

Prostate cancer

Getting fitter can reduce prostate cancer risk by 35%, study finds

Increase in cardiorespiratory levels of 3% annually found to be beneficial, Swedish research suggests



📷 Aerobic exercise such as jogging, cycling or swimming can help protect against prostate cancer, a Swedish study has found. Photograph: Victoria Jones/PA

Andrew Gregory *Health editor*

🐦 @andrewgregory

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Men can reduce their risk of prostate cancer by as much as 35% by doing a little more jogging, cycling or swimming, a study suggests.

Boosting cardiorespiratory fitness by only 3% over the course of a year was linked to a much lower chance of developing the disease. The findings prompted the researchers to encourage men to boost their fitness levels to help cut their prostate cancer risk.

“The more intensive activity, the lower the requirement for duration and frequency,” said the study’s co-author Dr Kate Bolam, of the Swedish School of Sport and **Health** Sciences in Stockholm. “Also, getting more muscles involved will have greater aerobic challenge on the cardiovascular system.

“Hence, activities that involve the lower body ... brisk walking or jogging, hiking, activities that you are barely not able to keep up a conversation while doing ... or that preferably also include both arms and legs are recommended for more significant effect.

“The trick is to challenge your cardiovascular system on a regular basis so it improves to match the requirements placed on it. It could even be line dancing if that gets your heart rate up and you have fun.”

The study did not set out how someone might accomplish a 3% increase in cardiorespiratory fitness. But Bolam said her advice would be “to think about activities that you think are enjoyable that raise your heart rate that you could add to your weekly routine”.

The Swedish study analysed data on the physical activity levels, height and body mass index (BMI) of 57,652 men, along with information on lifestyle and perceived health, and the results of at least two cardiorespiratory fitness tests.

Annual cardiorespiratory fitness measurements were expressed by the amount of oxygen the body uses while exercising as hard as possible. The men were divided into groups depending on this increasing by 3%, remaining stable, or falling by 3% each year.

During an average follow-up period of seven years, researchers found 592 men were diagnosed with prostate cancer. Those whose fitness had improved by 3% annually were 35% less likely to develop cancer compared with those whose fitness had declined.

The findings were published in the British Journal of Sports Medicine.

Simon Grieveson, assistant director of research at Prostate [Cancer](#) UK, who was not involved in the study, said: “This is an interesting piece of research that adds to previous studies showing possible links between exercise and a lower likelihood of getting prostate cancer.

“Regularly keeping fit and eating a balanced diet are good for every man’s general health and wellbeing - however, we don’t know definitively whether physical activity can lower a man’s risk of getting, or dying from, prostate cancer.”

Matt Lambert, the health information and promotion manager at World Cancer Research Fund, said: “It is widely known that having a higher level of cardiorespiratory fitness is important for our health and longevity, but it can also be protective against certain diseases.

“This insightful study adds to the evidence around how risk factors such as fitness may play a role in reducing men’s risk of prostate cancer.”
