's just as good as running:

Need more convincing that you don't need to train for a marathon in order to see a significant boost to your health? A long, brisk walk is as good as a run when it comes to lowering risk of high blood pressure, high cholesterol and diabetes, say US researchers. The reason? It's the total energy used, rather than the intensity of the workout that counts.

It could help beat depression:

Getting out and about on foot is an effective intervention for depression and has a mood-lifting effect similar to more strenuous forms of exercise, according to researchers at the University of Stirling.

It's good for your joints:

If you suffer from joint problems, regular exercise is one of the most important things you can do – as much as the condition will allow, obviously. Walking is ideal because it's low-impact but helps keep your weight in check and prevents stiffness and swelling.

One recent US study found that walking 6,000 steps per day – that's approximately three miles – may protect people with, or at risk of, osteoarthritis of the knee from developing mobility issues, such as difficulty climbing stairs.

You'll make new friends:

Particularly if you take Rover with you. In a Canadian study of 884 adults over the age of 50, those who took their dog for a walk at least four times a week were more likely to report feeling a strong sense of community.

You'll fare even better if you pick up the pace:

Walking a little quicker – or further – can increase the heart-boosting benefits of your stroll, according to a study published in the American Heart Association journal *Circulation*.