

## Is running or walking better for you?

From **Sunday Morning**, 7:45 am on 29 November 2020

We all know the benefits of exercise are enormous — but do we need to run to get the best physical returns, or can we get enough just from walking in the time we have to exercise?

In a recent piece in *New Scientist*, sports engineer Steve Haake pitted running against walking and dispelled a few myths along the way.

He told Jim Mora that the mechanisms for the two exercises are subtly different and that as a species, humans are built for endurance.

“We’re designed for going long distances, hunting for our food, when you find that food what you do is stuff it down your face, you’ll eat as much of it as you can, you put on weight... we’re very good at putting on weight, we’re designed to do that, so that then you can go walking long distances hunting out your next bit of prey, you lose weight while it happens and then you find your next bit of prey and stuff your face with that.”



[Listen to the interview on Sunday Morning with Jim Mora](#)

<https://www.rnz.co.nz/national/programmes/sunday/audio/2018774864/is-running-or-walking-better-for-you>

He says anecdotally, running and walking produce the same amount of injuries as each other, though stories of runners’ injuries are more talked about.

But he says there is also an abundance of evidence that running helps lower the risk of health defects such as cardio-vascular problems, diabetes and stroke, compared with walking.

However, there are caveats.

“If you walk half as fast and twice as long (as a run), you cover the same distance, you’ve done the same amount of energy as running it in half the time... the risk (of those health problems) was the same.

“The key is getting your heart rate up, a brisk walk is as good as a slow run, it just takes longer to get there.”

Professor Steve Haake

So, while you may think walking is better for you than running or vice versa, Haake says it is important to remember that both are a safer option than doing nothing.

“Generally in a country like New Zealand and the UK we’ll have 25 percent of the country being completely inactive, doing less than 30 minutes [of exercise], so that’s our sedentary population which we worry about a lot... we have these problems over here in the UK where people will automatically just get in their cars to drive to the shops, to go and buy the paper, to go to work... and then they’ll sit there for 15 minutes in the car and it just does not do them in any good when they could’ve probably walked in 10, 15, 20 minutes.

“So, those 10, 15 or 20 minutes, if you are sedentary, are the most important 10 minutes of your life, they are likely to save your life... you want to do 150 minutes brisk walking] a week at least (to reduce your chances of disease by 10 percent).”

Reference: Radio NZ