Do 10,000 steps matter?

The famous number came from an advert. The real target is lower.

Where 10,000 came from

It was a slogan for a Japanese pedometer in the 1960s. It was never science.

What matters

The first steps count most. Going from 3,000 to 7,000 steps a day does far more for you than going from 10,000 to 14,000.

A big 2025 review found the same: about 7,000 steps a day brings most of the benefit.

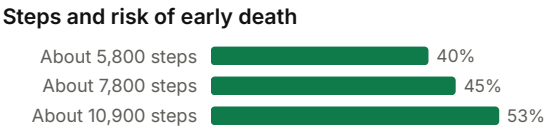


Figure 1: The first extra steps do the most *15 studies, about 47,000 adults. Source: Paluch et al., Lancet Public Health, 2022.*

Your target

- **Under 5,000 a day?** Aim for 7,000.
- **Around 7,000?** Push toward 9,000 to 10,000.
- **Over 10,000?** You are doing well. Go a little harder, not further. See easy cardio.

Easy ways to add steps

Walk during phone calls. Park further away. Walk for ten minutes after lunch and after dinner. Those two walks are about 2,000 steps.

Want a plan? Walk to lose weight builds you up to 30 minutes, five days a week.

SOURCES

1. Paluch AE et al. (2022). Daily steps and all-cause mortality: a meta-analysis of 15 international cohorts. Lancet Public Health.
2. Lee IM et al. (2019). Association of step volume and intensity with all-cause mortality in older women. JAMA Internal Medicine.
3. Tudor-Locke C, Bassett DR Jr (2004). How many steps/day are enough? Preliminary pedometer indices for public health. Sports Medicine.
4. Tudor-Locke C et al. (2011). How many steps/day are enough? For adults. International Journal of Behavioral Nutrition and Physical Activity.
5. Ding D et al. (2025). Daily steps and health outcomes in adults: a systematic review and dose-response meta-analysis. The Lancet Public Health.
6. Stens NA et al. (2023). Relationship of daily step counts to all-cause mortality and cardiovascular events. Journal of the American College of Cardiology.

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