

which the White House said on Tuesday...  
{ **HEALTH** } IT ALMOST HALVES THE RISK OF DEATH AND CARDIOVASCULAR DISEASE

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# 7,000 is the new 10,000 steps, finds study

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**NEW DELHI:** For decades, fitness trackers and health apps have urged users towards the same daily goal: 10,000 steps. But new research suggests that even taking 7,000 steps a day brought significant reductions in the risk of death and major diseases.

A comprehensive analysis of studies published between January 1, 2014, and February 14, 2025 on Thursday in *The Lancet Public Health* has found that taking 7,000 steps a day almost halved the risk of death and cardiovascular disease, and significantly reduced the likelihood of developing diseases such as type-2 diabetes, dementia and depression.

The study, which analysed data from 57 studies involving more than 160,000 adults across 35 research cohorts, represents the most extensive examination to date of how daily step counts affect health outcomes beyond just mortality.

The researchers particularly stressed on the less daunting nature of the goal. "Although 10,000 steps per day can still be a viable target for those who are more active, 7,000 steps per day is associated with clinically

meaningful improvements in health outcomes and might be a more realistic and achievable target for some," the researchers wrote.

The 10,000-step target has long been accepted as a gold standard for daily activity, appearing on fitness devices and in public health messaging worldwide. But its origins lie not in rigorous scientific research but in a 1960s Japanese marketing campaign.

The number comes from Manpo-kei, a pedometer sold in Japan in 1965 whose name translates to "10,000 steps meter". The company chose this round number partly because the Japanese character for 10,000 resembles a walking person — a clever bit of marketing that has influenced global health recommendations for decades.

Current physical activity guidelines from the World Health Organization (WHO) focus primarily on minutes of moderate-to-vigorous activity rather than step counts, recommending at least 150 minutes of moderate-intensity activity per week, but have not established official step-count targets, citing insufficient evidence.

"Despite growing interest in



**A retired couple walking arm-in-arm in Aalborg, Denmark.**

step-based recommendations, the evidence available during the development of the 2018 Physical Activity Guidelines for Americans and the 2020 WHO Guidelines for Physical Activity and Sedentary Behaviour was considered insufficient to support the development of step count targets," the study's authors noted.

The new research examined eight health outcomes: all-cause mortality, cardiovascular disease, cancer, type 2 diabetes, cognitive outcomes including dementia, mental health, physi-

cal function, and falls.

Compared with taking 2,000 steps per day — considered the lower bound of normal activity for older adults — participants who took 7,000 daily steps had: a 47% lower risk of all-cause mortality, 25% lower risk of cardiovascular disease, 47% lower risk of cardiovascular disease mortality, 37% lower risk of cancer mortality, 14% lower risk of type 2 diabetes, 38% lower risk of dementia and 22% lower risk of depressive symptoms. The likelihood of falls dropped by 28%.

Importantly, the research found that health benefits began accumulating well before reaching either 7,000 or 10,000 steps. Even modest increases showed substantial improvements: people taking 4,000 steps daily had a 36% lower risk of death compared with those taking 2,000 steps.

For most health outcomes, the researchers identified "inflection points" — thresholds where additional steps provided diminishing returns. These typically occurred between 5,000 and 7,000 steps per day.

"For all outcomes, even very low step counts were associated with a risk reduction, and the HR continued to decrease with

each 1,000 increment of step increase," the authors wrote. "Overall, the decrease in risk was attenuated before reaching 7,000 steps per day."

While taking 10,000 steps did provide additional benefits for some outcomes compared with 7,000 steps, the improvements were relatively small. For instance, 10,000 daily steps was associated with a 10% lower risk of all-cause mortality compared with 7,000 steps.

The study revealed interesting variations based on age and the type of device used to measure steps. For all-cause mortality, the relationship was non-linear for younger adults, with benefits levelling off around 5,400 steps per day. For older adults, however, the relationship was linear, meaning continued benefits with each additional step.

The analysis also addressed a key question for public health guidelines: whether different devices — accelerometers versus pedometers — produced similar results. The researchers found that "the magnitude of association was similar at equivalent step counts, with minor differences in model fit for linear versus non-linear models".

New Delhi