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Issue
04

# Breathless on the stairs? Don't blame age.

Four useful things to know this week.

02 · 11 · 2026

English

## Breathless on the Stairs? Ask About a Breathing Test

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New research

# Breathless on the stairs? Nine in ten with COPD were never told why

### Breathless on the Stairs? Ask About a Breathing Test

- PURE study · 1,19,252 adults aged 35–70 · 25 countries including India
- About 1 in 10 had narrowed airways (COPD) on a simple breathing test
- Nearly 9 in 10 of them had never been diagnosed
- Cough or breathlessness for weeks? Ask your doctor about spirometry

Families often blame age or weight when someone stops halfway up the stairs to catch their breath.

The PURE study in Lancet Global Health, October 2026, gave a simple breathing test called spirometry to 1,19,252 adults aged 35 to 70 in 25 countries including India, and about 1 in 10 had narrowed airways, which is COPD.

Nearly 9 in 10 of them had never been diagnosed, yet they still faced a higher risk of death and of chest and heart problems, and the missed ones were often younger, with few symptoms, and many had never smoked.

**Do this:** if cough, phlegm or breathlessness has lasted for weeks, do not blame age, and ask your doctor about a breathing test.

Source — Lancet Glob Health 2026 (online 2-Oct-2026):104055, PURE investigators, McMaster University, Canada

Breakthrough

# Diabetes tablets stopped in 46 out of 100 people, with sugar still in control

### Nearly Half Stopped Their Diabetes Tablets, Under Supervision

- DiRECT trial · Lancet 2018 · 306 adults, diabetes within the last 6 years
- Remission at 12 months: 46% vs 4% on usual care
- Weight loss 10 kg vs 1 kg
- Remission is not a cure · never stop your own tablets

Many people with type 2 diabetes are told it is a lifelong sentence, so a Scottish trial asked whether recent diabetes could go into remission.

The DiRECT trial, published in the Lancet in 2018 by the universities of Glasgow and Newcastle, studied 306 adults with diabetes of under six years, none on insulin, whose tablets were stopped before a doctor-supervised low-calorie diet for a few months and a slow return to normal food.

At 12 months, 46% were in remission against 4% with usual care, and they lost about 10 kg against 1 kg.

**Be careful:** remission is not a permanent cure, it all happened under supervision, and you should never stop your own tablets.

**Do this:** if your diabetes is new, speak to your doctor about weight loss today.

Source — Lancet 2018;391(10120):541-551, University of Glasgow and Newcastle University

Everyday health

# Thirty minutes a week of muscle work, not a day, is enough

### Thirty Minutes a Week of Muscle Work Is Enough

- 16 long-term studies pooled · adults 18 and over
- 10–17% lower risk of death, heart disease, diabetes and cancer
- Best benefit at 30–60 minutes a WEEK, not a day
- No gym needed — squats, wall push-ups, stairs

Everybody talks about walking, but hardly anyone talks about strengthening the muscles.

A 2022 analysis in the British Journal of Sports Medicine from Tohoku University pooled 16 long-term studies, and adults who did muscle-strengthening exercise had a 10 to 17 percent lower risk of death, heart disease, diabetes and cancer, on top of walking or running.

The surprise is that the benefit was greatest at just 30 to 60 minutes a week, and doing more than an hour added little.

**Honest note:** this is observational data, a strong signal and not a guarantee. **Do this:** two 15-minute sessions a week of squats, wall push-ups or stairs, and ask your doctor first if you have a heart or joint problem.

Source — Br J Sports Med 2022;56(13):755-763, Tohoku University Graduate School of Medicine, Sendai

Myth vs fact

# Does sugar make children wild? The sweets did not, our eyes did

### Did the Sweets Make Him Wild?

- MYTH — Sugar makes children hyperactive
- FACT — 23 double-blind trials found no effect on behaviour
- FACT — Mothers told 'he had sugar' rated sons wilder, though none had
- FACT — Sugar still harms teeth and weight

**Myth —** Sugar makes children hyperactive.

**Fact —** Twenty-three double-blind trials found no effect of sugar on children's behaviour.

In almost every home you will hear that a child is jumping around because he has had sweets.

A 1995 analysis in JAMA from Vanderbilt University looked at 23 trials in which children secretly got either sugar or a sugar-free drink, and found no difference in behaviour or learning.

In another study, mothers were told their sons had eaten a lot of sugar, though every boy had the sugar-free drink, and they still rated their sons as wilder.

**The truth:** the party mood, tiredness and our own expectation make children seem wilder. **Still:** sugar harms teeth and adds weight, so keep it low.

Source — JAMA 1995;274(20):1617-1621, Vanderbilt University, Nashville

Words for this issue

## सर्वे भवन्तु सुखिनः सर्वे सन्तु निरामयाः

May everyone be happy; may everyone be free from illness.

— Traditional prayer for the wellbeing of all

**A light moment**

Patient: Doctor, I have started muscle exercises, just 15 minutes, twice a week.
Doctor: Wonderful! What do you do?
Patient: Fifteen minutes of carrying the sabzi bags up to the third floor, and I rest the other 6 days!

Breath checked, a few squats, sweets in moderation;
small steps, taken early, spare you a long trouble.

**Pass it on**
**If this could help someone, forward it.**

The information in this issue is for general health awareness. It is not a substitute for your doctor's advice. Before starting any medicine, test or treatment, please see your doctor.