

# BENEFITS OF EXERCISE AND ACTIVITY

## Introduction

Typically when someone starts inquiring about diet, normally has vision of ideal look or ideal weight is. Although nutrition is 80-% of any effective fat loss or weight loss program, the missing component is exercise, 20%. Exercise in its many forms will burn calories, increase energy, developing muscles, improve your heart, strengthen born, among many other benefits.

Did you know that each pound of muscle adds to your body burns average of 33 calories a day at rest?

In addition, a lot of people only exercise for weight loss but never improve body they desired, because they didn't improve their eating habit.

Remember, if you want to lose weight more importantly body fat, if you want your tighten your waist line, firm you legs or chest, you must exercise.

*– By Ken Roycroft, Health and Fitness Instructor, Nutritional Consultant, Holistic Healer, Peaceful Warrior*

## Benefits of Exercise and Activity

Energize Your Life! Whoever said physical activity is all work and no play? In fact, it can be just the opposite! There is no need to think of strenuous workouts that are painful and boring. Instead, imagine doing fun physical activities you enjoy and look forward to. Do physical activity for enjoyment and watch the health benefits follow!

## The Importance of Physical Activity

The evidence is growing and is more convincing than ever! People of all ages who are generally inactive can improve their health and well-being by becoming active at a moderate-intensity on a regular basis.

Regular physical activity substantially reduces the risk of dying of coronary heart disease, the nation's leading cause of death, and decreases the risk for stroke, colon cancer, diabetes, and high blood pressure. It also helps to control weight; contributes to healthy bones, muscles, and joints; reduces falls among older adults; helps to relieve the pain of arthritis; reduces symptoms of anxiety and depression; and is associated with fewer hospitalizations, physician visits, and medications. Moreover, physical activity need not be strenuous to be beneficial; people of all ages benefit from participating in regular, moderate-intensity physical activity, such as 30 minutes of brisk walking five or more times a week.

Despite the proven benefits of physical activity, more than 50% of American adults do not get enough physical activity to provide health benefits. 25% of adults are not active at all in their leisure time. Activity decreases with age and is less common among women than men and among those with lower income and less education.

Insufficient physical activity is not limited to adults. More than a third of young people in grades 9–12 do not regularly engage in vigorous-intensity physical activity. Daily participation in high school physical education classes dropped from 42% in 1991 to 32% in 2001 (CDC, 2002).

## Why Should I Be Active?

"It's easier to maintain your health than regain it." —Dr. Ken Cooper

Physical activity can bring you many health benefits. People who enjoy participating in moderate-intensity or vigorous-intensity physical activity on a regular basis benefit by lowering their risk of developing coronary heart disease, stroke, non-insulin-dependent (type 2) diabetes mellitus, high blood pressure, and colon cancer by 30–50% (USDHHS, 1996). Additionally, active people have lower premature death rates than people who are the least active.

Regular physical activity can improve health and reduce the risk of premature death in the following ways:

- Reduces the risk of developing coronary heart disease (CHD) and the risk of dying from CHD
- Reduces the risk of stroke
- Reduces the risk of having a second heart attack in people who have already had one heart attack
- Lowers both total blood cholesterol and triglycerides and increases high-density lipoproteins (HDL or the "good" cholesterol)
- Lowers the risk of developing high blood pressure
- Helps reduce blood pressure in people who already have hypertension
- Lowers the risk of developing non-insulin-dependent (type 2) diabetes mellitus
- Reduces the risk of developing colon cancer
- Helps people achieve and maintain a healthy body weight
- Reduces feelings of depression and anxiety
- Promotes psychological well-being and reduces feelings of stress
- Helps build and maintain healthy bones, muscles, and joints
- Helps older adults become stronger and better able to move about without falling or becoming excessively fatigued

Can a lack of physical activity hurt your health? Evidence shows that those who are not physically active are definitely not helping their health, and may likely be hurting it. The closer we look at the health risks associated with a lack of physical activity, the more convincing it is that Americans who are not yet regularly physically active should become active.

### **More Exercise Benefits**

- Physical activity burns calories, so the more you just get up and move, the more calories you will burn. You even burn extra calories doing things like running the vacuum cleaner or going up and down steps.
- Exercise may help you succeed at breaking your weight loss plateau. Many people hit a stopping point where their diet and amount of exercise simply seems to stop working. Increasing your physical activity may give your weight loss another "push" and you'll begin losing again. Strength training is especially effective in doing so because building muscle will burn fat.
- Exercise increases your metabolic rate and the rate stays elevated for some time, even once you've stopped the activity. Perhaps this is why active people can "Eat

anything and not gain weight." and why other folks "Gain weight just by looking at food."!

- Exercise will help you sleep better. Just be sure not to exercise too close to your bedtime if you exercise at night, because it may keep you awake. If you need to exercise within a few hours of going to bed, make sure it's only a brisk walk. Experts say you should allow yourself about three hours between exercise and going to bed. Save the high-impact aerobics for the a.m., mid-day or early afternoon.
- Exercise is good for body and soul. Exercising improves mood and due to the chemicals it releases in the brain called endorphins, it gives you an overall feeling of well-being. This is the same chemical that being in love or eating chocolate induces!
- Exercise reduces the risk for several diseases including heart disease, adult-onset diabetes, high blood pressure or hypertension, breast cancer, osteoporosis and colon cancer. Exercise may also help prevent, or be effective in treating, some mental illnesses, such as depression.

### **Tips for Exercise Success**

Swimming, cycling, jogging, skiing, aerobic dancing, walking or any of dozens of other activities can help your heart. They all cause you to feel warm, perspire and breathe heavily without being out of breath and without feeling any burning sensation in your muscles. Whether it is a structured exercise program or just part of your daily routine, all exercise adds up to a healthier heart.

Here are some tips for exercise success:

- If you've been sedentary for a long time, are overweight, have a high risk of coronary heart disease or some other chronic health problem, see your doctor for a medical evaluation before beginning a physical activity program.
- Choose activities that are fun, not exhausting. Add variety. Develop a repertoire of several activities that you can enjoy. That way, exercise will never seem boring or routine.
- Wear comfortable, properly fitted footwear and comfortable, loose-fitting clothing appropriate for the weather and the activity.
- Find a convenient time and place to do activities. Try to make it a habit, but be flexible. If you miss an exercise opportunity, work activity into your day another way.
- Use music to keep you entertained.
- Surround yourself with supportive people. Decide what kind of support you need. Do you want them to remind you to exercise? Ask about your progress? Participate with you regularly or occasionally? Allow you time to exercise by yourself? Go with you to a special event, such as a 10K walk/run? Be understanding when you get up early to exercise? Spend time with the children while you exercise? Try not to ask you to change your exercise routine? Share your activity time with others. Make a date with a family member, friend or co-worker. Be an active role model for your children.
- Don't overdo it. Do low- to moderate-level activities, especially at first. You can slowly increase the duration and intensity of your activities as you become more fit. Over time, work up to exercising on most days of the week for 30-60 minutes.
- Keep a record of your activities. Reward yourself at special milestones. Nothing motivates like success!

# THE EXERCISE HABIT

## How much exercise do I need?

Talk to your doctor about how much exercise is right for you. A good goal for many people is to work up to exercising 4 to 6 times a week for 30 to 60 minutes at a time. Remember, though, that exercise has so many health benefits that any amount is better than none.

## How do I get started? Sneak exercise to your day:

- Take the stairs instead of the elevator
- Do housework at a fast pace
- Go for a walk during coffee break or lunch
- Rake leaves or do other yard work
- Walk all or part of the way to work

Start by talking with your family doctor. This is especially important if you haven't been active, if you have any health problems or if you're pregnant or elderly.

Start out slowly. If you've been inactive for years, you can't run a marathon after only 2 weeks of training! Begin with a 10-minute period of light exercise or a brisk walk every day and gradually increase how hard you exercise and for how long.

## How do I stick with it? Here are tips that will help you start and stick with an exercise program:

- **Choose something you like to do.** Make sure it suits you physically, ie. swimming is easier on arthritic joints
- **Get a partner.** Exercising with a friend or relative can make it more fun
- **Vary your routine.** You may be less likely to get bored or injured if you change exercise routine. Walk one day. Bike the next. Consider activities like dancing, racquet sports, even chores like vacuuming or mowing the lawn
- **Choose a comfortable time of day.** Don't work out too soon after eating or when it's too hot or cold outside. Wait until later in the day if you're too stiff in the morning
- **Don't get discouraged.** It can take weeks or months before you notice some of the changes from exercise, such as weight loss
- **Forget "no pain, no gain."** While a little soreness is normal after you first start exercising, pain isn't. Take a break if you hurt or if you are injured
- **Make exercise fun.** Read, listen to music or watch TV while riding a stationary bicycle. Find fun things to do, like walking in a zoo. Go dancing. Learn to play a sport you enjoy, ie. tennis

## Making exercise a habit

- Stick to a regular time every day
- Put "exercise appointments" on calendar
- Sign a contract committing to exercise.
- Keep daily log or diary of exercise activities
- Check your progress. Can you walk a certain distance faster now than when you began exercising? Or is your heart rate slower now?
- Ask your doctor to write a prescription for your exercise program, such as what type of exercise to do, how often to exercise and for how long
- Think about joining a health club. The cost gives some people an incentive to exercise regularly.

## How can I prevent injuries?

Start every workout with a warm-up. This will make your muscles and joints more flexible. Spend 5 to 10 minutes doing some light calisthenics and stretching exercises, and perhaps brisk walking. Do the same thing when you're done working out until your heart rate returns to normal. Pay attention to your body. Stop exercising if you feel very out of breath, dizzy, faint, nauseous or have pain.

## Benefits of regular exercise

- Reduces your risk of heart disease, high blood pressure, osteoporosis, diabetes and obesity
- Keeps joints, tendons and ligaments flexible, which makes it easier to move around
- Helps you maintain a normal weight by increasing your metabolism (the rate you burn calories)
- Contributes to your mental well-being and helps treat depression
- Reduces some of the effects of aging
- Increases your energy and endurance
- Helps relieve stress and anxiety
- Helps you sleep better

# IS STRESS MAKING YOU FAT

By: David Zinczenko, Men's Health

Like just about everyone else I know, I'm pretty much stressed out to the max. I have family issues. Work issues. Love life issues. And that Edie on *Desperate Housewives*... oh she makes me so mad!

All this anxiety isn't good for us. You probably already know that stress can raise your blood pressure, diminish your sex drive, and cause excessive horn-blowing in traffic. But did you know it's one of the biggest factors in determining your weight, as well? Here's why.

## ***Stress Changes Your Body***

Stress isn't just something you feel in your head. It's something that trickles all throughout your body. Under stress, your body produces two hormones: adrenaline and cortisol. Adrenaline is like lighter fluid, and cortisol is like charcoal. The former quickly burns off the immediately available sugar in your blood, so you can fight or flee whatever is stressing you. Cortisol continues to fuel the fire, pumping more sugar into your blood so you have energy to burn. The problem is that excess sugar coursing through your blood is meant to help you flee the sabertoothed tiger or battle the charging wild boar. It's made to be burned off quickly as you either escape or attack. When the stress comes in a more modern form like a pressing deadline or a stack of unpaid bills, you can't literally fight back or flee. And without that burst of physical activity, you don't have the chance to burn off that extra blood sugar. Instead, it gets stored in your belly as fat.

Every time you feel anxious over those bills or deadlines, there's more mush added around your middle. In a recent study at Yale, women who were most susceptible to stress had both higher levels of cortisol and greater abdominal fat than non-stressed women. And the ladies under stress stored fat primarily in one place: their bellies.

## ***Stress Incites Your Cravings***

You know the kid in school who always egged you on to do the things you didn't want to do – throw spitballs, trip the math-club president in the cafeteria, or touch your tongue to the frozen street sign? That's what stress is: the instigator. It goads you to do things you know aren't good for you, and under pressure, you cave in and do them anyway.

If you reach for chow when you're stressed, it's not because you're weak. It's because you're programmed to do that. Researchers at the University of California, San Francisco, have identified a biochemical feedback system in rats that could explain our stress/craving connection. In their study, the researchers determined that stress stimulated a flood of hormones that prompted the rats to engage in pleasure-seeking behaviors like eating high calorie foods. While observing pleasure-seeking responses in rats might explain a lot about Charlie Sheen, what does it say about the rest of us? Well, a study done at Yale University found that people with higher stress-induced cortisol levels ate more food - including more sweets - than people with lower cortisol levels.

## ***Stress Keeps You And Your Weight Up***

A University of Chicago study showed that men who slept only 4 hours a night had cortisol levels 37 percent higher than men who got a full 8 hours. Men who stayed awake the whole night had levels 45 percent higher than the well-rested guys. And remember, increased cortisol equals more fat stored in your belly. Another study tracked the work habits and weights for nearly 10 weeks.

## ***Is Stress Making You Fat***

1,800 men over a 12-month period and found that those who regularly logged late hours were 36 percent more likely to tip the scales at above-normal weights than the 9-to-5ers.

That's another reason why letting go of stress is an important step toward letting go of pounds.

Another University of Chicago study showed that men who were relaxed enough to get deep, quality sleep secreted almost 65 percent more human growth hormone (HGH) than men who didn't fall into deep sleep. Why is HGH important? It helps prevent the loss of muscle mass that can be caused by cortisol. And muscle mass helps you burn calories and maintain a constantly burning metabolism.



## ***Stress Changes Your Decisions***

Sure, you have every intention of eating right. But when dinner is something that can be considered only in the 15 seconds of free time you have each evening, it's awfully tempting to swing through the drive-thru and pick up something that's ready faster than you can say, I'll have fries with that. More and more research is showing that a journey to the fast-food emporium is almost as dangerous as a hunting trip with Dick Cheney. Consider: One study found that fast food increases the risk of obesity and type 2 diabetes. Subjects who consumed fast food just two or more times a week gained about 10 more pounds than participants who consumed fast food less than once per week.

The high-fat, high-carbohydrate content of fast food messes up your blood vessels. A University of Buffalo study found that levels of arterial inflammation remained high for 3 to 4 hours after a high-fat meal. (The study was conducted using an Egg McMuffin and hash browns.)

Soda contains high levels of high-fructose corn syrup. On average, we drink 50 gallons of soda per person per year. Yes, you read that right.

Fast and convenient foods are soaked with trans fats. In a 9-year study of more than 16,500 men, researchers found that for every 2 percent increase in trans fat intake, men added one third of an inch to their waists. (Mono- and polyunsaturated fats had no effect.) Plus, an 80,000-person Harvard study found that getting just 3 percent of your daily calories from trans fats increases your risk of heart disease by up to 50 percent. To put that in perspective, 3 percent of your day's calories totals about 7 grams of trans fats - that's roughly the amount in a single order of fries.

### ***So Now What?***

Okay, so this is the point in the book where I tell you to relax, not work so hard, and get more sleep. That would also make it the point at which you close the book, hurl it across the room, and start cursing my ancestors. So let's see if we can find a better way, shall we?

Like I said, I'm just as stressed as you are. I don't have any magical solutions for finding relaxation and inner peace, and I can't call your boss, your kids, your spouse, and your creditors and tell them to back off. (Well, I could, but I'd have to charge you a lot more for this book.)

Instead, we need to learn to embrace the stress in our lives and start making it work for us. Not to get all new-agey on you (incense is not my thing), but the fact is, we need stress. For example, too much cortisol may force us to gain weight, but too little isn't good for us, either. We need cortisol to help with organ function. Too much stress may make us confused, anxious, and angry, but too little stress makes us bored - and boring.

So the point of this book is to help you manage your stress and undo the evils that it can wreak upon you. As long as you have the quick and easy meals and healthy ingredients outlined beginning in chapter 4, you'll have a great weapon with which to battle the ravages of stress.

You'll always have healthy food at your fingertips, so you won't be at the mercy of the drive-thru. You'll always be full, so you won't reach for an unhealthy snack when deadlines approach. And you'll have all the food you want in the time you have, so you can get back to what's really important in life - like trying to figure out who's who on Lost.

In the following chapters, you'll learn techniques that will help you take control of your time and your food by:

- Planning your meals one day at a time, so you can avoid impulsive decisions
- Eating six times a day to avoid extreme hunger ups and downs
- Making your own meals, so you know exactly what ingredients are being used and, more important, which belly-inflating ones aren't

You can fight stress with food –

- With good food.
- With Powerfoods.

With food that takes less than 6 minutes to make.

# STRESS MANAGEMENT

## Stress Management

Everyone experiences stress from time to time, so it is perfectly normal. However, normal doesn't necessarily mean healthy. Nor is it inevitable! Believe it or not, you can learn how to largely eliminate stress. I don't mean eliminate the pressures in your life - those will probably persist. The way I think of it, pressure is what is happening to you, but stress is how you react to those pressures. So, you can keep the pressure and get rid of the stress.

A good example of this comes from the study of stress in executives. Several studies have shown that low and middle level executives show many stress symptoms, like ulcers, high blood pressure, tension, burnout and so on. Top executives, however, as a group show much fewer stress signs. There are exceptions in both directions, of course. Why do big wigs show fewer signs of stress? There may be many reasons, like more control over their lives, but it is hard to believe they don't have pressures. So why don't they get as stressed out? Probably the main reason is that they are either naturally stress resistant or have learned how to handle the pressure without letting it eat them up. It's like the old saying, "If you can't stand the heat, get out of the kitchen".

Fortunately, stress management is largely a learnable skill. Most people can learn how to take the heat in their lives. Before we talk about how, let's consider what stress is in more detail. The way I think of it, stress is a "false alarm". What I mean is that it is the erroneous activation of the "danger alarm" system of the brain. I visualize it as a big red fire alarm inside the head. This is a system we are all born with and it is a good thing to have. However, the biological purpose of this system is to help prepare us for dealing with real, physical danger. When the danger alarm is turned on, it produces a physiological response called the "fight or flight" reaction, which helps us to fight the danger or flee it.

When you are in real, immediate physical danger, it is appropriate to feel afraid. Getting your body charged up with adrenaline may well help to keep you alive. However, most of the time when we feel stressed, there is no immediate danger, so it is a false alarm. The fire alarm is sounding, but there is no fire!

So how do you learn how to manage stress? There are basically two main ways:

1. Learn how to turn off the alarm system through various relaxation methods.
2. Learn how to not turn it on inadvertently in the first place.

Relaxation methods work on the idea that you can't be relaxed and uptight at the same time. Basically, anything you do that is the opposite of what the danger alarm system does will tend to shut it off. Some examples include:

- Deep breathing - taking deep, slow breaths rather than the shallow, fast breathing we feel when we are stressed. This really works physiologically to help shut off the danger alarm.
- Muscular relaxation - tensing and relaxing various muscle groups can work wonders. Try your neck and shoulders, your shoulder blades, your forehead and eyes, tensing these groups for a few seconds, then relaxing them. You can also combine this with deep breathing by inhaling while you tense, then exhaling when you relax the muscles. There are more sophisticated versions of these muscular methods, like the shower of relaxation and progressive relaxation.

- Visualization - imagine a very peaceful scene, like laying on the beach, out in a fishing boat on a lake, in a mountain cabin or whatever. It can be a real place or you can make it up. Try to invoke all your senses as you imagine being in this very peaceful, relaxing place. What do you see? What sounds are there? What sensations of touch, temperature or smell? For example, you might imagine the sun on your skin, the cool breeze on your forehead, the salt tang of the ocean, the grit of the sand.

Try all these methods and see which works better for you. Some people do better with muscular methods, others with visualization. All these can be learned quite readily and often work very well.

In the long run, however, it is better to learn how to avoid getting stressed out in the first place. So how do you do that? Well, the clue is in the visualization method. Thinking peaceful thoughts makes you feel relaxed. In imagining a peaceful place, you have also distracted yourself from whatever thoughts you were having before. This points out the basic premise of cognitive/behavioral psychology that our feelings and behaviors are largely caused by our own thoughts. This is oversimplified, because there are many feedback loops that make the connection between thoughts, feelings and behaviors sort of like a chicken and egg problem. But the simple version of the cognitive theory is that peaceful thoughts cause relaxation and stressful thoughts cause stress.

In other words, the reason we get stressed out is not what is happening to us and not what happened in the past (at least not directly), but rather, how we are thinking about what is happening. Past experience does influence us strongly, but the medium of that influence is beliefs or thoughts. For example, if you were abused as a child, you might have developed the belief that you are worthless. It is this belief today that is making you feel depressed, not the fact of the abuse itself. This is a really neat, powerful idea because it means we can overcome the bad experiences of the past. It means we have power over ourselves, so we don't have to be victims of the past or of present circumstances!

The best way to manage stress is to learn to change anxiety to concern. Concern means you are motivated to take care of real problems in your life, but your danger alarm system is not erroneously activated. Changing your feelings is largely a matter of learning to identify and change the upsetting thoughts that are the immediate and proximate cause of upset emotions.

Source: [www.cyberpsych.com/stress.html](http://www.cyberpsych.com/stress.html)



# EXERCISE AND SCHEDULE TIPS

## Get Exercise In Your Schedule - Tips

Changing your food habits is only part of your plan to lose weight. Exercising is the other part, and it's essential if you want to burn calories. In the next section, we'll look at ways to increase your physical activity, starting with making time in your day for exercise.

## Finding Time to Exercise

Being physically active is fun and feels good. Remove the evil word exercise from your vocabulary, substitute the words physical activity, and see how your attitude immediately becomes more positive. Most people don't like to exercise, but who doesn't like to move their body? Just imagine for a minute, if you couldn't move, how much you would suddenly want to. Since you are graced with the ability to move, take advantage of it. Explore different activities and find those that feel good to you.

## On the Move

Since you're looking to be active 30 to 90 minutes each day, you'll want to have a variety of activities in your repertoire. You can do many activities by yourself, but others are better suited to a group or a partner.

In fact, it's a good idea to find an "activity buddy" who wants to make lifestyle changes, too. There may be a day when you're not in the mood to be active but your buddy will encourage you to get moving. One of the special things about physical activity is that it boosts your mood as well as your metabolism. Your mood will perk up after the activity, and you'll be glad your buddy encouraged you. Undoubtedly there will be a chance for you to return the favor. Have an alternative plan if your buddy can't make it. Don't let that impact your routine – go ahead and keep your appointment with yourself.

Lack of time is the most common reason people are not physically active. But taking care of your body through activity is just as important as nourishing it or keeping your doctor's appointment. What can you do to make time for activity?

- Get up half an hour earlier. That might mean turning off the TV a half hour earlier the night before so that you still get the rest you need. You can record the end of your TV show, and watch it the next day.
- Delegate a few duties to other family members to give you the time you need to take care of yourself and be more active.
- Use your lunch hour. Take a walk or go to a nearby gym if you can.

## A Little More Here, A Little More There...

There are many opportunities to be more active in your daily routine. You'll be surprised at how easily you can fit in a little bit of activity here, a little more movement there. At first it's 10 minutes, then 20, then suddenly you've worked 30 extra minutes of movement into your day without doing any structured type of activity. Make a game of it – it can be fun! Encourage family members to join in, and you'll all become healthier together.

- Put away the remote controls. Getting up every time you want to adjust electronic equipment burns more calories than pressing a button.
- Talking on the phone? Put on a headset so that you can walk or do household chores instead of sitting.
- Waiting for the microwave? Walk or dance around the kitchen, or use cans from the cupboards as weights and pump up your arms until the microwave's done.
- Be active when you're watching TV. Lift weights, walk on a treadmill or other home aerobic equipment, jump rope (not every day, as this is hard on the joints), stretch – there are lots of things you can do while in front of the tube.
- Give up just a percentage of TV viewing per week and be active instead – take a walk or do an aerobics video. This is especially painless to do if you tape your favorite shows, then

watch them later and fast-forward through the commercials. You'll minimize your sitting time without missing your programs!

**Stay Positive** Establishing new habits is tough work. Be gentle with yourself and if you slip, don't get upset. No negative self-talk! Instead, tell yourself you're going to do better from now on, and move forward. Be sure to reward and acknowledge your successes. Use nonfood rewards that you enjoy.

- When you're riding in the car, move your lower body frequently. Tap your toes, do heel-toe presses into the floor, squeeze the muscles in your buttocks together, then squeeze one side at a time, alternating sides. If you're the driver instead of a passenger, do these moves while waiting at a stoplight – but keep your foot on the brake! Once at work, do the same moves occasionally while sitting at your desk.
- If feasible, walk to work or ride your bike.
- When at work, take a walk instead of sitting in the breakroom, and take a walk during part of your lunch period. Recruit a coworker or two to go with you. Soon the social aspect of talking while walking will keep you wanting to walk.
- At a sporting event? Find a place where you can pace along the sidelines rather than watch from the sitting area.
- If you're out shopping, take a couple of quick laps around the mall first. Not only does this burn calories, it has the added bonus of letting you check out the displays and plan your shopping venture.
- Take the stairs instead of elevators or escalators whenever possible. Take the stairs several times throughout the day or walk them intentionally on your break.
- Keep a pair of comfortable walking shoes in the car. Pull them out whenever you have some extra time.
- Park farther away from your destination, as long as it's safe to do so, to build in a little extra activity time. Or get off the bus or subway several stops before the one closest to where you're going. Allow extra time to walk the final distance.
- After work, school, or dinner, take a walk with the family or neighbors before settling in for the evening.
- Take the long way around when you're walking. Whether it's around the city or merely to the water cooler at the office, find the longest way possible to get there. Include hills or stairs if you can.
- Waiting at the bus stop? Walk around instead of standing or sitting.
- Get up and walk to a coworker's desk instead of calling or e-mailing.
- Sitting at a table, desk, or computer? Do the same activities described for sitting in a car – toe tapping, toe-heel presses, and buttocks squeezes. Be sure to stretch, too; repeat several times.

In addition to being more active during your day, you'll want to make a consistent plan for daily exercise. Learn some strategies for working out regularly in your own home in the next section.

**Nonfood Fun** Make sure you have rewards for yourself that have nothing to do with eating. Whether you're rewarding yourself for a job well done at work or for pounds lost, do it without involving food. Consider some of these nonfood rewards:

- Making a chart of your goals and put stars or stickers on it when you achieve them.
- Attending a movie, sporting event, play, or concert.
- Spending time with friends or family – or alone, whichever feels special.
- Relaxing bath with candles, soft music.
- Taking a nap.
- Listening to music.
- Reading a good book.
- Doing hobbies or crafts.
- Calling a friend.
- Getting a massage.
- Taking a vacation.

### **Exercise Strategies**

Since muscle is more metabolically active than fat tissue, you want more of it. Increased muscle mass will use up more calories, making it easier for you to lose weight and keep it off. Toned

muscles make you look more trim even before you lose all the pounds. Upper arms look firmer and less flabby. Toned muscles in your lower abdomen help trim the tummy, making it appear flatter as the fat disappears.

No one has to go to a gym to get toned muscles. You can improvise weights and other gym equipment right in your own home.

- Use large-size cans of food as small hand weights. As you can handle more weight, use milk jugs.
- Use bags of frozen vegetables as weights draped across your ankles as you do leg lifts.
- Be sure to clearly mark these particular vegetable bags as your weights so that you don't inadvertently eat them. After partially thawing many times, they won't be good to eat.
- Keep hand weights next to the couch, and make TV time strength-training time, too.
- Buy a good-quality jump rope, and use it often for a heart-pounding workout.
- Keep sports and play equipment by the door, ready to put to use.

### **Make a Date**

**Taking Steps** Join the 10,000 Steps Program! Buy a pedometer to track how many steps you take each day. Most people walk only about 900 to 3,000 steps per day unless they make a point of being more active. Gradually increase the number of steps you take over the course of a day. Walking 10,000 steps uses up about 500 calories and is approximately equal to walking 5 miles, depending on the length of your stride. Find out more at [www.shapeup.org/10000steps.html](http://www.shapeup.org/10000steps.html). Shape Up America! is a nonprofit organization dedicated to achieving healthy weight for life. Being more active is one-half of your weight-loss plan. That makes it important enough to put on your calendar. An appointment with yourself is just as important as an appointment you would keep with someone else. Don't cancel on yourself. Try not to reschedule. If weight loss is a priority for you, then activity dates become a priority, too.

Consistency is vital to getting results from your activity. Being active two days this week and one day next week is good, but it won't peel away the pounds. To see results, you must consistently be active. Gradually work up to being active for 30, 60, or 90 minutes a day – whatever your goal is -- on most days of the week. Scheduling activity time is a good way to be consistent. Write your activity times on your calendar, and protect them from other obligations.

- Allow yourself flexibility with your routine. You don't have to be active at the same time every day, unless that works best for you. You might aim for being active before work on several days of the week and after work on the remaining days.
- Line up options. What happens if the weather is bad or the kids are home sick? Set up an alternate plan, such as doing an aerobics or martial arts video, or dancing to music. You can also go to your local mall and walk several laps. Many malls open early to accommodate mall walkers, and weekday evenings are usually another good, uncrowded time to walk. Think ahead now, so that when something unexpected happens, you'll be ready and able to stay on track.
- Vary your activities so that you stay interested. A variety of activities will also use and tone different muscles.
- Set aside one hour each non-workday to take care of things around the yard or house. You burn calories and the chores get done -- what a deal!
- Check out your local parks and recreation department. They typically offer community classes in everything from dancing and yoga to aerobics, swimming, and team sports. Community colleges, too, often offer noncredit courses that can introduce new activities.
- Walk your kids to school instead of driving them. Do the same to pick them up. If time is a concern, choose one of the two.
- Join a walking club such as the American Volkssport Association -- this noncompetitive club conducts walks you do at your own pace in all 50 states. Find a Volkssport group in your area at [www.ava.org](http://www.ava.org).
- Host a "potluck" of activity equipment. Rather than food, have everyone bring a game that requires physical activity. There will be a smorgasbord of games – maybe lawn darts, badminton, croquette, hula hoops, balls, and pogo sticks.

## **Keep Calorie Balance in Mind**

So you did it, you overate some of those discretionary calories in the form of a giant piece of cheesecake at the party. You knew it was loaded with calories, but you just couldn't resist. Don't beat yourself up about it. Instead, beat a path to some extra activity. If you eat more than you intend to now and then, you can always bring your calorie scale back into balance by adding some extra physical activity. By either increasing the duration or intensity of your activities, you can burn more calories.

- Be proactive. If a holiday or special event is approaching and you know you may eat more than usual, add 10 minutes of extra physical activity to your daily routine for a week or more in advance. Or, increase the intensity of your normal physical activity routine. Either way, you'll be balancing your calorie scale in advance.
- Making exercise part of your daily life is an essential part of your weight-loss plan. However, a business trip or vacation can really mess up a routine. In the next section, learn how to keep up your exercise plan even when you're on the road.

## **Turn TV Time into Active Time**

Watching TV doesn't have to be a sedentary activity. In fact, you can get double the reward by watching your favorite programs and working out, too.

- Put your stationary bike or treadmill near the TV. Be active on it during a half-hour TV show; work up to an hour-long show.
- Do sit-ups, push-ups, and jumping jacks or jog in place during commercials instead of heading to the kitchen.
- Let different family members lead activities during commercials. Rotate at every commercial break so that everyone gets a turn.

## **Exercising While Away**

Traveling is great once you get to your destination – but getting there can mean an extensive amount of sitting, no matter what your mode of transportation. Once you put your mind to moving more, you can fit in bits of activity in all sorts of places – both on the way and once you arrive.

If you decide that taking a vacation or a business trip is a good excuse to take a break from your physical activity plan, think again. You lose aerobic capacity and muscle strength much more easily than you gain it. Your aerobic capacity declines after just a few days of not exercising, and it's possible to lose up to 25 percent of your aerobic capacity within three weeks.

Planning ahead is key to staying active while you're away from home. A change in routine or surroundings can be a challenge -- or an opportunity. Sometimes being in a different location gives you a chance to do different things. If you live in northern climates and are cold and snowed-in during winter months, a trip to a warmer climate will give you the opportunity to actively enjoy the outdoors.

The following are things to think about and plan around before your next venture away from home:

- What will the weather be like where you are?
- What days and times will you be able to be active?
- Who will you be with and are they fidgeters or sloths?
- What type of places are nearby where you can be active?
- What clothing or special gear do you need to bring along for your anticipated activities?
- How can you make staying active fun?

Once you've thought these things over, write an effective goal or two. You might consider setting goals such as:

- While I'm at the conference, I will walk 30 minutes in the morning on three of the four days.
- During vacation, I will use the stretch bands every other morning and take the hotel stairs at least twice a day.

Having a plan before you leave puts you in the driver's seat. Now you just need some strategies.

## Getting There

Traveling to your destination is primarily a sedentary activity. But you can build physical activity into your travels to help expend calories and to keep your blood flowing.

- When you're driving, stop at rest stops, scenic places, or parks, and get a move on. Walk briskly for 10 minutes every two or three hours, even if it's quick laps around a parking lot.
- Turn waiting time into activity time. When waiting for transportation, take a walk! Check your luggage or put it in a locker, and walk around the station or airport. Doing laps through several airport concourses can really add activity to your day. Or pace back and forth at the bus or train stop. Instead of dreading wait time, look forward to it as a chance to fit in activity.
- On the airplane or train, get up and walk the length of the plane or train every 30 minutes or so. Do some stretches while in your seat. This at least gets your blood moving.
- Keep walking instead of getting on the moving walkways at airports.

## At the Hotel

Hotels and motels, even the budget kind, offer plenty of opportunities to be active. So take advantage of them!

- If there's a fitness room, make time to use it. Set your alarm and get up early or finish off a day of meetings by working out. If there isn't a fitness room, ask if your hotel has an agreement with a nearby gym that you can use for free or a small fee.
- Swim laps or walk in the shallow end of the pool. Or ask front desk staff if there are safe routes to walk in the area, or even walking trails. Some hotels have maps of nearby neighborhood trails.
- Once your luggage is installed in your room, take the stairs often instead of the elevator. If you're in a tall building, walk up the first several flights of stairs, then exit the staircase and take the elevator the rest of the way.
- Toss resistance bands into your suitcase, and do your regular routine with them morning and night. Full water bottles can stand in for small weights.
- Put a jump rope into your suitcase, too. Jumping rope burns calories fast; just be sure to warm up first. And try to jump rope outside or on the ground floor to avoid disturbing others.
- Do your regular stretching and strength-training exercises -- at least a little bit. Walk in place for a few minutes to warm up your muscles. Do at least one set of each exercise and enough reps to feel the muscles burn. To get the most out of your routine, do each activity slowly. Slow movements make your muscles work harder.

## During Your Days Away

- Make activity the focal point of your vacation. Perhaps a walking tour or a kayak paddling trip would interest you.
- If your vacation takes you to sunny places, walk the beach instead of sunbathing – at least some of the time.
- On vacation, plan at least one physical activity per day. Take a hike or a walking tour around a historic district, or go shopping on foot. If you don't plan an activity, get up in time to have a good walk before starting the day's adventures.
- Include vacation-type activities that automatically include activity, such as snow or water skiing, snorkeling, golfing, bike riding, playing tennis, or beach volleyball. It doesn't matter if you're not a pro at these things, just try them out and have fun. Get moving and take advantage of all your resort or hotel has to offer.

Most people understand the fundamentals of losing weight – burning more calories than you eat – but who couldn't use a little help now and then? These weight-loss tips don't exactly help you cut corners. They simply help you stick to the healthy plan that's right for you.

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