

Exercising outside the box

Written by Holyoke Enterprise
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Simple ways to incorporate exercise in daily routines

Exercise is an essential element of a healthy lifestyle. When coupled with a healthy diet, exercise puts men and women on a path toward optimal health while reducing risk for a host of ailments, some of which can be deadly.

But many people find they simply don't have the time to exercise regularly. Commitments to career and family can be demanding and time-consuming, and exercise is often a casualty of a hectic schedule.

Though getting to the gym every day or even making use of exercise equipment at home on a daily basis may not be feasible, that doesn't mean people still can't find ways to incorporate a little exercise into their daily routines. The following are a few simple ways to fit more exercise into the day no matter how busy people are.

—Turn TV time into treadmill time. Watching a little television at night is how many people relax and unwind, but it can be a great time to squeeze in some daily exercise as well. Opinions as to what's the best time of day to exercise vary, and no definitive study exists to suggest one time of day is better than another.

People who like to relax with a little television time at night should make the most of that time by hitting the treadmill, elliptical machine or exercise bike instead of just plopping down on the couch. Add a television to the home's exercise room or purchase a gym membership where the cardiovascular machines are connected to televisions. Enjoy favorite shows while simultaneously getting the benefit of exercise.

—Say "bon voyage" to the conference room. Professionals who spend lots of time in meetings can add a simple twist that incorporates exercise into a typical business meeting. Rather than conducting the meeting in a conference room, propose a walking meeting when possible.

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A walking meeting is the same as a standard business meeting, but it's conducted on foot outside of the office. Walking meetings can provide some much-needed energy for staff members, people who may appreciate the chance to get out from behind their desks and stretch their legs while still getting work done.

Take smartphones or tablets along to jot down important ideas, just like a more traditional meeting. And make the most of the walk by leaving time for some light stretching before and after the meeting. Chances are employees will return to their desks reenergized and glad they found a way to get some exercise despite a busy schedule.

—Park far away when shopping. It's tempting and almost human nature to hunt for the parking spot closest to the door when shopping downtown or even at the grocery store. But for those who want to include more exercise in their daily routines, parking far away from the entrance to favorite stores is a great way to incorporate more walking into one's life.

Walking is a simple yet effective cardiovascular exercise, one that the Mayo Clinic notes can lower blood pressure and manage weight while lowering low-density lipoprotein, which is commonly referred to as "bad" cholesterol. In fact, research has indicated that regular, brisk walking can be just as effective at lowering a person's risk of heart attack as more vigorous exercise, including jogging.

—Avoid the elevator, and attack the stairs. The elevator may be inviting, but it's also somewhat of an enabler. Instead of taking the elevator up to the office each day, take the stairs, and take them with more gusto than usual. Rather than taking one step at a time, take the stairs two by two, lifting legs high for each pair of steps. This helps build leg muscles and makes the daily climb up the staircase a little more strenuous.

Many adults find they simply don't have the time to commit to routine exercise, but there are several simple ways to incorporate exercise into existing routines without taking time from an already busy day.

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