

Ten Simple Ways to Become More Physically Active

Journal of Public Health Policy

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Regardless of your shape or size, physical activity has been shown to add years to your life, and life to your years. But believe it or not, the benefits of physical activity are not restricted to exercise performed in the gym. In fact, one of the easiest ways to improve your health may be through increasing the amount of low intensity physical activity you perform throughout the day. For example, simply increasing the number of steps that you take each day is very likely to reduce your risk for diseases like diabetes and cardiovascular disease. In fact, there is good evidence to suggest that simply reducing the amount of time spent sitting each day may reduce risk factors as well.

Here are some practical ways that you can incorporate physical activity into your daily life. Try one or two, and once they've become part of your routine try a couple more.

- 1. Take the stairs as often as possible.** This one is as simple as it sounds. If you have to go up two floors or less, opt for the stairs. If you have to go up or down a distance that is too great for you to walk at the moment, walk the first few flights, then take the elevator the rest of the way. Remember, every time you take the stairs instead of the elevator or escalator, you are making a decision that will positively affect your long term health.
- 2. Drink plenty of water.** This sounds odd, but it's a trick that people been using for years. Staying well hydrated may reduce feelings of hunger, and can often reduce chronic back pain. So this is really a win-win-win.
- 3. Park as far from the front door as possible.** Another simple but effective tactic. Whether you're at the mall, work, or school, parking the car at the edge of the parking lot forces you to walk just a little bit further than you are used to. It will only add a few seconds to your trip, but if you do it every day it could add years to your life.
- 4. Clean your home regularly.** Most people don't realize what a good workout cleaning can be. Cleaning involves plenty of walking, lifting, and stretching - all of which are very good for your body. Washing dishes by hand can also be an easy way to burn a few extra calories, and to spend some time chatting with other members of your family.
- 5. Gardening and yard work.** Yard work is great because not only does it increase your physical activity, but it also gives you an excuse to be outside. Pulling weeds, mowing the lawn, trimming the hedge, and raking leaves are all very physically taxing and like cleaning, they use a range of muscle groups.
- 6. Disconnect your cable for the summer.** Get rid of the cable, and suddenly you've got one less reason to spend your days sitting on the couch. After a few weeks without cable, you might start to wonder why you ever had it in the first place. And if, you *need* to watch the NHL playoffs - walk to the local pub/sports bar with your friends on game night.
- 7. Buy a pedometer.** Pedometers are beeper-sized gadgets that count the number of steps that you take each day. They are a terrific way to measure the amount of physical activity you are getting each day, and can also serve as a great motivator to make the decision to walk whenever possible. Aim for at least 10,000 steps each day, but any increase is likely to bring health benefits, so don't feel bad if you can't get up to 10,000 right away.
- 8. Use active transportation and public transit.** Individuals who take public transit are more likely to meet physical activity recommendations than those who don't take public transit. This is because most transit trips involve at least some walking to and from stops.
- 9. Have "walk-meetings".** Consider taking half your lunch break to go for a walk either alone or with someone else you work with. It will help wake you up for the afternoon, as well as giving you a chance to chat with your co-workers.
- 10. Go for a family walk after dinner.** It's another chance to spend some time together, get outside, and get some exercise all at the same time.