- Walking

7,000 daily steps more realistic target to reduce chronic diseases: Study

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Walking approximately 7,000 steps per day can significantly lower the risk of chronic diseases, cognitive decline and even premature death, according to a new global study — an encouraging insight for UAE residents looking to improve their health.



Published by the Lancet Public Health Journal, the study analysed data from over 160,000 adults. It suggested that 7,000 steps may be a more realistic and achievable target than the widely promoted, but unofficial, 10,000-step target — especially for those with low levels of physical activity.

"It is important to not completely dismiss the 10,000 steps. Note that risk continues to decrease beyond 7,000 steps for some outcomes. However, the rate at which it reduces risk starts to decrease," Melody Ding, associate professor at the Sydney School of Public Health, said.

"Therefore, there is a 'return on investment' with every additional 1,000 steps taken," she added.

She emphasised that active individuals who are already hitting the 10,000-step mark should continue with their routine. "However, for those of us who are far from achieving the 10,000 targets, getting to 7,000 steps per day offers almost comparable health benefits for the outcomes we examined," she explained.

This is particularly relevant in the UAE, where sedentary lifestyles and high fast food consumption have contributed to one of the world's highest obesity rates — one of the major causes of chronic diseases. This trend is likely to continue in the coming years.

As reported by Khaleej Times, a Lancet study earlier said that the number of people in the UAE suffering from obesity — both males and females — will see a significant increase over the next twoand-a-half decades. It predicted that overweight and obesity prevalence among adult males in the UAE aged 25-plus will increase from 84 per cent in 2021 to 94 per cent in 2050, the highest globally, along with Kuwait and a few other countries.

Unlike earlier studies that mainly focused on heart health or overall death rates, the Lancet Public Health journal said this is the first study to comprehensively examine how taking more steps per day can reduce the risk of several different health outcomes.

Compared to 2,000 steps per day, the study revealed that walking approximately 7,000 steps can reduce all-cause mortality by 47 per cent, cardiovascular disease by 25 per cent, cancer by six per cent, type 2 diabetes by 14 per cent, dementia by 38 per cent, depression by 22 per cent and falls by 28 per cent.

The study also revealed that even modest step counts of around 2,000 per day are linked to better health compared to very low activity.