

5 Hassle-Free Ways You Can Exercise Every Day

Simple Tips for a Healthier Routine

By Christopher Travers, MS

You can't make it to the gym. You don't have time for an hour-long workout. You don't want a fitness instructor barking instructions at you.

I understand, and I've heard these reasons before.

But know this: It's not as hard to make exercise a part of your life as you assume it is. In many cases, you can get fit using the environment around you. A few simple tips will help get you started.

1. Walk, then walk some more

Too many people assume that if you're not huffing and puffing, you're not exercising.

My response: If you walk at least 10 minutes at a time, those 10 minutes count toward the recommended 150 minutes of cardiovascular exercise per week.

The beauty of walking is that you can do it virtually anywhere, at virtually anytime. If you have a 30-minute lunch break, spend 10 to 20 minutes of it walking. If you work in a city, figure out interesting routes to walk every day. If you work on a sprawling campus — such as Cleveland Clinic's — get out and explore on foot.

2. Don't just take the stairs — use them

You've probably heard this before: If you have stairs at your home or office, take them every chance you get.

Don't stop there. You can actually work stairs into your exercise routine. For a strong cardio workout, walk up and down the stairs repeatedly. Start with a limited number of repetitions, then increase them as you feel stronger.

Stairs are also good for strengthening exercises. Try calf raises. Keeping your feet straight and maintaining an upright posture, place the front quarter of your feet on a stair. Using your calf muscles, raise up as high as you can, then lower your body as low as you can. Return to your starting position.

3. Use your own body for resistance

Good, old-fashioned calisthenics such as pushups (for upper body strength) and lunges (for your legs and glutes) will never go out of style. Also, much like walking, you can do them nearly anywhere.

Just be mindful of good form to prevent injuries. For example, when doing pushups, keep your back in a neutral line, without letting it dip too low or arch too high. For lunges, put one foot forward as if you are

taking a walking stride, then pretend you are sitting down as you bend the other leg. Dip down to a comfortable level and repeat with the other leg.

For these strengthening exercises, including calf raises, try starting with two sets of eight to 12 reps, then add more as you feel stronger.

4. Put your furniture to work

Whether you're at home or work, put your chair to work. For example, the "chair dip" is a fantastic exercise for working the triceps muscles and keeping your arms strong and well-toned.

Start by sitting on the edge of the chair with your hands on either side of your legs and your feet flat on the floor. Keeping your hands on the seat of the chair, scoot off of the chair and lower yourself toward the floor until your elbows are at a 90-degree angle. Finally, straighten your arms to bring yourself back up.

5. Mix and match

As I mentioned above, the typical recommendation for cardio exercise is around 150 minutes per week of moderate exercise.

But for a well-rounded exercise plan, try to incorporate two to three days per week of strength training, as well. You can use some of the exercises I outlined above as a starting point, then expand to others as you grow more comfortable. If you want help crafting a plan that fits your needs, your doctor or a personal trainer can offer sound advice.

Above all, though, remember that fitness doesn't have to be a hassle if you make it part of your everyday life.