

Exercise halts cognitive decline in elders

[Health India]: Washington, Dec 28 : A 10-year study of elderly men published in the latest issue of the journal 'Neurology' has revealed that more intense physical activity may help people maintain their cognitive skills as they age.

The study reviewed the data of 295 men, born between 1900 and 1920, from the Finland, Italy and Netherlands Elderly (FINE) Study. The researchers measured the duration and intensity of physical activities such as walking, bicycling, gardening, farming, sports, odd jobs, and hobbies. The study showed that over 10 years the cognitive decline in men who had reduced their daily physical activity by an hour or more was 2.6 times greater than the decline in men who maintained their activity.

Men who performed their daily physical activity with a lower intensity 10 years later had a 3.6 times stronger decline than men who maintained the intensity level.

Men who engaged in activities of the lowest intensity had up to 3.5 times greater decline than men who participated in activities with a higher intensity. There was no decline among those who increased the duration or intensity of their activities.

In fact, activities of medium-to-low intensity, such as walking three miles per day, was associated with less cognitive decline than the lowest-intensity activity like walking less than three miles per day.

"Our study suggests that being physically active in old age could keep the brain fit. The small number of healthy participants in the FINE study is a disadvantage but the study's length is an advantage, and the results were consistent and significant," said Boukje M. Van Gelder, lead author and researcher at the National Institute for Public Health and the Environment in Bilthoven, the Netherlands. (ANI)