

Brisk walking regime can alleviate stress in menopausal women

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Menopausal women who suffer from stress, anxiety or depression can benefit from undertaking a regular walking routine, new research suggests.

"With the aging population, physical activity represents one way for women to stay mentally healthy. Physical activity can help throughout the menopausal transition and afterwards," Temple University public health researcher Deborah Nelson, the study's lead author, said in a release.

The study is published in the January issue of *Cancer Epidemiology, Biomarkers and Prevention*.

Researchers tracked 380 women from Philadelphia, Pa., recruited between 1996 and 1997, for more than eight years. They were assessed on their levels of physical activity, and for symptoms of stress, anxiety, depression and hot flashes.

The average age of the women was 42, and the group was evenly split between Caucasian and African-American women.

The study revealed that women who were postmenopausal benefited most from walking at a moderate pace — particularly African-American women.

After walking five days a week for an hour and a half at a speed of 6.5 km/h, they reported less stress and better emotional well-being. There was no reduction in hot flashes, the researchers noted.

"You don't have to run 20 miles [32 kilometres] a week to reap the benefits of exercise. If you stick to a moderate-paced walking schedule, it can keep your body mass index down and lower the risk of stress, anxiety and depression," Nelson said.