

You don't have to be an Olympian to add years to your life

By ACSH Staff — December 17, 2012

Olympic athletes tend to live about 2.8 years longer than the general population, [according to a study](#) [1] conducted at the University of Melbourne in Australia.

Dr. David Studdert and colleagues examined the records of 15,000 Olympians from nine countries who medaled in the Olympic games between 1896 and 2010 and found that medalists in eight of them had a significant survival advantage compared to controls. They concluded that the advantages may be explained by genetic factors, physical activity levels, a healthy lifestyle or the wealth and status that come with international sporting glory.

However, a further study conducted at Leiden University Medical Center in the Netherlands, looking at athletes who participated in the games between 1896 and 1936, found that contact sports actually had the [opposite effect](#) [2], increasing the risk of death by 11 percent. This number increased to 16 percent when the sport had a very high level of physical contact. And although they did note that there may be a slight advantage in longevity for athletes, there was some good news for the rest of us: The upper threshold of benefit was around 300 minutes of exercise per week. And really, they say the take home message is that similar health benefits and longevity could be achieved by all of us through regular physical activity.

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[1] <http://www.medpagetoday.com/Orthopedics/SportsMedicine/36455>

[2] <http://www.acsh.org/take-good-care-of-your-brain-while-at-play/>