
Pick up running to slow ageing

A study by US researchers suggests that running regularly can slow the effects of ageing.

The Stanford University Medical Center team found that elderly joggers were half as likely to die prematurely from conditions like cancer than non-runners. They also enjoyed a healthier life with fewer disabilities.

The findings in Archives Of Internal Medicine reinforced the importance of regular exercise for older people.

The study tracked 500 runners for more than 20 years, comparing them to a similar group of non-runners, the BBC reported. All were in their 50s at the start of the study.

At the end of 19 years, 34 per cent of the non-runners had died compared to only 15 per cent of the runners.

Though both groups became more disabled with age, the onset of disability started an average of 16 years later for the runners.

At the beginning of the study, the runners ran for about four hours a week on average. After 21 years, their weekly running time had reduced to around 76 minutes but they were still

seeing health benefits from taking regular exercise.

The health gap between the runners and non-runners continued to widen even as the subjects entered their ninth decade of life.

Running not only appeared to slow the rate of heart and artery-related deaths but was also associated with fewer early deaths from cancer, neurological diseases, infections and other causes.

There was also no evidence that runners were

more likely to suffer osteoarthritis or need total knee replacements than non-runners – something scientists have feared.

Professor James Fries, from the University of California at Stanford, who led the team said: “The study has a very pro-exercise message. If you had to pick one thing to make people healthier as they age, it would be aerobic exercise.

“The health benefits of exercise are greater than we thought.”
