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How many days is considered a few

Something went wrong. Wait a moment and try again. How many is a few? Ms. 71 thinks it to be three exactly. I disagree and think the term is relative. posted by josher71 to Science & Nature (67 answers total) 12 users marked this as a favorite I agree that it is relative. I believe it to be more than 2 but less than 10.posted by horsemuth at 9:23 PM on June 29, 2007 it's utterly relative. if mrs. 71 were right, there would only be three u.s. marines in the entire corps.posted by bruce at 9:25 PM on June 29, 2007 [8 favorites] Relatively speaking it is exactly about three.posted by peacay at 9:26 PM on June 29, 2007 [1 favorite] I think that Ms. 71 would be rather put out at illustrious institutions such as...oh, the BMV, for example.]Just wait right over there for a few minutes while we make your new driver's license." (Ms. 71 tapping foot after 5 minutes)posted by Liosliath at 9:29 PM on June 29, 2007 In the context of 'a few drinks' it would be surprising if it was ever three.posted by sien at 9:29 PM on June 29, 2007 [1 favorite] a few means 2 or 3, it is non-descript but no more than that. a couple is fixed, some is much more vague, and depends on the application.posted by edutut at 9:32 PM on June 29, 2007 What does she think 'I had a few words with him' means?posted by vacapinta at 9:33 PM on June 29, 2007 For me, a couple = 2 or 3, a few = 4 or 5, several = 6 or more.posted by pineapple at 9:33 PM on June 29, 2007 A few may be two, but a couple may NEVER BE THREE.posted by solotoro at 9:48 PM on June 29, 2007 Threeish.posted by lemuria at 9:56 PM on June 29, 2007 I instinctively think three, but I know it's one of those words you need to be flexible with on occasion. So, usually three, but maybe more.posted by m198tu at 9:56 PM on June 29, 2007 I don't think there's an exact answer to it. To me (a Minnesotan, if that has any bearing), a couple, a few, and several are for the most part interchangeable. Some is more than a couple/few/several, and many is more than that.posted by flod logic at 10:21 PM on June 29, 2007 If I catch 10 sardines it is a few, if I cook and eat 10 sardines it is a lot. I would think a few is usually more than two but less than ten with exceptions like having a few people over for a party.posted by Iron Rat at 10:48 PM on June 29, 2007 Usually three, but occasionally four.posted by Afroblanco at 11:28 PM on June 29, 2007 That's a really interesting point made above about it possibly varying regionally. Likewise, growing up in Southern California I always thought that a few was 2-5.posted by miss lynnster at 11:41 PM on June 29, 2007 I think a few is three or four, never two or five. Two = a couple, five = some.posted by slightlybewildered at 11:48 PM on June 29, 2007 a few more answers, and can we be done?posted by The DeeJ at 11:59 PM on June 29, 2007 3-5, usually 3.posted by parallax7d at 12:03 AM on June 30, 2007 Don't forget that if "few" is preceded by "quite a," you have to multiply by at least three -- possibly four or more, but at least three. An example: "Quite a few people are irked by chatfilter."posted by booksandlibretti at 12:11 AM on June 30, 2007 When I was a kid, I used to think that several=seven. Probably because they sounded like the same word.posted by jpdokane at 8:22 AM on June 30, 2007 A few is a random variable, normally distributed with a mean of 3 and a standard deviation of about 0.55 thereabouts.posted by msitigt at 9:37 AM on June 30, 2007 [1 favorite] If few referred to a specific amount, it'd probably be in the dictionary. It's not, so few is indefinite.posted by roomwithaview at 9:57 AM on June 30, 2007 When I asked my mom for cookies when I was a little kid, "a few" always meant three. That standard has served me well since.posted by marchivist at 11:04 AM on June 30, 2007 I am with jamaro. I too am from SoCal, but a couple is only two to me.posted by dame at 2:15 PM on June 30, 2007 Oh and to play devil's advocate, if few is loosely defined then what's the meaning of the phrase "more than a few" as in "Oh yeah, I've been there more than a few times..."?posted by vacapinta at 2:54 PM on June 30, 2007 understand it to mean, ratherposted by rossmik at 3:18 PM on June 30, 2007 If you're Julie Andrews, a few is fourteen or fifteen, depending on whether snowflakes that stay on your nose and eyelashes count as two different things.posted by L. Fitzgerald Sjoberg at 9:44 PM on June 30, 2007 Response by poster: Clearly this argument can get heated and this is why we can no longer discuss this at home.posted by josher71 at 12:47 PM on July 1, 2007 My step father is German and my girlfriend is Spanish, and though they both speak English better than I do, this is one of the questions that they have both asked me. I usually respond that I would be happy to explain in a few minutes, but that I have a couple things I need to finish up first.posted by Nothing at 8:15 PM on July 1, 2007 « Older What is "light activity", exactly? | How will I ever get my fitness back after two... Newer » This thread is closed to new comments. Photo Courtesy: filadendron/Getty Images My mom speaks in 10,000-steps-a-day terms: "I already took my 10,000 today," or "It's been a 14,000-steps day." Ever since I gave her a Fitbit in 2015 she's been a total convert. Recently, I snooped on her statistics, and she averaged 13,500 daily steps last month. She'd always been a person who liked walking, but having a specific goal of a minimum of 10,000 daily steps helps her stay more active. Taking more steps a day has made it easier for her to lose a little bit of weight and manage her high blood pressure. I took to her on that and now also like to get my 10,000 steps a day when possible. But sticking to healthy habits wasn't necessarily easy for me in 2020. Unlike me, my mom made no excuses and averaged almost 7,000 steps a day when Spain was in total lockdown between March and early June of 2020. She did it by pacing her really-not-that-big Barcelona apartment. In those same weeks, I was sheltering in place in California and trying to get some activity by using a stationary bike. The only way I could make the activity attainable and not numbingly boring was by pedaling and reading at the same time. The whole experience got me thinking: Are 10,000 steps a day really necessary? Was my tiresome pedaling equivalent to my previous frequent walks? And where did the whole 10,000 steps a day come from, anyway?The Most Important Thing Is to Get MovingEven if you're not a natural-born walker like my mother, you still should be finding other ways to move that are appropriate for your mobility level. The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) recommends "that adults do at least 150 to 300 minutes of moderate-intensity aerobic physical activity a week, or 75 to 150 minutes of vigorous-intensity activity, or an equivalent combination of moderate- and vigorous-intensity activity" to prevent cardiovascular disease. Photo Courtesy: Universal Images Group Editorial/Getty Images The organization defines an activity as "moderate-intensity" if a person can talk but not sing while doing it. During a vigorous-intensity activity, "a person cannot say more than a few words without pausing for a breath." That could be a 30-minute brisk daily walk — but also a swim, run, rowing session or some biking. A 2014 study published in the International Journal of Behavioral Nutrition and Physical Activity found an 11% reduction in risk for all-cause mortality — death from any cause — for a dose of 150 minutes per week of walking and a reduction of 10% for the same number of minutes of cycling. The study — with 280,000 walking participants and 187,000 cycling participants monitored over years — also found that walking or cycling had the largest effects in that initial exposure category "with decreasing rates of beneficial effects as the exposure to walking or cycling increased." The study explains that the sweet spot to get the maximum benefit from walking is in the first 120 minutes per week and the first 100 minutes per week for cycling. That study isn't alone in disclosing the benefits of walking. A 2020 Journsl of the American Medical Association paper on the association of daily steps and mortality among U.S. adults also concluded that "greater numbers of steps per day were associated with lower risk of all-cause mortality." To reach this conclusion, the researchers examined data from groups taking 4,000, 8,000 and 12,000 steps per day.So Where Did 10,000 Steps Come From?If you buy a Fitbit, it'll start you off with a 10,000-step goal. "It adds up to about five miles each day for most people, which includes about 30 minutes of daily exercise," Fitbit states on its website, circling back once again to the basic guideline of at least 150 minutes of moderate exercise per week. I'm 5'4" and it takes me more than an hour to walk the 10,000 steps. Photo Courtesy: Fitbit The Mayo Clinic recommends defining how many steps you generally take on a regular day — with the help of a tracker — and then setting short-term goals. "adding 1,000 steps a day for two weeks by incorporating a planned walking program into your schedule." That way you can work toward achieving a long-term step goal of 10,000. The thing is, 10,000 is an easy-to-remember round number. It's also an achievable goal daily. The whole counting of steps has a very compelling quality to it. Author David Sedaris wrote a whole essay about his Fitbit adoption and long walks that was published in The New Yorker. He refers to his fitness wearable as a "master" and talks about managing to take 60,000 steps a day. Granted, reading about his nine-hour walks makes anyone feel a bit lazy. But the essay also makes some very good arguments in favor of the whole counting of steps. Even after trading my Fitbit for an Apple Watch — which has a system of rings and annoyingly buries the number of steps behind several taps — I still keep thinking in 10,000-steps-a-day terms and making that one of my goals. It's just easy to remember and easy-ish to achieve. For certain desk-bound professionals, most of whom have been working from home for months, something as simple as that can make a difference between a completely sedentary life and one with the right amount of exercise. Or some amount of exercise. Which reminds me: Those 150-300 minutes of moderate-intensity activity or 75-150 minutes of vigorous-intensity activity shouldn't be your only wellness goal. The HHS also recommends doing muscle-strengthening activities that involve all major muscle groups at least twice a week. Now let me call my mom. I want to see how her day is going and ask how many steps she managed to take today. Getting her hooked on planks or push-ups might prove difficult, though. Resource Links: Disclosure: Patricia Puentes' husband works for Health at Apple. Ask Media Group doesn't profit from the recommendations in this article. MORE FROM SYMPTOMFIND.COM

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