

## **Housework may promote health in old age, study suggests**

Household chores might seem a drag, but researchers have suggested tasks like dusting, scrubbing floors and washing the windows might help adults to stay healthy into old age.

Writing in the journal *BMJ Open*, a Singapore-based team of researchers said regular physical activity “improves physical and mental health, mitigates the risks and effects of chronic diseases, and reduces falls, immobility, dependency and mortality among older adults”.

The team randomly recruited adults from the town of Yishun in Singapore, and asked them to complete cognitive function tests as well as activities to assess their physical capabilities, such as standing up from a chair as quickly as they could.

Participants were also quizzed on their levels of physical activity, including the amount of light housework (such as dusting) and heavy housework (such as floor-scrubbing) they did, and were assessed for their risk of having a fall based on measures such as knee extension strength.

The study involved 249 participants aged 21-64 and 240 participants aged 65-90. Most of those who reported doing high levels of heavy or light housework were women.

After taking into account factors including age and sex, the team found cognitive scores and attention scores were 8% and 14% higher respectively for older adults doing high amounts of heavy housework – on average 131 minutes a week – compared with low levels, which appeared to amount to none at all.

Sit-to-stand times were lower for older adults reporting high amounts of heavy housework compared with low amounts, while they were also assessed as being at lower risk of having a fall.

The team also found cognitive scores were 5% higher for older adults who reported high levels of light housework – on average doing 902 minutes a week – and memory scores were also higher, compared with those undertaking low levels of such tasks, averaging 89 minutes a week.

Dr Shiou-Liang Wee, the co-author of the research, from the Singapore Institute of Technology and Geriatric Education and Research Institute said health messaging on staying active should not just be about recreational physical activities.

"Housework is a purposeful activity performed by many older adults. Independent of recreation, [commuting] and other work-related physical activity, heavy housework is linked to sharper memory and better falls protection in older adults," he said.

Gill Livingston, professor of psychiatry of older people at University College London, who was not involved in the work, said the study was interesting but had little meaning as people who are not so well may be expected to do less housework.

"I think the advice would be that housework can be good exercise, which is good for your heart and brain. We cannot draw any conclusions from this study that it is specifically protective," she said.

Charlie Foster, professor of physical activity and public health at the University of Bristol, also urged caution, noting the study relied on self-reported levels of household chores, which may be inaccurate, and did not fully take into account other factors which may influence the results.

### 研究：常做家务的人老了以后身体更健康

家务活也许看似累赘，但是研究人员指出，打扫灰尘、拖地、擦窗等家务活可能有助于人们到老年以后保持身体健康。

研究报告指出，常做体力活动可以“改善身心健康，减轻慢性病的风险和影响，降低老年人跌倒、卧床不起、失去独立生活能力和死亡的几率”。该研究结果由一个新加坡研究团队发表在《英国医学杂志》上。

该团队从新加坡义顺镇随机招募了一组成年人，请他们完成认知功能测试，并通过体力活动来评估他们的体能，比如用最快速度从椅子上站起来。

研究人员还通过问卷调查了参与者的体力活动水平，包括他们做多少轻度家务（比如打扫灰尘）和重度家务（比如拖地），并基于膝关节伸展力等衡量标准对他们跌倒的风险进行了评估。

该研究涵盖了 249 名 21 至 64 岁的参与者和 240 名 65 至 90 岁的参与者。大多数报告称自己做了大量重度或轻度家务的参与者为女性。

在考虑了年龄、性别等因素后，研究团队发现，做大量重度家务（每周平均 131 分钟）的老年人认知功能和注意力得分比很少做家务的老年人分别高出 8% 和 14%。

相比很少做家务的老年人，做大量重度家务的老年人报告的从椅子上站起来的时间更短，与此同时评估显示他们跌倒的风险也更低。

研究团队还发现，报告称做大量轻度家务（每周平均 902 分钟）的老年人认知功能得分比做少量轻度家务（每周平均 89 分钟）的老年人高出 5%，记忆力得分也更高。

该研究的合著者、新加坡科技学院和老年医学教育与研究学院的韦修良（音译）博士表示，关于保持活跃的保健宣传不应该只专注于休闲运动。

他说：“家务活是很多老年人从事的有明确目标的活动。重家务活独立于娱乐、通勤和其他工作相关的体力活动之外，可以增强老年人的记忆力，减少老年人跌倒的风险。”

没有参与该研究的伦敦大学学院老年人精神病学系教授吉尔·利文斯顿表示，这一研究很有趣，但没什么意义，因为身体不太好的人做的家务活也少。

她说：“我认为这一研究给出的建议应该是，干家务是不错的锻炼方式，对心脏和大脑都有益。但是我们无法从这项研究得出结论，认为干家务能起到特别的保护作用。”

布里斯托大学身体活动与公共健康系教授查理·福斯特也劝大家保持谨慎，并指出该研究的家务活数据是参与者自己报告的，可能并不准确，而且该研究也没有充分考虑其他可能影响结果的因素。