

Healthy Living

Patient Information from the American Chiropractic Association

Exercise, the Easy Way

Years ago, Americans walked approximately 12 miles every day. Today, we're lucky if we can get to 3,000 steps. As a country, we're not getting enough motion in our daily lives.

Fortunately, it doesn't have to take a lot of time or effort to incorporate exercise into your schedule.

Start Small

If all you can manage is a five-minute walk, do it. Five minutes are better than none. Eventually, you'll be able to work your way up to 30 minutes or more, and you'll be taking a big step toward maintaining the flexibility and mobility of your joints.

For those on a time crunch, consider taking small breaks from work. Simply getting up from your desk and walking around the office or the parking lot or going up and down the stairs a few times is enough to get your blood flowing and to trigger feel-good endorphins to get you through the rest of your day.

You can also think about incorporating exercise into the activities that you enjoy, such as shopping. Next time you take a trip to the mall, walk around the entire perimeter before going into a store.

Or you can turn household chores and yardwork into exercise. Consider washing your car by hand rather than using a drive-through car wash. And next time you have to mow the lawn, don't groan and put it off. Instead, think of it as an opportunity to get in some exercise and work up a sweat. The same is true of raking leaves



Think about incorporating exercise into the activities you already enjoy, or turn your household chores and yard work into exercise. If you're on a tight schedule, at least take small breaks from work to walk around the office or go up and down the stairs a few times.

and vacuuming the living room—anything that gets you on your feet and moving around is going to be beneficial to your health.

What's My Motivation?

With busy schedules and the rising cost of gym memberships, it's easy to make excuses for not exercising. The important thing is to remember what motivated you to start working out in the first place. Do you want to be able to keep up with your grandkids? Play 18 holes of golf? Avoid the diabetes that runs in your family? Wear a fabulous dress hanging in your closet?

Whatever it is, keep your goal in mind to keep your body moving toward it.

Vary Routines

If you already have a workout routine that you enjoy, think about how you can tweak that plan to get the greatest health benefit. Regardless of how you choose to exercise, the experts agree that it's important to vary your routine at least every few weeks to avoid plateaus and see maximum results. Variety can be as simple as changing the machines on your weight-lifting circuit or switching from a treadmill to an elliptical.

If you'd prefer to continue with the same activity, such as running, consider altering how far or how fast you run. Switch from interval training to hill training, or from one-mile sprints to three-mile jogs.

New Exercise Options

Tired of running on a treadmill? Check out these exercise options to spice up your workout routine:

Practice yoga. With a variety of styles and poses, yoga can fit into many different lifestyles and address a variety of health and fitness needs. The physical benefits of yoga, such as increased flexibility, strength, endurance and balance, make it an excellent option for athletes to complement the often repetitive motions of training. The same benefits are valuable to less active people looking for a way to add more movement to their days.

Swim. Diving in for a few laps is a great workout option because it provides cardio and resistance training without any added stress on your joints. You can also “run” in the water for even more

variation. Either strap on a flotation device and hit the deep end for minimal resistance while running, or try the shallow end (with the water level hitting about midhigh) for much stronger resistance.

Do weight training. You can use free weights or grab those soup cans from the cupboard and fill an old gallon milk jug with water to create your own. Start small—with light weights and only a few repetitions—and work your way up to more sets with heavier weights.

Go for a bike ride. Biking is good for your body because it provides a great cardio workout without putting extra stress on your joints. You can hit the trails for an outdoor ride or try a spin class at your local gym for a more structured workout.

Take Zumba classes—or any kind of dance. Zumba is a dance fitness program combining Latin and international music styles such as salsa, merengue, cumbia and reggaeton. Classes are fun, so you won't realize you're exercising and you can make the workouts as high impact as you'd like.

No matter what workout you choose, be sure to talk to your doctor of chiropractic about exercising safely. ■



For more information on prevention and wellness, or to find a doctor of chiropractic near you, visit ACA's website at www.acatoday.org/patients.