



If you need a boost to hit your health and fitness goals, you might want to consider ditching your partner, in a loving way. A new study shows older couples exercising together are less active overall than those who exercise separately.

Researchers from Nanyang Technological University (NTU) in Singapore crunched the numbers on 240 people aged 54 to 72 years old, using fitness trackers to record data such as daily steps and calories burned for 12 weeks.

“Those who participated with their spouses had lower mean and median step counts and met daily step counts of 10,000 and 15,000 less frequently than those who participated by themselves,” write the researchers in their published paper.

The science isn’t all that clear-cut on this issue. Previous studies have found that exercising with others can make activities more enjoyable, and add accountability and extra motivation to an exercise regime.

With the current research, the team behind it suggests that the lower activity levels for couples exercising together are linked to well-established habits and routines, and people being set in their ways – rather than people taking it easier or cutting activities short.

In other words, setting a goal of 10,000 steps a day is easier for one person than for two: with two people, both need to find the time in the day and the motivation to get the activity on the agenda.

“For these couples, changing daily habits could require a major reshuffling of set habits and routines ingrained in their family life after years of marriage,” says Sapphire Lin, a health scientist at NTU.

“This makes incorporating exercise difficult, and could lead to a demotivating effect.”

We know that the global population continues to get older in general, and it’s also been well established how important exercise is to staying healthy – which especially applies in our later years as the body winds down.

It's clear that our bodies only have a finite lifespan, with physical and mental issues mounting up as we get older, but there's plenty of evidence that keeping active can help slow down some of this decline.

This study offers some interesting insights into the best ways for older adults to stay fit, while also revealing that those who were given personalized feedback from their fitness tracker app ended up being more active.

“Our research suggests that older adults looking to introduce exercise into their lifestyles may find it more effective to focus on changing their own routines rather than attempting to exercise as a couple and seeking to impose changes on their partner,” says Lin.

The research has been published in the International Journal of Human–Computer Interaction.

<https://newspub.live/fitness/want-to-get-more-exercise-maybe-leave-your-spouse-behind/>