Introduction

What our body says about our future

< 0.8 m/s	10 s	7,000
walking speed: below this threshold, the risk rises markedly	on one leg: a simple, revealing test	steps a day: beyond this, the benefit levels off after 60

After 60, a few simple movements reveal the state of your physical reserves. They are not predictions of lifespan, but markers, observed in large groups of people, that anyone can check at home.

Walking speed is a well-documented indicator of health. In people aged 60 and over, a speed below about 0.8 m/s is associated with a higher risk of death. This threshold remains a statistical indicator, not an individual diagnosis.[1]

Grip strength reflects overall muscle strength; a weak grip goes hand in hand with an increased risk of death and cardiovascular events.[2]

Getting up from the floor without any support engages the legs, coordination and balance; it reveals strength, mobility and coordination.[3]

Standing on one leg for ten seconds: balance is another indicator. In a study of people aged 51 to 75, being unable to stand on one leg for ten seconds was associated with higher mortality over the following seven years.[4]

Activity spread across the day: an hour of sport does not fully make up for long periods of sitting. Gardening, getting up often and walking to the shops all count, and in people over 60, the benefit for mortality levels off at around 7,000 steps a day.[5]

Social ties: isolation and loneliness are associated with excess mortality comparable to that of recognised risk factors such as smoking.[6]

These results are statistical associations, not individual verdicts. Walking, strength, balance and social ties can be maintained at any age. If you have trouble with one of these tests, your doctor can look for the cause.

This book shows how diet, combined with physical activity, can help you preserve these abilities, starting today.

Notes

1 S. Studenski *et al.*, “Gait speed and survival in older adults”, *JAMA*, 2011, 305(1), pp. 50-58 (34,485 participants aged 65 and over, 9 cohorts).

2 D. P. Leong *et al.*, “Prognostic value of grip strength: findings from the Prospective Urban Rural Epidemiology (PURE) study”, *Lancet*, 2015, 386(9990), pp. 266-273.

3 L. B. B. Brito *et al.*, “Ability to sit and rise from the floor as a predictor of all-cause mortality”, *Eur J Prev Cardiol*, 2014, 21(7), pp. 892-898 (adults aged 51 to 80).

4 C. G. Araújo *et al.*, “Successful 10-second one-legged stance performance predicts survival in middle-aged and older individuals”, *Br J Sports Med*, 2022, 56(17), pp. 975-980.

5 A. E. Paluch *et al.*, “Daily steps and all-cause mortality: a meta-analysis of 15 international cohorts”, *Lancet Public Health*, 2022, 7(3), pp. e219-e228; A. Biswas *et al.*, “Sedentary time and its association with risk for disease incidence, mortality, and hospitalization in adults: a systematic review and meta-analysis”, *Ann Intern Med*, 2015, 162(2), pp. 123-132.

6 J. Holt-Lunstad, T. B. Smith, J. B. Layton, “Social relationships and mortality risk: a meta-analytic review”, *PLoS Med*, 2010, 7(7), e1000316; J. Holt-Lunstad *et al.*, “Loneliness and social isolation as risk factors for mortality: a meta-analytic review”, *Perspect Psychol Sci*, 2015, 10(2), pp. 227-237.

