



Live Healthy Live Well

Fitness Focus Tips

Benefits of Physical Activity: It can take some extra effort to stay active during cold winter months, but the benefits far outweigh the costs.

The benefits of regular physical activity include:

- Release of endorphins, which help our body combat stress and tension.
- Increase of red and white blood cell production, contributing to a healthier immune system.
- Weight management.
- Improved sleep.
- Increased lean body mass.
- Improved bone density which helps prevent osteoporosis.
- Reduces feelings of seasonal depression and anxiety.

The 2008 Physical Activity Guidelines for Americans recommends adults get at **least 150 minutes** of moderate-intensity physical activity per week. This includes the winter weeks. Get motivated by working out with friends or family, or find a "workout buddy," that will hold you accountable to daily workouts. Schedule your workouts on your calendar, and view each workout as a meeting with your boss or an important client. You wouldn't cancel that meeting, so don't cancel these. Enroll in an activity class at the local YMCA, rec center or yoga studio, where you pay up front, this will incentivize you to go to the scheduled classes. Try a new indoor class such as yoga, Pilates or Zumba, or try out a new indoor sport like tennis, racquetball, squash or swimming. If the weather is too frigid to leave home, find home workout DVDs at your local library, or find one online that can be downloaded or streamed directly to your computer. Often when we want to work out the least is when we need it the most. Remember, **getting started is the hardest part**, and you'll thank yourself once you're done.

Fitness Focus: Stretch

Stretching offers us a multitude of physical benefits, and it is an easy task to fit into your day. Do these two stretches seated.

1. **Ankle Rotation:** Sit with a tall spine, feet flat on the floor, calves at a 90 degree angle to thighs. Place your right ankle on your left knee. Rotate the ankle ten times clockwise and then ten times counterclockwise. Switch sides. Repeat. Helps to loosen your hips and increase blood flow through your legs.
2. **Chair Cat/Cow:** Move to the front of your chair, tall spine, feet flat on the ground. Place your hands on your knees, fingers pointed forward. Inhale, and with an exhale round your spine, drop your head down. On the next inhale, arch your back and lift your head. Flow through this movement a number of times

Fitness Focus: Stand Up!

There's no argument that we've become a culture of sitters. We spend countless hours behind our steering wheels, we slump over keyboards and computer screens all day, and we unwind by plopping in front of our televisions. Much of this sitting is unavoidable. What you can do is simply stand more, when possible. Take 5 minute walking breaks every hour, or one minute standing breaks every half hour. If space is cramped, march in place. Challenge yourself to stand up every time you talk on the phone, or read all in-coming emails standing. Even simply adjusting your posture can help counteract the circulation and muscle deficits caused by constant sitting.

Fitness Focus: Take the Stairs

Perhaps the simplest yet still drastically underused exercise tool is hiding in your office stairwell. Stair-climbing has become the poster child for workplace wellness, and for good reason. Opting for climbing over riding can increase muscle power, strengthen your heart, lower cholesterol, relieve workday stress and dissipate midday energy depletion. Chances are, you work in a building with at least a few flights of stairs. Start skipping the elevator and utilize the stairwell for trips in and out of your office. First floor dwellers should start to take "stair breaks." Set your watch for 5 or 10 minutes and do laps up and down the stairs. Need a challenge to get you started? Pledge to go elevator and escalator free for a week. Once you get started, you'll never look back!

Fitness Focus: Arm Exercises

Maintain your muscular strength through the holidays by adding in these two arm exercises to your daily schedule:

1. Bicep curls: Use a full water bottle, or substitute a stapler or paperweight. Sit tall, core muscles flexed, feet on the ground. Hold water bottle in your right hand, rotate the palm of your hand forward, and let your arm hang straight down. Tuck your elbow into your side and curl the water bottle up towards your shoulder. Repeat 15 times both sides. The slower the better on this movement.
2. Arm Lifts: Sit in the same position as for bicep curl. Hold water bottle in right hand, arm hanging straight down, elbow into side, this time face your palm towards your side body. Inhale and on an exhale raise your right arm up, straight out to the side until it is parallel with your shoulder. Inhale, release back down. Repeat 15 times each side.

Fitness Focus: More Stretches

Stretching throughout the workday can help combat neck strain, muscle stiffness and headaches, along with numerous other workplace ailments. Try neck stretches. Sit upright without letting your back touch your chair. Align your head directly over your spine. Inhale, and on the exhale, drop your right ear toward your right shoulder. Relax your right shoulder away from your ear. Move ear to shoulder, not shoulder to ear. Hold the pose for ten long breathes, feeling the stretch on the left side of your neck. Slowly lift your head and then switch sides. Repeat often.

Fitness Focus: Low Back Stretches

To release locked back muscles practice chair twists. Sit towards the front of your chair, thighs together, knees pointed forward, and feet flat on the ground. Inhale, stretch both arms up, exhale, lower and grab the left back of your chair, or the left arm rest, with your left hand. Rest your right hand on your outer left thigh or on the desk in front of you, as you twist to the left. Hold for five to ten breaths. Inhale raise arms up and back to center, then exhale switch sides and twist to the right. Make sure to relax shoulders away from ears, breathe into your rib cage and engage your lower abdomen muscles.



Fitness Focus: 20 Minute Ideas

Just because there isn't time to make it to the gym for an hour workout doesn't mean you can't fit in 20 minutes of home cardio or muscle training. If you have access to a home computer there are a number of free home workout videos you can use. Try this one for lower body: 5 Minute Lower Body, and this one for upper body: 10 Minute Upper Body. Additionally jumping jacks, running in place, push-ups, holding plank position, hopping in place, stationary squats, lunges and marching in place are all home activities that can help you stay on track this holiday season. Remember, workouts don't need to be long to be beneficial. Every little bit helps

Fitness Focus: Chair Squats

Being active at work doesn't have to mean leaving your desk. Try this chair squat exercise. Sit on the edge of your chair with your feet planted firmly on the floor shoulder width apart. Raise your arms up in front of you parallel with the floor. Exhale; push yourself up to a standing position. Inhale, start sitting again, gently touch the seat with your bottom, but do not fully sit down. Exhale stand back up. Repeat 10 times, or for one minute. Helpful Hint: Relax your shoulders, and try not to clench your jaw. Use your leg muscles not your face muscles. Calorie Alert: Set an alarm to repeat this throughout the day. To burn off enough calories for one of your favorite cookies repeat 5 times

Fitness Focus: Midday Yoga

When your brain feels like it's bursting from overflowing emails, endless meetings, spreadsheets and to-do lists, a few midday yoga movements might be the cure. Calm Eyes: Sit comfortably, spine tall, shoulders relax down your back. Rub the palms of your hands together quickly to create heat. Close your eyes, press heels of hands into eyelids, rest fingers against forehead. Stay here for 3 long deep breathes. Four-Count Breathing: In your seated position, inhale through your nose on a slow count of 4, at the top of your inhale, hold your breath for four counts, and then exhale through your nose for 4 counts. Repeat ten times. Standing Forward Bend: Stand up tall with shoulder aligned with your hips. Bend knees slightly, and fold your torso gently forward. Let your head hang heavy, taking all effort out of your neck. Grab for opposite elbows and gently sway side to side. Stay here for ten long, deep breaths, and then inhale slowly and roll up. Exhale, you're ready to head back to work.

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