

Lifestyle changes in middle age reduce cardiovascular disease

Even small changes in lifestyle can result in big changes in cardiac health, found a new study of 15,708 men and women ages 45 to 64 years. The lifestyle behaviors included eating at least 5 fruits and vegetables daily, exercising at least 2.5 hours per week, maintaining a normal-weight Body Mass Index between 18.5 and 30 kg/m, and not smoking.

At baseline, 1,344 people (8.5%) reported following all 4 healthy lifestyle behaviors. Six years later, 970 (8.4%) individuals had adopted the healthy lifestyle. The people least likely to improve lifestyle behaviors were men, African-Americans, individuals with less than college education, lower income, or a history of hypertension or diabetes.

People who followed 4 healthy behaviors had a 35% reduction in [cardiovascular disease](#) incidence and a 40% reduction in mortality compared to people with less healthy lifestyles. People adopting only 3 healthy habits experienced lower mortality but not fewer cardiovascular disease events over the same period.

"The potential public health benefit from adopting a healthier lifestyle in middle age is substantial," observed lead author Dana E. King, MD, MS. "The current study demonstrated that adopting 4 modest healthy habits considerably lowers the risk of cardiovascular disease and mortality in the relatively short-term 4-year follow up period. The findings emphasize that making the necessary changes to adhere to a healthy lifestyle is extremely worthwhile, and that middle-age is not too late to act."

[SOURCE: The American Journal of Medicine, 20\(7\):598 \(July 2007\)](#)