

9 Ways to Exercise...When You Don't Have the Time

Think you have no time to exercise? These strategies will help you get fit in just minutes a day.

We all know exercise can help us improve our health and lose weight. Yet, 25 percent of adults don't exercise at all, according to the U.S. Surgeon General.

Hectic schedules may be to blame. Who has the time to exercise when juggling work, school, family and more? It's worth squeezing it in, though, because regular exercise can relieve daily stress and lift your mood. At the same time, you can reduce your risks of diabetes, high blood pressure and heart disease.

Aim to be active for at least 30 minutes most days, but it's okay to start slowly. Find activities that you enjoy. You only need to find a few minutes a day to start getting the health benefits. First, check with your doctor before you start or increase your activity level.

Tips for fitting in fitness

- **Wake up a little earlier.** Start by setting your alarm clock just 5 minutes earlier. Do stretches and jumping jacks before getting in the shower, or follow a short exercise DVD.
- **Find a workout buddy.** Exercising with a friend is more fun than working out alone and a good motivator. Ask a coworker to go for a walk during lunch or see if a neighbor wants to shoot hoops.
- **Change into exercise clothes before leaving work.** You'll be ready for a short walk as soon as you get home.
- **Schedule your fitness activities.** If you put exercise on your calendar like other appointments, you're more likely to do it.
- **Acknowledge your successes.** Keep a log of all the times you make a healthy choice to move more, such as by taking the stairs instead of an elevator. After the first week, reward yourself with a new pair of sneakers or a cool new water bottle.
- **Create a home (or desk) gym.** If you have equipment always at the ready, it will be easy to steal five minutes to use it. A jump rope, a stability ball, exercise bands and dumbbells don't cost much or take up much room.
- **Move while you watch TV.** Don't sit idly - or worse, get a snack - during commercials. Do sit-ups or jog in place instead.
- **Play games with your kids.** Don't just watch while your kids play outside - join in their fun. Play tag or Duck Duck Goose, or just toss a ball back and forth. If your kids love video games, think about swapping their console for the Nintendo Wii. The whole family will break a sweat using special controllers to compete at boxing, tennis, golf and bowling.
- **Exercise while you work.** Raise your activity level and productivity with neck rolls or arm raises (push hands out to the side and then up toward the ceiling). Or do a few modified push-ups on the edge of your desk.

Stepping it up

After you've built short periods of activity into your day, think about times when you could lengthen each burst by a few minutes. The key is to start small and ramp up gradually.

Even if you're worn out from a busy day, try to make time for fitness. Regular exercise actually boosts your energy level. Exercise, along with restricting calories, is also important for weight loss and maintaining a healthy weight.

Next time you look for an excuse to skip exercise, remind yourself of the benefits. You're helping yourself feel good, look better and live longer. Who wouldn't want that?