WHAT WE'RE READING...

13 Ways to Sneak in (More) Cardio

Exercise is a key contributor to health and happiness. Beyond triggering that runner's high, it's associated with a higher quality of life, improved health, and a better mood. But missing a few gym sessions doesn't mean staying active has to fall by the wayside.

Sneaking cardio into daily life can save time and improve fitness, sometimes on par with the benefits of a scheduled sweat session. And more time getting moving in our daily lives means less time sitting, which can lower the risk for heart disease, diabetes, obesity, and early death. While intense exercise is good for us, it doesn't completely erase the effects of a sedentary lifestyle, so making an effort to get moving throughout the day can have some serious long-term benefits.

So how much cardio is enough, and what are some ways to fit it in? The Center for Disease Control (CDC) recommends 150 minutes per week of moderate aerobic exercise, plus two days per week of strength training.

Whether it's 30 continuous minutes of activity or three 10-minute sessions, we've got 13 simple ways to get more active for even the busiest person, whether at home, work, or play. Just keep in mind calories burned varies depending on age, build, gender, and weight.

AT THE OFFICE

1. **Be a stair master:** But consider taking them one at a time, not two.Researchers found that while the rate of caloric expenditure is higher when taking two at a time, the burn over an entire flight is more when taking one at a time. In one study, participants climbed a 15-meter stairway five times a day with an average of 302 calories burned per week using one step and 266 calories per week using the double step.

2. **Walk and talk:** Hold walking meetings with co-workers. While moderate walking uses almost two-and-a-half times the energy of sitting in a meeting, mobile meetings can also strengthen work relationships, improve health, and boost creativity.

3. **Please stand up:** Think of your ring tone as an alarm to get up out of the chair. Throw in a few bodyweight exercises before sitting back down (and check out this list for some great ideas).

4. Hydrate often: Getting lots of H2O means more trips to the bathroom (drinking water might also help ramp up metabolism). Pick a bathroom on a different floor, and visit it often.

ON THE GO

5. No more lazy layovers: Stuck in the airport because of a delayed flight? Don't just sit there. Do terminal laps — but skip the moving sidewalks!

6. Ditch the drive: Bike or walk to work instead. In addition to adding stress, commuting via public transportation or car can rack up sitting time and lead to weight gain. Just make sure to follow some basic safety precautions and rules of the road!

CHORES GALORE

7. Clean machine: Chores — they have to get done, so why not make them into a workout? Vacuuming can burn about 75 calories per half-hour, while washing the car uses more than double that.

8. Made in the shade: While running errands, park in the shadiest spot, not the closest, to log more steps and keep the car cool.

9. Take a lap (or three!): Browsing the perimeter of a grocery store can do more than just promote healthy food choices. Take a couple of laps to compare prices and rack up some steps! Pushing a cart around the grocery store uses 105 to 155 calories in a half-hour. Bonus points for lugging home the groceries.

WEEKEND FUN

10. Hit the dance floor: Shake it to your favorite beat. Just 30 minutes — or about seven or eight songs — of fast dancing can use up 180 to 266 calories.

11. Take an active date: Challenge your date to a game of tennis. In addition to burning 210 to 311 calories in 30 minutes, tennis may improve bone health, reduce risk for cardiovascular disease, and lower body fat. Looking for more options to give dates a fitness twist? We've got plenty of ideas for any season.

12. "Shopping is my cardio": Words of wisdom from Carrie Bradshaw. Except that a two-hour shopping expedition uses almost 300 calories, or 75 per half-hour. Enough said.

13. Game night: So-called "exergames" — such as on the Kinect or Wii Fit Plus— have been shown to increase energy expenditure up to three times more than just sitting. But while these games are better than parking on the couch, energy burn can vary quite a bit depending on the game.

THE TAKEAWAY

Exercise doesn't have to be done at the gym, on a track, or even in workout clothes. Little bits of exercise throughout the day can add up — just get creative! Pair some of these sneaky cardio boosters with unexpected strength training to vary the routine and meet the weekly recommendations for exercise.

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