



Fitting in fitness: Finding time for physical activity

Finding time for fitness can be tough. The key is making it convenient. Consider these practical suggestions.

[By Mayo Clinic Staff](#)

You know fitness is important for your health and well-being. But, your days are a blur of work, household chores, errands, and time with family and friends. Setting aside enough time to sleep — let alone exercise — can be tough.

But, first things first. Just how much exercise do you really need?

For adults, the Department of Health and Human Services recommends a minimum amount of 150 minutes of moderate aerobic activity along with two strength-training sessions weekly. That may sound like a lot, but if you work out at a moderate pace, it's about 30 minutes, five times a week. Walking briskly is considered a moderately paced activity.

You can also do 75 minutes of vigorous-intensity activity to meet your weekly aerobic exercise goal. Jogging, running and racewalking are examples of vigorous activities.

So how can you find time for fitness? The key is to be flexible and make fitness a way of life. And remember all physical activity — not just formal exercise programs — adds up to a healthier you.

Make a commitment

It's important to plan ahead so other "to-do" items don't push fitness off your radar. To keep exercise a priority:

- **Put it on the calendar.** Schedule physical activity as you would any other appointment during the day. Don't change your exercise plans for every interruption that comes along.
- **Become part of a team.** Sign up for a softball, soccer or volleyball team through your local parks and recreation department. Making a commitment to a team is a great motivator.
- **Join a fitness club.** Sign up for a group exercise class at a nearby fitness club. The cost may be an added incentive to stick with it.
- **Wear a fitness tracker or pedometer.** Seeing how far you've come may motivate you to do even more.

Enlist family, friends, co-workers and even the family pet

Activity can be more fun when you have company:

- **Involve the whole family.** Take group walks before or after dinner. Play catch. Ride your bikes.
- **Start a lunchtime walking group.** The regular routine and the support of your co-workers may help you stick with the program.
- **Get your dog into the act.** Take daily walks with Fido or Fluffy. If you don't have a dog, borrow one. An enthusiastic dog may give you the motivation you need to lace up your walking shoes.
- **Recruit a walking buddy.** That way, even on days when you're a bit lacking in motivation, knowing that your friend will soon be at your doorstep ready for a walk can help keep you moving.

- **Plan active outings.** Make a date with a friend to hike in a local park, or take a family trip to the zoo. Go dancing with friends.
- **Get social.** Try a dance club, hiking group or golf league. Encouragement from others can help you stay with a new activity.

Change the time or intensity

Sometimes, you may not be able to get in a full workout. You can still work toward your fitness goals even when life interrupts your best-laid plans, though. Consider:

- **Breaking it up.** It's great if you can get 30 minutes of continuous activity, but you can exercise in shorter bursts, too. Three 10-minute walks count toward your daily exercise goal.
- **Kicking it into high gear.** If your activity sessions are vigorous, you only need to exercise half the time to meet the minimum weekly recommendations. Another option is high-intensity interval training, which involves 30 seconds of activity at your maximum effort followed by three to four minutes of low-level activity. That pattern is then repeated a set number of times.

High-intensity interval training generally takes between 10 and 30 minutes a session. This type of quickly alternating activity produces many of the same benefits of continuous moderate-intensity exercise in less time.

Fitting in fitness at home and on-the-go

Time spent at home doesn't have to be "couch potato" time. To make fitness a priority at home:

- **Wake up early.** Get up a bit earlier than you normally do and use the extra time to walk on your treadmill or take a brisk walk around the neighborhood.
- **Make chores count.** Mop the floor, scrub the bathtub or do other housework at a pace fast enough to get your heart pumping.
- **Get outside.** Outdoor work counts, too. Mowing the lawn with a push mower is a great way to burn calories. Raking and hoeing strengthen your arms and back, and digging works your arms and legs.
- **Be active while watching TV.** Use hand weights, ride a stationary bike or do a stretching routine during your favorite shows. Get off the couch to change the channel or adjust the volume.
- **Get more out of errands.** When you go to the mall or grocery store, park toward the back of the lot and walk the extra distance. If you have a little extra time, walk inside for a lap or two before you start shopping. Keep a pair of walking shoes in your car so that you're ready when you find a few minutes for exercise.

Work out at work

To fit in more physical activity while you're on the job:

- **Make the most of your commute.** Walk or bike to work. If you ride the bus, get off a few blocks early and walk the rest of the way.
- **Take the stairs whenever you can.** If you have a meeting on another floor, get off the elevator a few floors early and use the stairs. Better yet, skip the elevator entirely.
- **Take fitness breaks.** Rather than hanging out in the lounge with coffee or a snack, take a short walk.
- **Skip the email.** Walk to a co-worker instead of leaving a voicemail or sending an email.
- **Take it on the road.** If you travel for work, plan ahead. Bring your jump-rope or choose a hotel that has fitness facilities. If you're stuck in an airport waiting for a plane, grab your bags and take a walk.

There's no single best way to fit physical activity into your day. Do what works for you, but make daily physical activity a habit you keep.

<https://www.mayoclinic.org/healthy-lifestyle/fitness/in-depth/fitness/art-20044531>