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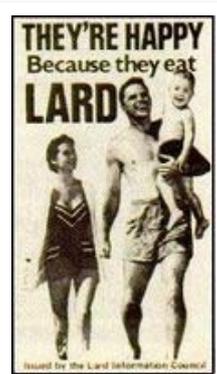
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Cycling News

Couch potatoes rejoice, biking is bad for you!

Well, that's a conclusion some will draw from a new Spanish study that attempts to demonstrate that "strenuous exercise" on mountain bikes "may induce sub-clinical myocardial injury." In other words, minor heart attacks. But, don't slob out just yet, the most current medical advice now states you must exercise hard to gain health benefits.



In a paper for the September 26th edition of US-based Journal of Sports Medicine and Physical Fitness, four researchers from the University of Granada, Spain, say multi-hour, hill-climb mountain biking is potentially bad for your health.

Their paper - 'Extreme mountain bike challenges may induce sub-clinical myocardial damage' - admits that "the relationship between extreme exercise and coronary artery disease is not well understood, and the information available is contradictory."

Quite. Here's most people thinking exercising is better for health than sitting in front of the TV eating lard-flavoured ice-cream.

The researchers measured plasma urea, creatinine, creatine kinase, myoglobin and cardiac troponin concentrations from eleven volunteer nonj-pro mountain bikers. The chemicals were measured the day before and immediately after a mountain bike challenge: "distance 95km, cumulative altitude difference 2,340m."

According to the Spanish boffins all the "biochemical markers of muscle cell damage increased significantly after exercise."

Their conclusion? "In male, amateur mountain bikers, this kind of strenuous exercise may induce sub-clinical myocardial injury."

But should we all stop cycling or should we take the Spanish research with a big pinch of low-sodium salt?

Yesterday, on [BBC.co.uk](#), there was a report showing that low levels of exercise is no longer considered effective at preventing heart disease, obesity and so forth. A team from Canada's University of Alberta compared a 10,000-step exercise programme with a more traditional

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fitness regime of moderate intensity.

They told an American College of Sports Medicine meeting that gentle exercise was not enough to get fit.

Lead researcher Dr Vicki Harber told BBC.co.uk: "Generally, low-intensity activity such as walking alone is not likely to give anybody marked health benefits compared to programmes that occasionally elevate the intensity.

"Our concern is that people might think what matters most is the total number of daily steps accumulated, and not pay much attention to the pace or effort invested in taking those steps.

"But to increase the effectiveness, one must add some intensity or huff and puff to their exercise."

Professor Stuart Biddle, an expert in exercise science at the University of Loughborough, agreed, telling BBC.co.uk it was possible that the current guidelines on how much exercise to take were set too low.

"You have got to strike a compromise between physiology and psychology. The harder you make it, the fewer people will actually do it."

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