# Brisk walking may reduce risk of heart abnormalities, research finds



Recent findings from British researchers have highlighted the potential health benefits of walking at a brisk pace, particularly in reducing the risk of heart abnormalities, including atrial fibrillation. This condition, often referred to as a "silent killer," has become increasingly prevalent, with cases doubling over the last three decades and currently exceeding 60 million worldwide.

The research, which tracked over 420,000 adults over a 13-year period, revealed a significant correlation between walking speed and the incidence of heart rhythm abnormalities. Those who walked at a brisk pace—defined as faster than 4 miles per hour—were found to be nearly 50 per cent less likely to develop atrial fibrillation compared to individuals who walked slowly, which is characterised as less than 3 miles per hour. The findings indicated that average walking paces, between 3 and 4 miles per hour, also contributed to a reduction in risk, lowering the likelihood of heart rhythm abnormalities by 35 per cent.

Statistically, the study identified that approximately one in ten participants developed some form of heart rhythm abnormality, including cardiac arrhythmias and slow heart rates. Specifically, atrial fibrillation cases accounted for 23,526 instances, while cardiac arrhythmias reached 19,093, and abnormal slow heart rates included 5,678 individuals.

The researchers noted that women under the age of 60 who maintained a healthy weight and those with pre-existing long-term health conditions benefited most significantly from brisk walking. They concluded that proactive measures to enhance physical activity could play a crucial role in preventing these health issues. However, they acknowledged that the study was observational and did not establish a direct causal link between the walking pace and the reduction in heart abnormalities.

Writing in the journal *Heart*, the researchers detailed their findings, underscoring that individuals maintaining a brisk walking speed could reduce their risk of atrial fibrillation by 46 per cent when compared to a slower pace, while the drop in risk for cardiac arrhythmias was noted at 39 per cent for brisk walkers.

Despite these promising insights, experts warn of the broader public health implications tied to sedentary lifestyles. Recent NHS data indicates a concerning rise in heart attack cases among younger adults, particularly those aged 25-29, where the increase has been reported at 95 per cent over the past decade. Factors contributing to this trend include prolonged periods of sitting during work and transportation, which have been linked to thousands of premature deaths annually due to inactivity, as cited by the World Health Organization.

The WHO attributes around 2 million global deaths each year to physical inactivity, underscoring its position among the leading causes of health-related issues, including cardiovascular disease, obesity, and related complications like type 2 diabetes and certain cancers. Furthermore, data indicates that complications from cardiovascular conditions, such as heart attacks and strokes, have seen an unsettling upswing, marking the highest levels of premature mortality in over a decade.

MailOnline previously highlighted concerns over rising rates of heart attacks in individuals under 40 in England, which have surged despite improvements in medical interventions like stents and statins, and the decline of smoking rates since the 1960s. Additional challenges, including slow ambulance response times and prolonged wait times for tests and treatment, have further exacerbated the situation.

The researchers' findings suggest that walking at a brisk pace could represent a manageable and effective strategy in combatting the rising tide of heart health issues, suggesting a clear avenue for further public health strategies and awareness initiatives.

Source: [Noah Wire Services](https://www.noahwire.com)

## References

* <https://pmc.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/articles/PMC3098122/> - This article supports the general benefits of walking for cardiovascular health, including improvements in cardiovascular fitness and reductions in cardiovascular disease risk, which aligns with the findings on brisk walking and its impact on heart rhythm abnormalities.
* <https://www.massgeneralbrigham.org/en/about/newsroom/articles/benefits-of-walking-for-heart-health> - This source highlights walking as a key strategy for improving cardiovascular health and preventing conditions like hypertension and high cholesterol, reinforcing the idea that walking can significantly benefit heart health.
* <https://www.health.harvard.edu/heart-health/revitalize-your-walking-routine> - This article emphasizes how walking, particularly with interval training, can enhance cardiovascular fitness, which supports the benefits of brisk walking in reducing heart rhythm abnormalities.
* <https://www.heart.org/en/healthy-living/fitness/walking/why-is-walking-the-most-popular-form-of-exercise> - This resource provides insights into the overall benefits of walking, including reducing the risk of serious diseases like heart disease and stroke, highlighting walking's role in public health strategies.
* <https://www.frontiersin.org/journals/public-health/articles/10.3389/fpubh.2021.829367/full> - This study underscores the importance of brisk walking in improving cardiorespiratory fitness and its potential benefits for the elderly, aligning with the observed benefits of brisk walking on heart health.