

Everyday Exercise

The easiest part of exercising is coming up with excuses not to do it. Sure, the goal is to exercise every day, but studies show that only 30 minutes of exercise three times a week can make an enormous difference in your physical and mental health (Harvard Medical School, 2005). So for those of you who put all of your effort into, "I don't have enough time," or, "It'll be too hard," or, "I'm just not the exercise type!"—here are some ways to get started and pointers for making fitness a part of your everyday life at work and at home. Check with your doctor before starting any new exercise program. It will all add up to a healthier you.

At Work

- **Pick the worst possible parking space.** Look for the space which forces you to walk the greatest distance to get into your workplace.
- **Take the stairs** instead of the elevator or escalator.
- **Walk to your colleague's desk.** Deliver your message or document personally instead of using the phone or e-mailing.
- **Go out for lunch** and walk around. Then sit down and eat a healthy lunch.
- **Always forget something in your car.** At one point during the day you'll have to get up, walk out, and get it.
- **Put a pedometer in your pocket.** You should be taking 6,000 to 10,000 steps a day.
- **Use the restroom on different floor** and take the stairs, naturally.
- **Get a phone headset.** There's no reason you can't walk (and swing your arms) and talk at the same time.
- **Set an alarm to ring hourly.** Use it as a reminder to get up and move.
- **Regularly stretch at your desk.** Focus on your arms, wrists, back, neck, and shoulder muscles.
- **Use the copier (or printer, or fax machine) as mechanical inspiration.** While standing, stretch your legs and entire body, focusing on your hips, thighs, and hamstrings.
- **Put an exercise ball behind your desk.** Sitting on it rather than a chair will work your abdominal muscles, strengthen your back, and help your posture.
- **Create an office workout.** Bring bands for resistance, ankle weights, and even dumbbells (or full bottles of water) and incorporate a workout into your daily schedule. (Someone at your local gym, fitness center, or health club can give you ideas for specific exercises and stretches, or search the Internet.)
- **Enlist your boss and coworkers.** Find people to join you in your activities, and get the support of management. Perhaps a local gym will be able to provide discounts or arrange fitness seminars at the workplace.

At Home

- **Pick an activity and start.** The first step really is the hardest. It's OK to start slowly.
- **Establish a routine** and make it part of a daily pattern.
- **Walk when you get home or after dinner.** Even a leisurely, 15-minute walk will be beneficial. A brisk 30-minute walk will give you a good cardiovascular workout. If you're more ambitious, try speed walking or head for the hills.
- **Use the stairs** but "up the ante." Running up and down stairs inside or outside your home for 10 to 20 minutes will lead to terrific results.

- **Leave the car at home.** For nearby errands, walk or ride a bike. Your destination is probably closer than you think.
- **After shopping, lift those grocery bags.** Take the handles with both hands and lift the full bag directly in front of you up to your chin 10 times.
- **Garden to your heart's content.** Mowing with a push mower, weeding, pruning, transplanting, and raking can make for a real workout.
- **Run around with the kids** and see what happens to your heart rate after a half hour of active playtime.
- **Make the most of housework.** Put some music on and move it. Do stretches while vacuuming, leg lifts while folding laundry, and rise onto the balls of your feet, and then lower them, while doing dishes.
- **When out with the stroller, stretch, and tone.** There are many exercises specifically geared for pushing a stroller.
- **Buy a jump rope** and keep it where you can grab it while waiting for the kids to finish their homework or for a meal in the oven.
- **Go dancing instead of out to dinner.** Cardio Salsa for a date night, anyone?
- **Use a treadmill while watching TV.** Let your favorite programs improve your ratings.
- **Fill those commercial breaks** with stomach crunches and push-ups.
- **Lose the remotes.** Get up to change the TV channel or music on the stereo.
- **Work out with videos or DVDs.** Exercising this way is a great option for early morning or before bed. Keep a good supply so you won't get bored.
- **Get moving with a stationary bike.** Listening to your favorite music while you work out adds another stress-release layer to exercising.
- **Buy an exercise ball.** It's a simple piece of at-home gym equipment which can give you enormous workout flexibility.
- **Make a smart investment in a set of dumbbells.** Strength training combined with a cardiovascular workout equals total fitness. Increasing muscle allows the body to burn calories faster, and weight-bearing exercises help fight against osteoporosis.

Or Wherever

- **Find a regular activity you can commit to, and set a schedule** but don't throw in the towel if something unexpected happens and temporarily puts you off course.
- **Make yourself try it once.** Whether it's swimming, biking, aerobics class, or a visit to a gym, try to expand your fitness horizons.
- **Exercise with friends** and keep each other accountable.
- **Write down what you do.** A fitness log which includes your goals will validate, encourage, and inspire you.
- **Keep yourself on your toes.** If you find yourself getting bored, mix things up a little. Include different activities in your schedule.
- **Keep a gym bag in the car** and take away that excuse to avoid exercising on your way home from work.

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- **Work out while driving.** Use the time to tighten your chest, arms, and buttocks by squeezing and releasing.
- **Look online** for free exercise routines from the experts, including plenty of at-home, timesaving workouts in 10 minutes or less. Find one that works for you.
- **Hire a personal trainer.** Up-close-and-personal advice and tips can make all the difference when it comes to starting up and keeping up, even if the trainer and sessions are over the Internet!

Reference

Harvard Medical School. (2005, December 1). Working off depression. *Harvard Mental Health Letter* [Electronic version]. Cambridge, MA: Author.