

Every Little Bit Counts

Whether you are already active or not, even a few added steps here and there and a little extra effort during everyday tasks can add up to big benefits. In fact, many people who've conquered health and weight challenges have made increased activity a way of life. Look at some simple ways to boost your lifestyle activities and underline the ideas you'll try.

At free-time or leisure:

- Have fun! Play actively with your children or grandchildren. They love to play tag, ride bikes or practice sports - don't be surprised if you strengthen your relationships too.
- Walk your dog, play fetch or chase him around the backyard. Join an adult sports league like softball or bowling. Sign up for a walking, hiking or jogging club. Walk the golf course and carry your own golf clubs instead of renting a cart. Take up tennis or learn another sport. Take a swim to cool off and relax in the summer or find an indoor pool in the winter.
- Reconnect at the end of the day with your partner or a friend on an evening walk. Plan a hike or a walking tour when you have out-of-town visitors.
- Instead of always going out for a meal, choose dancing, bowling or other active pursuits with friends.

At home:

- Housework such as vacuuming, scrubbing floors, making beds and washing windows keeps your house and your body in shape.
- Balance on one foot while you're cooking, washing dishes or brushing your teeth.

- Instead of piling things at the bottom of the stairs, make a trip upstairs every chance you get. Stretch while you're reading your mail.
- Do some floor exercises while you watch television or stand up and stretch during the commercials. Even standing while you watch TV will burn more calories and build more muscle than just sitting. Tape your favorite daytime show to watch in the evening while you use a treadmill or stationary bike. Better yet, turn off the TV, turn on some music and dance.
- Yard work like mowing your lawn, weeding and gardening are great, too. Other ideas include washing your car, walking to the mailbox, getting up to change the channels and walking to the next room to talk instead of yelling.

At rest:

- Stretch when you wake up and after sitting for a long time. Learn basic yoga or tai chi and practice daily. Try deep breathing exercises, relaxation techniques and meditation.
- Give yourself time to relax at the end of the day.
- Get enough sleep so you'll have plenty of energy for your more active lifestyle.



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At work:

- Get off the bus or subway a stop or two early or park in a distant parking space and walk the rest of the way. Consider walking or riding your bike to work.
- Use the stairs instead of the elevator; start with one flight once a day and gradually increase until you hardly use the elevator at all. Walk down the hall to your co-worker's office instead of using the intercom, phone or email. Contract and relax your muscles while you're sitting at your desk.
- Fidget — tapping your foot or bouncing your leg requires energy — just don't drive your co-workers crazy. Stand and stretch or walk around when you need a break. Walk to your meetings and to lunch.
- Take a walk during your lunch hour or use a nearby gym. Even better, ask a co-worker to join you. See if your employer offers any fitness benefits like an on-site exercise facility or discounts to local clubs. If these aren't presently available, ask for them — everyone benefits from healthier employees.

While out:

- Do your errands on foot whenever possible. (They don't call it running errands for nothing!)
- Park your car in a central location and walk to all of your destinations.
- Walk through the mall briskly. In fact, many malls open early so you can walk in a temperature-controlled environment; take a few laps and window-shop before the stores open.
- Take the stairs instead of the escalator or elevator.
- Stretch and tighten your muscles while waiting in lines or sitting at stoplights.

While traveling:

- Walk around the airport or conference center instead of sitting around waiting. See the local sights by foot or walk to attractions.
- Stretch or do exercises in your hotel room and take advantage of the hotel's gym or the resort's exercise classes. Use the stairs and walk to meetings and restaurants.
- Plan a vacation that includes lots of opportunities to rejuvenate your body as well as your mind.

