- Walking

A short walk prevents dementia

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Walking as little as 3,000 steps a day may help slow the progression of dementia in older people, reports The Guardian. In a 14-year study at Mass General Brigham hospital, researchers tracked nearly 300 adults ages 50 to 90 who were cognitively healthy at the start, using pedometers to monitor activity and PET scans to detect Alzheimer's-related brain changes. They found that 3,000 steps a day appeared to delay cognitive decline by about three years, while 5,000 to 7,000 steps daily delayed it by roughly seven years. Participants with elevated levels of amyloid—a toxic brain protein linked to Alzheimer's—experienced slower buildup of another harmful protein, tau, and a slower rate of cognitive decline if they were more physically active. Those who were sedentary saw faster deterioration. Though the researchers cannot rule out that early Alzheimer's changes might make people less active, lead author Wai-Ying Yau calls the results encouraging. "We're encouraging older people who are at risk of Alzheimer's to consider making small changes to their activity levels," she says, "to build sustained habits that protect or benefit their brain and cognitive health."