

TTIPS VOL. 32/22 – SAFETY REGULAR EXERCISE LOWERS COVID RISK



Introduction

How do I love cycling? Let me count the ways.

I like bicycling because it's fun. I like it because it makes me happy. I like it because I can do it with friends and my family. I like it because I can do it outdoors. I like it because I meet great people who share my enthusiasm for the sport. I like it because it keeps me healthy, head-to-toe. And now I like it because it probably keeps COVID away. Yep, it most likely does. 'Aint that great? Keep reading.

I'm double vaxed and boosted. I'm sure that helps. But early on during in the pandemic I was at work the whole time before there were viable vaccines. Many work colleagues were getting sick all around me, but I never caught it. Donna, also an avid rider, didn't get it either. I speculated many times that I believed vigorous cycling boosted immunity and may have kept COVID at arm's length. Turns out I may have been right. Check out this recent article from [Bicycling.com](https://www.bicycling.com)

Regular Exercise Linked to Lower COVID-19 Risk and Severity, Confirms a New Worldwide Research Review

THE BENEFITS TO DAILY PHYSICAL ACTIVITY JUST KEEP COMING

By Elizabeth Millard / Bicycling.com
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- A new major analysis of available research, representing nearly 2 million adults from 10 countries, says there's a link between regular physical activity and reduced risk of contracting COVID-19, as well as lower severity if you do get it.
- The maximum protective effect occurred at about the recommended level of physical activity, which is 150 minutes of moderate-intensity exercise, 75 minutes of vigorous-intensity exercise, or a blend of the two during the week.
- While the mechanisms behind the protective effects of exercise are still unclear, researchers suspect it's because physical activity improves immune response and can reduce stress.

Throughout the first two years of the coronavirus pandemic, early research, including two studies published in the *British Journal of Sports Medicine*, suggested there might be a link between regular physical activity and reduced risk of becoming infected with the virus, as well as lower severity if you did develop COVID-19. In a new major analysis of available evidence, it turns out those assumptions were correct.

Also published in the *British Journal of Sports Medicine*, the research review pools data from 16 significant studies conducted between November 2019 (when the virus was detected in Wuhan, China) and March 2022, representing nearly 2 million adults from 10 countries. The average age of participants was 53 and the results were nearly evenly split between men and women.

The analysis showed that overall, those who participated in regular physical activity every week had an 11 percent lower risk of infection with SARS-CoV-2, the virus responsible for COVID-19. They also had 36 percent lower risk of hospital admission, 44 percent lower risk of severe COVID-related illness, and 43 percent lower risk of death from the virus than those of the same age who were more sedentary.

The maximum protective effect occurred at about the recommended level of physical activity, which is 150 minutes of moderate-intensity exercise, 75 minutes of vigorous-intensity exercise, or a blend of the two during the week.

“I hope these findings give people another good reason to be physically active,” lead author Antonio Garcia-Hermoso, Ph.D., researcher at the Public University of Navarre in Spain, told *Bicycling*. “Every move counts. It can be done as part of a sport, like running or cycling, but it also adds up through everyday tasks, like cleaning and gardening.”

He added that it’s also important to include muscle-strengthening activities at least two days a week, but even that can be comprised of simple tasks like climbing stairs, doing push ups, or taking a yoga or Pilates class.

In terms of why activity is so beneficial for preventing COVID-19, the mechanism isn’t fully known yet, but Garcia-Hermoso said physical activity has been shown to contribute to a more effective immune response, which provides enhanced protection against infections, including those affecting the respiratory system like COVID-19.

Another boost might come from the way exercise can reduce stress, he added. Ample prior research has associated psychological stress with lowered immunity, in part because stress reduces the number of lymphocytes—the “natural killer” cells that attack invaders—that are circulating in the body.

“The health benefits of regular physical activity and exercise are well documented,” said Garcia-Hermoso. “Regular physical activity elicits a plethora of physiological adaptations that improve health either directly or indirectly. In contrast to the vast majority of drugs, exercise is free of adverse effects. It’s time to consider exercise as medicine. It’s never too late to start being physically active.”

Okay riders, hope that gets you out on your bike more often. See you next week.

Until then,

Make Every Ride Epic,

Darryl