

Finding Time to Exercise: It's Easier Than You Think

Exercise 30 minutes a day?! Your doctor wants you to do it. You know it's good for you. So what's stopping you? If it's lack of time or access to a gym, you may be surprised to learn that you don't need to exercise for 30 minutes straight and you don't need to use a structured workout environment.

Benefits add up all day

Although exercising moderately for 30 or more consecutive minutes three to five times a week is the best way to gain significant aerobic capacity and lose weight, if you piece together segments of activity throughout your day that add up to at least 30 minutes, you will still receive many of the health benefits of exercise. These segments can be comprised of any activity that uses large muscles and gets your heart pumping faster.

A sedentary lifestyle puts you at risk for many diseases. The American College of Sports Medicine, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, the National Institutes of Health and the U. S. Surgeon General have *all* recommended that Americans try to accumulate 30 minutes or more of moderate-intensity physical activity daily. Changing your lifestyle from sedentary to active reduces many health risks, helps you feel better and gives you more energy.

Getting active

You want to put these esteemed institutions' advice into practice, but how? Here are some suggestions for accumulating 30-plus minutes of exercise daily:

- Park your car at the far end of the parking lot.
- Garden, rake leaves, mow the lawn (use a push mower, of course).
- Take on housework with gusto—vacuuming, dusting and making beds can be rigorous.
- Whenever possible, use the stairs instead of elevators and escalators.
- Take a quick, brisk walk on your coffee and lunch breaks.
- Ditch the remote—walk to the TV like we did in the old days.
- Play with a toddler or an active dog.
- Pop in your favorite tunes and dance.

Making lasting lifestyle changes

Whatever you choose to do to become more active, try to add activities that are realistic and enjoyable. Walking from the far end of a parking lot may not appeal to you, but it's a simple, realistic way to add exercise to your day. Perhaps you can use the time walking the lot or climbing stairs to clear your mind and prepare for whatever your destination may require. Be sure to add activities that will become a permanent part of your routine.

And don't forget to play! Whether it's charades, hopscotch or fetch with your pet, have fun!

So, the pressure to start a formal exercise program is off—and the challenge to add activity to your lifestyle is on. Good luck!

Sources: *Exercise, an Active Lifestyle and Obesity* by Ross E. Andersen, PhD. The Austin Research Report, *The 20-Minute Myth* by Sharon Cohen; *Shape* magazine, November 1993; The American College of Sports Medicine; The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention; The National Institutes of Health

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