



Pick Your Path to Health

You Can Work Exercise into a Busy Life

If you're like a lot of people, you know you should exercise more, but have trouble finding the time and energy for a full workout. The good news is that even a small increase in physical activity can benefit your health.

And you don't have to belong to an expensive gym—or buy a lot of fancy equipment and flashy clothes—to exercise more. Try to find ways to add just a little bit of physical activity throughout your daily routine. Take the stairs rather than the elevator. Go for a walk on your lunch break. Park a little farther away from the grocery store. Think about doing short errands on a bicycle.

African American women have particular reason to be concerned about getting more physical activity: according to the Surgeon General, the percentage of the population reporting no leisure-time physical activity is higher among women than men, and higher among African Americans than whites. African Americans are often at greater risk for heart disease, hypertension, diabetes, and obesity—conditions for which exercise can help reduce the risk.

Of course it's easier said than done. We know you're busy, and it can be hard to get motivated. But you may be surprised how many opportunities to exercise you can find in your daily life: for example, washing and waxing your car, dancing, pushing a stroller, or jumping rope. If you haven't been exercising, start slowly by just stretching or walking for a short time for the first couple of days. Each woman has the power within her to get off the couch or to get up from her desk to take a 10-minute walk.

Try to get a friend or family member to be physically active with you. Exercise may seem easier and be more fun when you have company! If you're concerned about a safe, comfortable place to walk, many shopping malls open their doors before stores are open, and encourage walkers. Some even have walking clubs for support and encouragement.

Why is it important to get more exercise? According to the President's Council on Physical Fitness and Sports, we've known for decades that physical activity prevents heart disease, which is the leading cause of death in the United States. More recently, research has shown that, on average, physically active people outlive inactive people. Regular physical

activity helps older adults stay independent longer, and improves quality of life for people of all ages.

Whether your goal is to control your weight or just to feel healthier, becoming physically active is a step in the right direction. Take advantage of the health benefits that regular exercise can offer to lead you on the path to a healthier lifestyle.

Pick Your Path to Health is a national public health education campaign sponsored by the Office on Women's Health within the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. For more information about the campaign, please call 1-800-994-WOMAN or 1-888-220-5446 (TDD), or visit the National Women's Health Information Center at <http://www.4woman.gov/> To request weekly health tips by e-mail, click on the box that says, "Click Here for weekly health tips by e-mail."