



# SMALL STEPS STRONG SHIELD

---

**When it comes to physical activity, small steps provide a strong shield against severe COVID-19 outcomes.**

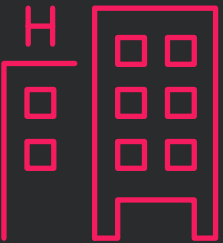
People who exercise are considerably less likely to be admitted to hospital, to require ventilation and are less likely to die from COVID-19 infection, a new Vitality study has found.

*Branding updated in 2023.*

# A world-first study

The first study globally to show the dramatic effects of independently recorded physical activity on COVID-19 outcomes has been published in the *British Journal of Sports Medicine (BJSM)*. The study was produced by Vitality in collaboration with Wits Sport and Health (WISH) – a research group at the University of Witwatersrand in South Africa – and the University of Western Ontario in Canada.

THE RESEARCH SHOWS HIGH ENGAGEMENT IN PHYSICAL ACTIVITY WAS ASSOCIATED WITH A:



34%

lower risk of hospital admission



41%

lower risk of ICU admission



45%

lower risk of requiring ventilation



42%

lower risk of death, compared to those with low levels of activity



The World Health Organization (WHO) recommends that adults do at least 150 minutes per week of moderate-intensity exercise for health benefits and to mitigate health risks.

Those in the high activity group were much less likely than those in the low activity group to be hospitalised, admitted to the ICU, be ventilated, or die from COVID-19. Those in the moderate activity group – below the World Health Organization's recommendation of 150 minutes per week – still saw substantial benefits.





# Physical activity protects even moderate exercisers from COVID-19

Researchers analysed the data of 65 000 Vitality and Discovery Health members who had been infected with COVID-19 and were unvaccinated.

Their independently-recorded exercise data was captured by smart devices, clocked gym attendance and participation in mass events in the two years prior to the COVID-19 lockdown in South Africa, in March 2020.

THE DATA WAS SPLIT INTO THREE CATEGORIES ACCORDING TO THE MEMBER'S LEVEL OF MODERATE-INTENSITY PHYSICAL ACTIVITY PER WEEK:

## LOW ENGAGEMENT

less than

60

minutes



## MODERATE ENGAGEMENT

60 to

149

minutes



## HIGH ENGAGEMENT

more than

150

minutes

## Save lives through exercise

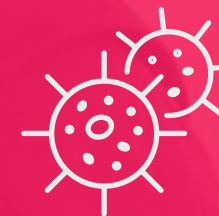
Regular physical activity reduces the incidence of negative outcomes – severe illness and death – in confirmed COVID-19 cases, translating into lives saved.

Exercising at high levels was shown to have a particularly beneficial effect on individuals with a higher likelihood of poor COVID-19 outcomes – those who are elderly, male, or have hypertension or diabetes.

THE BENEFITS OF REGULAR EXERCISE ON GOOD HEALTH HAS BEEN REPEATEDLY SHOWN IN SCIENTIFIC STUDIES. REGULAR EXERCISE:



**Benefits** the immune system by reducing inflammation and mobilising white blood cells to fight off infection



**Enhances** the body's ability to recognise harmful pathogens (which cause disease)



**Improves** psychological stress

NOW WE CAN ADD, REGULAR EXERCISE IMPROVES COVID-19 OUTCOMES.

Find out more about the study [here](#)