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THE BEST SPORT FOR A LONGER LIFE? TRY TENNIS!

By Gretchen Reynolds from the New York Times (Sept 6, 2018)

Playing tennis and other sports that are social might add years to your life, according to a new epidemiological study of Danish men and women. The study found that adults who reported frequently participating in tennis or other racket and team sports lived longer than people who were sedentary. But they also lived longer than people who took part in reliably healthy but often solitary activities such as jogging, swimming and cycling. The results raise interesting questions about the role that social interactions might play in augmenting the benefits of exercise. At this point, no one doubts that being physically active improves our health and can extend our longevity. Multiple, recent epidemiological studies have pinpointed links between regular exercise and longer lives in men and women. But whether some activities might be better than others for lengthening life spans remains in dispute. One widely publicized 2017 study of more than 80,000 British men and women found that those who played racket sports tended to outlive those who jogged. For the new study, which was published this week in Mayo Clinic Proceedings, these same researchers decided to widen their inquiry and look at a variety of sports and their associations with life and premature death. The associations between particular activities and life span were more surprising. Cycling was the most popular activity among the Danes in the study, many of whom reported riding for four or more hours every week.

Their pedaling was associated with a lengthier life span, adding an average of 3.7 years to riders' lives, compared to sedentary Danes. Running likewise was associated with an extra 3.2 years of life. But these gains were notably less than for playing tennis, which was linked to 9.7 added years of life, or badminton, which was linked to an extra 6.2 years, or soccer, which added almost 5 years to players' lives. These associations remained unchanged even when the researchers controlled for people's education, socioeconomic status and age. "Raising your heart rate is important" for health, says Dr. James O'Keefe study co-author and the director of preventive cardiology at the Mid America Heart Institute at Saint Luke's Health Center in Kansas City. "But it looks like connecting with other people is, too."



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