Keeping physically active can significantly cut the risk of colon cancer, international research shows.
Scientists analysed data from 413,000 people in 10 European countries, and found physically active people were 22% less likely to develop the disease.
They said an hour a day of vigorous physical activity or two hours of moderate activity would be enough to reduce the risk.
The study appears in Cancer Epidemiology and Biomarkers Prevention.

"If you combine regular physical activity with a good diet you are more likely to maintain a healthy body weight which will also significantly help to reduce your risk of bowel cancer"

Dr Lesley Walker
Cancer Research UK

The study found the risk of tumours on the right side of the colon was reduced by as much as 35% for most active people.
For active people who were not overweight the risk was reduced even further.

Housework a good option

Dr Lesley Walker, of the charity Cancer Research UK, said: "This is a very large study which should remove any doubt about the benefits of exercise in relation to reducing the risk of bowel cancer.

"It is important for people to understand that they can take steps in their daily routine to reduce cancer risk. You don't need to join a gym to get the benefit of exercise.

"If regular brisk walking or going for a run doesn't appeal you can do
some strenuous housework.

"Cleaning windows, vacuuming and scrubbing floors burn off a lot of calories.

"So does gardening or cleaning the car.

"If you combine regular physical activity with a good diet you are more likely to maintain a healthy body weight which will also significantly help to reduce your risk of bowel cancer."

Dr Walker said it was unclear why the benefits of physical activity were particularly pronounced on the right side of the colon.

However, physical activity was known to stimulate waves of muscle contraction down the right side of the colon which accelerates movement of waste and the possible cancer-causing agents in it.

Among the 21,500 cases of colon cancer diagnosed each year in the UK, approximately half are detected on the right-hand side of the colon.

The study was part-funded by Cancer Research UK and the Medical Research Council.

It is part of the European Prospective Investigation into Cancer and Nutrition (EPIC) study.

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Exercise 'slows prostate cancer'

Regular vigorous physical activity could slow the progression of prostate cancer in older men, a study has found.
The findings suggest working up a real sweat may help prevent men over 65 dying from the disease.
But the team from Harvard School of Public Health found men had to work out vigorously for at least three hours a week for it to have a positive effect.

The 14-year study, reported in the Archives of Internal Medicine, focused on data on 47,620 men in the US.

"Regular exercise throughout life has benefits and this could be yet an example where steady and prolonged application is 'money in the bank' later in life"

Chris Hiley
Prostate Cancer Charity

Previous research has suggested more physically active men may be at lower risk of prostate cancer. However, the link has never been shown to be particularly strong. The 47,620 men involved in the latest study were followed from 1986 to 2000. Each was asked to provide information about how much exercise - such as hiking, jogging, cycling, swimming and racket sports - they took.

During 14 years of the study, 2,892 new cases of prostate cancer were diagnosed, including 482 advanced cases.

Advanced cases

The researchers found that older men - aged 65 and over - who did regular, vigorous exercise were at a lower risk - almost 70% - of advanced and fatal cases of the disease.

However, no such association was found in younger men.

The researchers say that more work is needed to determine just how vigorous exercise may benefit prostate cancer patients.

Henry Scowcroft, of the charity Cancer Research UK, said it was not clear whether the study had shown a "cause and effect", or whether men who took more exercise were simply more health conscious.

He said: "This group might be more inclined to report symptoms to their doctor earlier and thus have their disease diagnosed before it becomes advanced.

"Given the well-documented benefits of a healthy lifestyle, we recommend that you take at least 30 minutes of moderate exercise five times a week.
"Having said that, older men should consult with their GP before embarking on any particularly vigorous exercise regime."

Chris Hiley, of the Prostate Cancer Charity, agreed.

She said: "We would caution that men with prostate cancer, many of whom might have other health problems associated with getting older, should seek advice from their GP before suddenly making such a change.

"What is clear is that regular exercise throughout life has benefits and this could be yet another example where steady and prolonged application is 'money in the bank' later in life."