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# Fitness for Busy Professionals

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# Fitness for Busy Professionals

## Fitting More Fitness in Your Schedule

Working fulltime can eat up more than forty hours per week for most workers and after family and other responsibilities, there's not much time left to take care of you. Fitness is important, though, and is becoming more accessible to busy professionals in many ways. You may never be able to exercise an hour every day, but even the smallest effort counts. Read on for some tips and ideas about getting more fitness into your busy schedule.

### **Think Small.**

Contrary to popular belief, you don't need to exercise for thirty minutes or more to achieve the maximum results. Recent studies have shown that smaller increments of exercise throughout the day produce the same effect as one longer workout, so you no longer have to worry about finding a large block of uncommitted time! Instead, plan your day to accommodate several ten-minute bursts of exercise. Fit in three of those segments and you have a total of thirty minutes for the day (which is the minimum suggested by doctors).

Once you can comfortably incorporate three segments into the day, challenge yourself to add more until your daily exercise time is an hour or more. Think of it as making deposits in your bank of health: every ten-minute exercise burst improves your health and is available for you to call on when you need it.

### **Equip Yourself.**

When you have exercise equipment at the office and ready to use, you are much more likely to take a few minutes to work out. This doesn't mean you should install a treadmill in your office (though it's not a bad idea if it works for you!). There are plenty of smaller workout tools that challenge and strengthen your muscles.

Resistance bands come in a variety of tensions so you can choose the best level of resistance for your needs. These bands are practically weightless and take up less room than your briefcase, and can be used in countless different ways. You can use bands for upper bodywork, stretching, leg training and more. A set of five usually costs less than \$20 – at that price it's more than worth it!

Another useful tool is a small set of dumbbells, ranging in weight from three to ten pounds. This is also fairly inexpensive and most come with a small storage rack that keeps the weights safely out of the way without the risk of tripping. Dumbbells are used primarily in upper bodywork but there are many exercises that use dumbbells and call on the lower body muscles at the same time.

You may also want to consider buying a yoga mat to keep at the office. A mat can do double duty by stabilizing you during yoga and also offering comfort for stretching routines. You can find yoga mats for as low as \$10 but be sure to check the thickness as cheaper mats sometimes offer less padding and comfort. Add one or more of these fitness tools to your office and incorporate their use into your daily workouts, and the difference will be clear in just a few weeks.

### **Make Your Health a Priority**

Too often busy professionals are willing to neglect health care unless it absolutely necessary. Trying to juggle a career, family, and more is highly demanding and doesn't often leave much time for self-care, but in the long run this can be damaging both your physical and emotional health. By neglecting your needs, you send your body and psyche the message that you are not as important as other things. Stop it! Ignore your body too long and you may find yourself with serious health issues that could have been avoided simply by being conscious of your needs.

Realize that caring for your body is a priority and needs to be treated with as much importance as the other concerns in your life. Schedule time into your planner just for you and follow up on it! If you've always wanted to take a yoga class on the weekend but couldn't because of other responsibilities, find someone that can take over those demands, even if it's just short-term. Hire a babysitter or arrange childcare with a friend and let the kids be off your mind for once. You only have one body, so invest some time and effort in making it the best body possible!

### **Four Ways to Fit More Fitness in Your Day**

Life moves at the speed of light and everyone's schedules seem to be crammed full. When you have too much going on, is it even possible to fit exercise into the day? Fortunately exercise doesn't have to be a formal one-hour event and there are dozens of ways to squeeze more fitness into your life. Here are four of the best ways to incorporate more exercise into your day-to-day life.

#### **Fitness at Work**

Exercise and work may not seem to go together but more employers are encouraging their workers to get healthy. Some companies even incorporate fitness breaks into the workday to accommodate busy schedules. But what if your company isn't one of these fitness-friendly guys?

There are many ways you can squeeze exercise in at the office without anyone even knowing! One of the most frequently mentioned methods is taking the stairs over the elevators. That's great, but let's take the idea a little further and try to walk around as much as possible.

Walk over to a co-worker's desk rather than sending an email or instant message, and instead of using the bathroom on your floor, go to one a few stories up – and take the stairs. Other ideas include practicing Pilates moves right at your desk and doing simple stretches either in your office or in the bathroom. If you look for opportunities to exercise, they'll start to jump out at you everywhere.

### **Fitness at Home**

Great, you're home – working out is so much easier now, right? Wrong! Home requires just as much attention and responsibility as work, as well as being mom or dad at the same time. An easy way to add fitness at home is to involve the whole family. Kids don't view exercise as work, and it can be a special time to share with your child that you wouldn't have otherwise. Have the family take a walk before or after dinner or organize a family-wide game of tag in the backyard.

Other ideas for home fitness include turning housework into aerobic exercise. Get that vacuum cleaner going and use your arm, back, and core muscles to propel it back and forth. Load the dishwasher and maintain proper posture as you bend and straighten, keeping your abdominal muscles tight. Sweep the driveway as fast as you can for a quick aerobic blast!

### **Out and About**

Incorporating fitness moves into your errands may seem strange but once you get used to the idea, you'll wonder why you never thought of using the checkout line at the grocery store as a workout zone! When you're standing in any kind of line, contract your buttocks for a count of 15 and then release. This helps strengthen the muscle and can also keep you from losing your cool when the customer in front of you needs three price checks.

Another good move is to stand on your tiptoes for a count of 10 and then drop back. This helps strengthen calf muscles. Pushing a loaded grocery cart also qualifies as aerobic effort! When you're sitting in traffic, seize the moment to do some arm exercises and stretching moves while you wait. You may get a few funny looks but at least your blood pressure isn't boiling over.

### **Spur of the Moment**

If you're having one of those lazy days or are just simply bored, use your time to visit a local park and do some speed-walking. If the weather is uncooperative, go to your local mall and walk briskly around all levels at least twice. Some malls offer reward programs that allow you to earn points for walking at the mall, which can then be redeemed for gift certificates or coupons. That's not too bad for a random decision to go walking at the mall! There are literally hundreds of options for random fitness jaunts, so take the time to look around your area and figure out where you want to go for your next spur of the moment fitness trip!

## **Losing Weight on a Busy Schedule**

You know you want to lose weight but when you're so busy running from home to work and back, how do you do it? Is it even possible with so much going on? You can lose weight while keeping a busy schedule but it does require extra planning and foresight. The most difficult part to manage is fitting exercise into the day, but with just a few small changes it can be done.

You should start by thinking about how much weight you want to lose. Many people expect to start a program and drop pounds almost immediately, and then become discouraged when it doesn't happen. If you have more than five to ten pounds to lose, be prepared to spend six months or longer working toward your ultimate goal. Even if you do only need to lose five pounds, you should still allow more than a few weeks to see it disappear. As it has been said so often, the last five pounds is often the most difficult to lose, but with patience, a good diet, and plenty of aerobic exercise, it can be done.

The most successful dieters all have some characteristics in common. First, they all include regular exercise in their schedules, regardless of how busy the day may be. Exercise is necessary to burn calories and fat, and one dash up the stairs isn't going to do it. For maximum fat burn you should exercise a minimum of 45 minutes per day and more would be excellent.

Before you panic, the 45 minutes does not have to be all at once. Research has shown that short, intense bursts of exercise can be just as effective as one long workout, so all you have to do is fit in several short segments of exercise throughout your day. Try walking around your office's parking lot during your lunch break or walking up four flights of stairs to your office rather than taking the elevator.

If you are one of the fortunate employees whose companies provide fitness facilities on site, make the most of it! Either arrive early to workout, shower, and change before work, or hang around afterward to get in your exercise. Company fitness facilities are absolutely wonderful since most include not only workout machines but saunas, fully equipped locker rooms, and even the occasional swimming pool.

Other ways to get your 45 minutes of fat-burning exercise in is to purchase a few small fitness items to keep in your office and use several times daily. Good choices for office fitness equipment include hand weights (which often come with their own storage rack), resistance bands, and yoga mats. You may want to consider a jump rope but obviously bring a change of clothing since it can be rather too intense for the office. Set your computer to give an alarm four times throughout the day to remind you to get up and exercise. Even just ten minutes of weight lifting or resistance training four times throughout the day adds up to forty minutes! That's fantastic!

You will probably find it easiest to do your aerobic exercise outside of the office. If your schedule permits you to attend gym classes several times during the week, take a high intensity class that keeps your heart pumping for thirty minutes or longer. Another excellent option is to swim. Swimming is one of the most powerful exercises for shaping

the body fast. Since the body is supported by water, your muscles receive a better workout since they must propel you through the water. Swim for 45 minutes three to four times a week and you will see results within three weeks.

For those who can't get to the gym or a pool, go for a run or a fast power-walk on your street. Incorporate arm movements into your walk to boost your heart rate and burn more calories. Also check your local video store for fitness videos that you can do in the privacy of your own home. There are many great videos that work your body just as much as a challenging gym class and you don't have to worry about anyone staring at the sweat dripping down your back and face. Maintain a regular exercise schedule of 45 minutes of aerobic exercise three to four times per week in addition to strength training and you will notice a change in your body very rapidly.

In terms of diet, the change that most busy workers need to make is to avoid fast food. Double cheeseburgers, fries and milkshakes are all heavily laden with fat, calories, and sodium – three things that will slow your weight loss effort down fast. Instead, eat a diet that is balanced and nutritious with a minimum of saturated fat, simple sugars and sodium. One easy way to make a diet change is to eat only organic. There are thousands of delicious organic options available and an organic-only diet naturally delivers you from the vast majority of fatty junk foods. Add plenty of vegetables and salads to your menu as well as regular protein for a giant boost to your weight loss program.

While losing weight on a busy schedule is difficult, it is by no means impossible. Exercise regularly, eat healthy, and you will see the pounds melt away.

## **Office Fitness**

Staying fit while holding down a fulltime job takes a lot of effort and determination, but there are ways you can make it easier on yourself! More companies are becoming fitness-friendly and installing exercise centers onsite or at least offering incentives for staff to exercise, so check to see if your company has any special programs for employee fitness.

Most employers today recognize the value of a physically fit employee that regularly exercises and some have even begun programs to encourage fitness throughout the company. These programs can be wonderful tools that include some great rewards for the participants, but the greatest reward is your own accomplishment of physical fitness. If your workplace doesn't offer anything like this, don't despair – there are still plenty of options for you to get fit and stay sharp at work.

Consider organizing an office fitness group that meets once or twice a week to exercise together. Undoubtedly there are other staff members within your office that are interested in staying healthy and fitting exercise into the day. Get your supervisor's

permission to put up an announcement about your fitness group and be sure to know where the first meeting will be held and how formal the arrangement will be. The best fitness support groups meet regularly and aren't about competition but focus instead on encouraging one another to reach individual goals.

Once your group has formed and set up a basic structure for meetings, you are basically good to go. Most office exercise teams are together just for the fun of it, but if your group decides to go further, consider entering a fundraising race for a worthy cause. Many teams do this and raise large sums of money due to the team's position within the office. This is a wonderful way to use fitness as a way of giving back to others.

If organizing an office fitness group just isn't your cup of tea, then do your best to squeeze in fitness throughout the workday. If you can keep weights at your desk or in your office, take a brief ten-minute break in the afternoon to lift some weights. Walk around the office as much as possible and even go to other floors of the building if possible. By squeezing in as many steps as you can, you increase your overall activity level for the day and boost your fitness. Buy a pedometer to wear during the day and aim for 10,000 steps every workday. You can also use the pedometer at home to monitor your progress.

At the office, try to find a quiet place where you can do some stretches and muscle-building exercises like squats and lunges. If there isn't a separate room available, try using the bathroom for your personal workout area. Stretching can really be done anywhere as long as you aren't too obvious with it. Check out the outside of your company's building to see if it is suitable for outdoor exercise. If the area is safe and suitable, use your lunch hour to go outdoors and walk or do stretches. Taking a break outside can help break the tedium of the workday and refresh your mind and body, so take advantage of the outdoors for the sake of your whole body.

Keep in mind that some corporations offer rewards to employees who understand the value of fitness and regularly work out to maintain good health. Check with your Human Resources coordinator to see if your company offers a similar program. You should also check with HR to find out if the company covers any kind of gym membership for employees. Sometimes employers will cover a portion of the cost of a yearly gym membership, recognizing the value of an employee that is physically fit and healthy.

The Human Resources coordinator can be a great fount of information on your company's health and fitness policies, so take the time to chat with him or her and find out exactly what is offered. Even if your company doesn't cover anything, there are still plenty of other ways that you can stay fit on the job without sacrificing time or dignity.

## **Organizing Your Own Workout Group at the Office**

You see your colleagues every day, share thoughts and ideas, and make snack runs for the gang, so why not tap into this powerful resource to encourage fitness on the job? Office fitness support groups can be fantastic for co-workers to help support and encourage each other, and the daily interaction can keep members accountable for exercise and diet. Not all work environments are friendly to inter-office workout groups but more companies are recognizing the value of healthy employees that exercise regularly, so talk to your supervisor before starting a program. Once you get the okay, here are some ideas to help your office workout group get up and running!

### **Announce and Publicize**

Create an eye-catching announcement to post around the office and print it on brightly colored paper. Put your announcement up in prominent positions – around the water cooler, on the doors of the restrooms, and in the snack room. Make sure the message is clear and that readers will understand the goals and aims of the group. The instructions should be clearly understood, whether you are holding a brief meeting to kick things off or simply want interested parties to email you. Contact information is especially important – if people are interested but can't figure out whom to contact, they quickly forget about it.

### **Talk it up!**

After you have put together your announcement, printed and posted it, now it's time for the promotion. Bring it up when you're talking with co-workers and ask if they are interested in it. Find out why or why not, and then let them know that the first meeting is all about identifying individual needs and figuring out the format that will work best for everyone. If your supervisor is interested in participating, let that be one of your selling points! You may want to include that information on your flyers and challenge your colleagues to match the boss's example. If your company or group has a newsletter, insert a brief item about the fitness group and invite all interested parties. You may be surprised at the response.

### **Make it fun for everyone**

An office fitness group is primarily about supporting and encouraging each other in individual exercise goals, but it should never be overly intense or competitive. There is enough competition in a typical office without adding to it – participating in an extracurricular group with co-workers should build rapport with one another rather than pitting one against the other. Incorporate some fun challenges into your group plan to keep the mood light.

Offer appropriate prizes for the member who racks up the most exercise time in a week, like pedometers and other fitness accessories. The prizes should not be overly expensive but avoid rewards that contradict the goals of the group: fast food gift certificates, candy bars, and high-fat foods do not fit in with a group that aims for more fitness! Some companies that are forward-thinking run long-term competitions that reward

healthy employees with tickets to movies or plays, dinner for two to a healthy restaurant, or even a brief vacation at a picturesque nearby location. Brainstorm ideas with your group and come up with what fits the overall group best.

### **Keep the group on track**

To make an office fitness group work, you have to be committed to the goals of fitness and health. When co-workers meet in social settings the talk can quickly go from fitness-related to work issues and gossip. Your group will probably need a nominal leader to keep discussions on track and simply manage the group's activities, and you will probably be chosen if you initiated the group. The leader essentially directs the group and oversees meetings, but the job can be shared between two or more people in order to prevent the burden from falling on just one person. Some groups actually work out together while others simply hold each other accountable for time spent exercising – whichever direction your group chooses, you should meet about once a week to get the maximum benefit from each other's encouragement.

### **Participate in the worthy cause**

There are thousands of fund-raising efforts that frequently rely on the efforts of corporate organizations to provide financing for charitable causes. Office teams can participate in fitness challenges and raise support from within the company that then goes to support the work of non-profit organizations. One of the most famous of these is the Race Against Breast Cancer, which brings thousands of participants from all over the United States to different events that challenge the mind and body. This is a fantastic way to get fit and do good at the same time, and definitely worthwhile for office groups to look into.

### **Fitness Pointers for Busy Women**

Exercise is an essential in life. Most people will certainly nod their heads to this. Exercise is not only perfect for losing weight, it is also good for keeping a reasonable body weight, for giving a boost on the metabolic rate and also for burning those unwanted excess calories. Exercise also revs up the heart and the lungs' machinery making them more efficient in doing their natural functions.

Aside from these, exercise also works for strengthening the bones and keeps people looking good and feeling good about themselves. Exercise also gives people the stamina to enable them to keep up with the pace of their lifestyles. Unfortunately, not many people chose to do what is good for them. Most people could not decide exactly what to do when waking up in the morning; whether to exercise or to press the snooze button one more time.

The following tips are very helpful in reaching and maintaining the ideal body weight. This is especially great for women since they get through a lot of things going on in their bodies and are more susceptible to osteoporosis. Not to mention that many women are under the pressure of keeping themselves beautiful. It is recommended that one or two of these tips at a time are incorporated to the work out routine.

Worry not that the exercise routine is not enough. It is important to keep the commitments one makes. Ideally, it is advised to exercise three to five times a week for 20-60 minutes. However, this is not exactly the case in the real world. One should not frustrate herself by aiming for the ideal when she knows for herself that it is utterly impossible. If she can manage it two times a week for twenty minutes per session, that will do just great.

It is best to focus on doing what one knows she can do than to reproach herself for having not done enough. She can start from this point and then progress on afterwards. This should make her feel successful for having kept her commitment to herself.

Weight lifting should always come first. Many women always do cardio exercises first before weight lifting. A disadvantage of this is that it is possible to miss a critical component of the routine and spend all of it on cardio training. A woman may notice this by not being able to see results even after devoting long hours at the gym. This can be avoided by reversing the order. This will guarantee visible positive outcome.

Remember to monitor heart rate. It is recommended to exercise at 75-85% of the maximum heart rate. Many people stick with just pumping up only 50% of their maximum heart rate. To ensure that one is working out at the prescribed target heart rate, she should use a heart rate monitor or any exercise equipment with this feature.

Work out for only an hour or less. Doing this will keep you from dreading the gym. Focusing on the exercise and the aim to be accomplished will make each work out session more and more efficient.

Have some sort of fitness social support. Being in a fitness community may be the important element lacking in your training program. A social support can do amazing wonders and therefore should not be underestimated. It would be helpful to work out in a gym once in while if one customarily does her work outs at home. One can also try classes in activities that have always been interesting such as yoga, pilates or sailing perhaps. One can also join clubs such as a walking club or a running club for instance.

Pep talk yourself. One should not pressure herself too much; rather, it is best to congratulate one's self and give out words of encouragement in between exercises. One should never forget to say some positive feedback for herself.

### **Five-Minute Fitness**

Everyone has those days: the phone is ringing off the hook, your contribution for the quarterly report has disappeared off your desk and you were in such a hurry this morning you left your diet-friendly lunch at home. When you have a day like that, exercise is usually one of the last things you want to think about, but getting active, even just for five minutes, can vastly improve your mood and your body at the same time! Do yourself (and everyone else) a favor and squeeze in five minutes of fitness – you'll be glad you did!

Step outside the building and take a brisk walk around the parking lot. Getting out of a stressful atmosphere and to a place where you can think is a huge part of calming your mind and emotions. While you exercise your cardiovascular system and muscles by walking fast, the excess tension in your system gets worked out so you return to work feeling relaxed and refreshed.

Ride the elevator to the bottom floor and then climb the stairs back up to your floor. If your building is four floors or shorter, repeat this. If your office building has no stairs, consider buying an inexpensive workout step and keeping it in your office. The exertion of step climbing helps work out stress and emotion.

Stand about two feet away from your desk, bend at the waist and place your hands on the edge of the desk to help support your body. Hold for thirty seconds and then stand up straight and take several deep breaths. Repeat twice more. Stretching out your back like this help release tension in the spine and shoulders.

Keep a can of tennis balls in a desk drawer and bring two of them out when the atmosphere is tense. Take one tennis ball in each hand and squeeze as hard as you can for eight seconds. Release and relax; then repeat several more times. This helps condition the forearms and increase hand strength as well. Tennis balls can also double as massagers for your feet and back – all this for about three dollars!

Keep a set of resistance bands in your office and take a break to work with them. If you are feeling irritated, take the band with the highest resistance and use it for lateral raises (place one end of the band under your foot and hold the other end in your hand at about waist height; lift the band straight out to the side).

Challenge a co-worker to a speed-walking contest in the parking lot (you may want to switch to flat shoes). Take the stairs down to the lot and see who can walk the perimeter the fastest without actually running. Not only is this good exercise but it is good for a few laughs as well.

Invest in a set of dumbbells to keep at the office. A set with five weights ranging from three to ten pounds is fairly inexpensive and typically comes with its own storage rack. Do some strength building exercises for the arms and back or, if you have a lot of angry energy to work out, use the heaviest weight and do as many bicep curls as possible until your energy wears out. You may not be able to perform more than one or two correctly but it might prevent you from snapping at an unfortunate co-worker.

Take some time out to do stretching. Stretches are a tremendous tool to use against

tension and stiffness in the joint and can help you break through the mid-afternoon slump in your energy. If you keep a yoga mat in your office, use that to perform some of the prone stretches (with your door closed!).

Make full use of your office by turning the very walls you're your own workout equipment: stand about eighteen inches away from the wall or door, place your hands on the surface at about shoulder height, and do vertical push-ups. Challenge yourself by moving farther away or changing the position of your hands on the wall. You may even want to try doing one-handed push-ups vertically – it can be a great introduction to doing the real thing.

### **Ten Best Ways to Maximize Your Workout Time**

When you've got a busy schedule crammed full of meetings and work, you don't have time to mess around with your workout. You want to get the best results possible for the time you invest – the good news is that you can get extra benefits with just a few simple changes to your workout!

#### **1. Keep proper form.**

One of the most common mistakes in exercise is not maintaining the right form during the workout. Bad form can lead to muscle pain and stiffness but, more importantly, bad form prevents you from burning as many calories as you normally would. Maintain good posture during exercise and you'll build more muscle faster!

#### **2. Take giant steps.**

During your cardio workout, take deep, wide steps to shape up your thighs and buttocks. By taking a larger step than normal, you require more effort from your muscles – more effort equals more strength and shapeliness. Short, shallow steps don't place enough stress on the muscle to produce fast results, but when you change to bigger movements, you start to see serious muscle taking shape. The same concept is true for running as well: runners who take long, deep strides burn more calories and cover more distance than short-striders.

#### **3. Listen to your breath**

During a cardio workout, check your breathing to see how hard you're truly working. If you can carry on a conversation with ease, it's time to increase intensity. How to know when you're at the right level? The general rule of thumb is that when you can sing the national anthem but need a breath after every phrase, you're most likely at the appropriate level for your needs. You should never work out so hard that you can't talk or begin to feel faint.

#### **4. Double up your workouts.**

Add weights to your cardio routine (or vice versa) and you can start to see results within three weeks! You really see the best of both worlds by using interval training. Interval training is highly effective because you introduce your body to a new challenge every five minutes or so. Traditional cardiovascular exercises focus on building aerobic capacity while weightlifting concentrates on increasing muscle strength. Combining the two into one interval training workout means you get benefits from both!

### **5. Add variety.**

The fastest way to become disillusioned with your workout is to do the same thing over and over again, plus your body can become conditioned to the movements and fail to burn as many calories as you would like. Avoid all this by surprising your body with new and different challenges at least once a week. If you typically run several times during the week, try hiking at a nearby park. If you're a Spinning devotee, take a Pilates class instead. The ultimate switch-up for most exercisers is swimming: an exercise that requires much more aerobic and muscle strength than imagined. Do a few laps in the pool and you'll see what I mean.

### **6. Challenge yourself.**

Set a goal for yourself every week that is beyond your normal effort. Try lifting weights that are five pounds heavier than you normally use, or walking three miles daily rather than two. Small goals like this are easily attainable and can make big changes in the results you see from your workout.

### **7. Introduce yourself to stretching.**

Stretching is sometimes the crazy uncle of the exercise family – nobody really wants to talk about it, but the fact is stretching is key to getting more out of your workout. Stretching assists in muscle recovery from strenuous workouts and can prevent soreness that might stop you from working out. Your entire body feels more comfortable when you have strong, flexible muscles. Spending a few minutes when you wake up and again before and after your workout really add up in terms of flexibility.

### **8. Don't exercise on an empty stomach.**

Sure, it may seem efficient to work out when you haven't eaten in hours but in reality it's a bad decision. When your body's fuel supply is low, you start feeling sluggish and slow – definitely not the ideal mood for a productive workout. An empty stomach does not equal more calories burned.

### **9. Snacks, not meals, provide the best fuel.**

After dining at the all-you-can-eat buffet, you may feel like you should work out just to compensate for overeating, but don't do it. Exercising on a full stomach can lead to cramps, upset stomach, and/or diarrhea because your body is trying to digest the meal and also provide you with energy at the same time. The best way to fuel your body

without nasty side effects is to have a small snack 15 to 30 minutes before you exercise. Ideal snacks include foods with adequate carbohydrates: bread, cereals, and rice.

#### **10. Drink plenty of water.**

You've heard it over and over, but it really is true: water will help you lose weight. Water helps fill your stomach to stop hunger pangs and keeps you alert throughout the day. When you become dehydrated, your entire body slows down and works much less efficiently. Working out causes you to lose hydration through sweat, so it's important to replace lost water after a workout.

We all run short on time these days but by incorporating one or more of these simple strategies you can maximize your workout time and see fantastic results fast!

### **Fitness on the Road**

Fitting in your workouts is tough enough during a normal workweek but when you have to be on the road it can be close to impossible to maintain a regular exercise schedule. How can you possibly keep physical activity as a priority when you stay in a different hotel every night?

Welcome to the twenty-first century, a land of portable workout equipment, companies that reward physically fit staff members, and websites that can point you to fitness-friendly hotels! In the old days you simply put up in whatever mom-and-pop motel was convenient and stayed in your room watching "The Price is Right" and eating a microwave dinner. Times have changed and more people are concerned about maintaining health, especially while traveling for business.

Thanks to the millions of business travelers wielding considerable power over the travel industry, there are more fitness options on the road than ever before. Here are few tips and ideas to make your next road trip physically active and challenging.

#### **Check out your hotel before you get there.**

Thanks to the advent of the Internet, you can find out almost any information that you need to know within minutes. Sometimes this can be bad but in the case of hotel accommodations, it's nothing but good news. Dozens of websites can search available hotels and identify ones that offer fitness centers and swimming pools. If you are able to choose your accommodations, go for places that either have gyms on site or offer free passes to nearby clubs. If you're not a regular gym rat this can be a great chance for you to try out some machines and decide if joining a gym at home would be worth your time and money.

Find out if your hotel has a swimming pool as nearly all do. Be sure to pack your bathing suit and try to swim at least ten laps every day that you stay at the hotel. Swimming is fantastic for building cardiovascular strength without placing a lot of stress on the joints and it doesn't produce a lot of sweat, either. Being aware of your fitness options before you leave on your trip can help you prepare and manage your fitness schedule without getting thrown off balance.

### **Bring your workout equipment with you.**

If your trip will be crammed full of meetings and business, preventing you from using hotel facilities, simply bring your own home gym with you! There are dozens of portable fitness accessories that can be used to tone the body and build strength – you may not be able to fit in a full cardio workout but you can at least maintain your regular strength-training program. Resistance bands are an excellent choice for portable fitness gear. Bands come in a range of strengths so be sure to read the package or try the band out before buying. Purchasing a multi-pack will provide you with multiple options for workouts and is usually fairly inexpensive. Many resistance bands come with their own case but it's easy enough to simply fold the bands and store them in a plastic bag.

Resistance tubing is another option you may want to consider. Tubing can be anchored around a sturdy object and then used for resistance training. Some tubing comes with handles for easy use but if not, simply twist the tubing around your hands or tie it around your ankles to provide the right amount of resistance. Bringing a yoga mat is still another excellent choice. Mats offer you the space for comfortable stretching and yoga practice, and if you're none too sure about the cleanliness of the floor, having a mat to lie on can go a long way toward easing your mind. A rolled-up mat doesn't take up too much space in a suitcase and adds very little weight. Don't forget the classic jump rope for a cardio and strength training workout in one!

### **Get outside!**

This is where the two previous strategies come together: use the Internet to locate your hotel and determine if the surrounding area is safe and pedestrian-friendly. Often a call to the hotel's front desk can accomplish this, too, but if you want to hear the information from an impartial source, call the Chamber of Commerce for the town or county and ask someone there.

If your hotel turns out to be located in a not-so-savory part of town, simply pack your portable workout gear and get your activity right in your room! For the lucky ones with hotels in better areas, plan on taking a walk or run through the area and doing some sightseeing while you exercise. This can be a great chance simply to see new scenery and acquaint yourself with new places. Seize the opportunity and get out of your boring hotel room!

### **Guidelines in Finding A Fitness Club**

You would like to join a fitness club but there are so many choices! Fitness clubs are effective motivators. They should motivate us and not frustrate us. Before you choose on a fitness club, make sure that it suits your needs and goals. And before you do that, you should first learn and decide on what is your priority. By then, you will know what you really need in a fitness club. Here are some guidelines you can consider in choosing a fitness club that is best for you:

### **1. Where is it located?**

The location is the first thing that you should consider when finding a fitness club. If the club is far from your home, you will just another excuse not to work out. It is best to find a facility that is near your home.

### **2. Are the employees friendly and nice? Will they be able to help you reach your goals?**

Make sure that the instructor has the necessary experience to work with you. The instructor should be a certified professional that can work with you safely and effectively. Your instructor should also know if you have physical limitations or you may find an instructor that is well trained to work with you. You can also check the age of the instructor especially if it is one factor for your motivation and learning. The staff should also be helpful, friendly and professional. You can also ask the services they offer and find what is important for you. Some facilities have their own dietician and physical therapists that can offer services for you.

### **3. What kind of programs does it offer?**

Find time to see what programs are there for you and check if they suit your interests. Do they offer group classes? Choose the facility that offers the classes you really like. You can do a trial class to check it out if you want.

### **4. Are the facilities and equipments good and will they be available anytime that is most convenient for you?**

Check if the equipments are enough for all members. Otherwise, you will waste your time falling in line and waiting for your turn. Also make sure that the facility is open during the time you are most likely to do work outs and exercises.

### **5. Is the entire facility well maintained, clean and safe for you?**

Machines and other training facilities should be in clean and in good order. If you see a lot of "out of order" signs, it could be something to think about. Modern equipments are safer and more comfortable to use, so you may also want to consider that. Are the floors cleaned regularly to avoid accidents? Is there enough room for everyone? Also check if the facility is located in a place away from danger, consider also if the location is well lit.

### **6. Are the members of the club friendly and can they be your friends?**

The fitness club is also a venue for social interaction. Take time to drop by and meet the members of the club before you enroll. Other members can be your buddies in the near future and should be considered.

### **7. What is the schedule of classes and will they be convenient for you?**

Find out what classes are offered at a specific time and consider if you will be available at the schedules given.

### **8. How much would it cost you?**

It is important to know the monthly membership fee and what it covers. Some fitness clubs have hidden charges and you should be keen in checking that. Check if they have promotions or discounts and do they offer services at an extra fee. It is also important to know how long the club has been and how often they increase rates.

### **9. How is it different from other fitness clubs?**

Don't just stick into one fitness club. Try to visit as many facilities as you can and make a comparison. Then you can just narrow down your choices to the facilities that met your needs and priorities.

### **10. What do people say about it? Take your time to gather feedback from other members. Ask them what they can say about the club and let them tell you about the experiences with the facility.**

Choosing a fitness club is just like shopping on the best shirt for you. Do not be pressured and do not try to contact them right away. You can take your time to review and gather enough information if you are still not sure which one to choose. Once you have made your choice, enjoy and make the most out of it.

## **The Best Gyms for Busy Professionals**

When you are constantly busy and on the go with work, it can be difficult to keep a regular exercise schedule. Relying on your self-discipline to get you up at 6:30 on Saturday morning for a run is probably not the best idea, but fortunately you no longer have to bully yourself out of bed for exercise. Gyms that cater to busy workers are popping up all over the country and more established gyms are offering better deals for the 9-5 crowds. You should check out the facility itself along with the terms of the deal before signing anything. Here are some tips for finding the best gym for you!

### **Check the schedule**

Many gyms now stay open twenty-four hours a day, including the popular chain 24-Hour Fitness, allowing you to work out at any time of day or night. You may not necessarily want to work out at 3AM but for some people it does fit into their schedules much better than a typical gym. If your job typically keeps you at the office past seven in the evening, then heading straight to the gym will probably work for you.

Most trainers recommend not exercising within three hours of going to bed to avoid difficulty in falling asleep and you should keep that in mind when you exercise in the evening. If you are interested in taking classes at the gym, talk to a staff member about the evening class selection. Gyms that value their busy working patrons will offer a full selection of cardio and yoga classes for the evening hours. Also find out about any restrictions – does the pool close at 10 P.M.? Will you need identification to use equipment after a certain time? Knowing these things ahead of time will save you stress and hassle later on.

### **Investigate the facilities**

The facilities offered by the gym can be more important to some people than others, but at the very minimum a good gym should offer a weight-lifting room fully equipped with machines that in top condition, a wide open area for cardio exercise classes, separate locker rooms for men and women, and a swimming pool.

Other gyms may offer specialized classes like Spinning and Yogilates or amenities like saunas and massage services. Decide ahead of time what's important to you and write down exactly what you want in a gym. Visit some local gyms and determine how they measure up to your needs. You should check out each area thoroughly and feel comfortable with it.

Subtly check out the gym-goers and ask yourself if they look like people with whom you would feel comfortable sharing machines and locker rooms. Investigate the locker room for your use and assess its level of cleanliness. You may want to ask a staff member about maintenance and cleanliness.

Another important aspect that many people forget about is the parking lot. Did you have trouble finding a parking place when you came? Ask a staff member or gym regular about parking and the number of people that use it. Find out the busy times and slow times, and then assess how it fits into your schedule.

### **Read the contract before you sign**

This one seems like it should be obvious but too many people sign all kinds of contracts without ever reading the fine print. This is especially important in a gym contract because if you have to cancel early for any reason, there can be sizable fees involved. The contract will also tell you exactly what is included for your money for you can make the most of your contract. Maybe you didn't realize you would have access to the spa but the contract states that you do. That's a nice bonus right there! You should be offered your own copy of the contract and if not, feel free to make one for your records so that you can refer to it if any dispute arises over your usage of the gym.

## **Understand the fees**

This is something else you should understand fully before signing the contract. Many gyms offer graduated programs that can be adapted to your needs. If you know you aren't interested in the swimming pool (even though that's a fantastic way to shape up) then you may not have to pay for the use of it. If your potential gym doesn't offer a program like that, ask if they would be willing to make a special deal with you. Explain that you really like the gym but don't need the full package offered. Many gyms are willing to negotiate with you as long as you approach it with friendliness and respect.

## **Best Gym Machines**

When you step into the gym for the first time, it can be overwhelming to see the variety of machines for you to choose from. How do you tell which machine is the best one to meet your needs? The smartest thing to do is to ask an employee or arrange for a one-time session with one of the gym's personal trainers so that you can walk around and get a feel for the gym and understand the purpose of each machine. Using exercise machines as part of your regular workout schedule can be a fantastic way to mix things up and challenge your muscles so they don't get accustomed to the same thing. You can also use machines like rowers and treadmills to get in your aerobic exercise and cut down on stress on the joints.

Despite the excess of workout machines at the gym, there are a few machines that stand out from the crowd. These machines allow you to burn more calories and fat while strengthening and shaping your muscles, and go above and beyond the performance of many others. If you're unfamiliar with these machines, ask a trainer to demonstrate for you at the gym. Most of these aren't complex so you don't have to be a rocket scientist to figure out how to use them. Use one or more of these machines in your workout program two to three times per week and be amazed at the change in your body.

## **Treadmill**

Perhaps the king of all gym machines, the treadmill is so much more than just a walking machine. Most of the latest models come with features like incline adjustment, arm tools and more to help maximize your workout time. A digital panel at the front will tell you important information like completed distance, calories burned and other facts. Many treadmills offer preplanned computerized workouts for you to choose from. The best of these is a workout that challenges you by changing the incline, speed and stride at different intervals throughout the workout. Using one of these treadmills can increase your calorie burn up to twice what a normal walking workout would burn. Vary the routine by adding your own arm movements when possible. Raise arms overhead up and down to the pace of your walk or reach forward with alternating arms. This can boost your heart rate higher and increase your total calorie burn.

## **Lateral Pulldown**

One of the best weight machines in the gym today, the lateral pulldown machine works your arms, core and back in one simple movement. Stand at the front of the machine with your feet about shoulder width apart and a handle in each hand. Slowly bring your arms backward as the weights pull on the bands. Do not let your arms go back further than your shoulders or else you risk injury. Slowly pull the bands forward and down as you feel the effort in your back muscles and core. Repeat for 3 sets of 20 repetitions. Be sure that the weight is manageable and ask for help if not. Lat pulldowns can seriously shape up your back and core with just three workouts throughout the week. Your calorie burn is modest but as you replace more fat with muscle, your daily metabolic rate will rise since muscle requires more fuel than fat.

## **Rowing Machine**

Don't overlook this humble piece of equipment that looks a little bit like training apparatus for beginning skiers. The rowing machine can powerfully develop your back, arms, legs, and core with just four workouts during the week. As you position yourself in the seat, make sure you sit erect and keep your abdominal muscles tight. Grasp the handles and pull back at the same time you push off with your legs. Maintain good posture during your workout to burn more calories. Keep rowing for twenty to thirty minutes (depending on your fitness level) and make sure to stretch your entire body after the workout. Use the rower three to four times a week and you'll begin to see major changes within your body in just a few weeks.

Don't feel like joining a gym. I don't blame you. Many of us would far rather do our working out in the comfort and privacy of our own homes.

## **Things to Consider When Buying Home Fitness Equipment**

There are a hundred lots of home fitness equipment nowadays that are sold in the market. Do not make the mistake in buying something and then regretting why you bought it after a day or two. Home fitness equipments vary and you should always have one good reason to buy it. Don't believe on everything commercials tell you about the equipment. Some equipment may seem easy to use on television but in fact will not really work for you. Try to ask yourself first of these questions before you grab your wallet and buy that equipment.

Do you need it? The equipment should suit your interests and needs. The activities that you will do with that equipment should be challenging and something to enjoy on. Buying equipment is never a guarantee that you will use it especially if it is something new that makes it harder to use. Make sure that you already know the equipment and that it is something that you already tried in a fitness club. Start from buying small

equipments that are aligned to your interests.

Can you afford it? Don't be fooled with the thought that you will be forced to use something because you spent too much money for it. Expensive equipments are never an assurance that you will use them or that they are effective for you. Always consider how much are you willing to pay for certain equipment. Also ask yourself if it is worth it. Always check on the quality before you buy equipment. The price may be too low but consider that the quality can also be low. Or it may be expensive but then the quality is not that good. You can try choosing on cheaper alternatives but not sacrificing the quality of the equipment.

You may also want to check out for some used equipments. Most of the time, this is where you find a better deal. You can even find equipments that do not seem to have been used at a very low rate. Or you can find the equipment 3 months old but the price is almost half the original.

Do you have enough space for it? This is often what buyers forget to consider. Try to consider first where to place a treadmill before buying it. Before you buy something, make sure you know where you will place it. Your place may not accommodate the equipment. Plan ahead and make sure that the equipment can be placed in your home without causing any hassle.

Is it safe for you? If you have existing conditions, be sure to check with your doctor to make sure that the equipment will be safe for you. Some equipment may be painful to use and might cause harm to your body. So make sure to try it first before you buy it.

It also suggested that you first consider if a gym near you already has that equipment. You can save money by just registering to that gym and use that equipment compared the price you will spend if you will buy that product.

Buying fitness equipments should be bought with consideration. Do not buy by impulse. Always ask the opinion of a professional gym instructor before you buy something.

### **Fitness Equipment for the Office**

Your office is practically your home away from home: you spend eight or more hours there everyday, eat at least one major meal at your desk, and usually keep some clothes there as well. Even though you spend so much time in one place, it can be difficult to think of the office as anything but work, but it's time to challenge your brain and consider your office the latest extension to your fitness program!

Those eight hours that you put in at your desk need to have some activity in them beyond sending out emails and leaving your desk for just five minutes to do some exercise can not only improve your body physically but it can clear your mind and change your mood! You may not believe that it's possible to actually exercise within the

confines of your office, but with the addition of a few vital tools you can break for exercise whenever you feel like (within reason)!

When you're thinking about exercise at the office, you probably imagine the infamous "take the stairs over the elevator" scenario repeated in so many women's magazines. Taking the stairs is great and it does work to build strength in your gluteus maximus (buttocks), but variety is good. Use the stairs as your personal stairclimber a few times during the week but on regular days incorporate some of the following ideas into your day and not only will you build muscle and shape your body, but you'll break your boredom as well.

One of the best pieces of equipment to have for the office is a set of hand weights. Most discount and sports stores carry sets that have weights ranging from 3-10 lbs. and have a storage rack included. These are usually not that expensive and are perfect for short weight-training sessions. You can store them under your desk (if there's room) or beside a bookcase or filing cabinet. The rack will hold the weights in place so there will be no rolling around or stubbing your toe. Once you have your weights, plan to incorporate short sessions three days per week to allow adequate time for your muscles to rest and recovery.

The obvious schedule would be Monday-Wednesday-Friday (unless your work requires you in the office on weekends as well), so think about those days and figure out the best times for you to stop and lift weights. Maybe you have a coffee break at 10:45 or 3:00. Whenever you can conveniently fit in a five minute segment for lifting weights, make a note. Try for four sessions throughout the day but three can work if needed. Follow a simple routine that works your biceps, triceps, shoulders, and other upper body muscles. Perform the movements slowly to get the maximum benefit from them. Remember to stretch your arms after finishing.

Another handy piece of office fitness equipment is a set of resistance bands. These bands are wide swatches of synthetic material that come in varying degrees of resistance and are usually color-coded as to resistance. Bands can be used much the same as weights. Place one end under a foot and hold the other end in your hand (you may need to adjust the length to get it just right). Hold your elbow close by your side and begin pulling the band up and slowly lowering down. You can use your bands for pull-downs as well, holding one end in each hand and raising behind head, stretching tightly and slowly lowering and raising.

The main difference between bands and weights is that hand weights typically cannot be used for legwork while bands can. Tie one end of the band around your ankle and place the other end securely under your foot. Using the foot with the band tied around it, lift it a few inches off the floor and to the side, and begin lifting the leg out and back to work the thigh muscles and sides of the hip.

While not as glamorous as hand weights or resistance bands, good old-fashioned squats and lunges are still among the best exercises in the world to strengthen legs and buttocks. Standing in front of a chair with feet about shoulder width apart, slowly lower your body until your buttocks barely touch the chair, then stands up. Repeat for 3 sets

of 15 repetitions. For lunges, begin in the same position and take one step forward with your right foot. Turn your back foot up until you are balanced on the toes of your left foot, lead forward so that your right knee forms a right angle with your leg, place hands on hips or on a chair for support, and slowly drop your body straight and then raise up. Repeat for 3 sets of 15 repetitions. You probably will want to close your office door while performing these movements lest your co-workers film you.

There are multiple options for fitting in exercise at work, even within the office itself. Invest a little money in weights or bands, or simply work with your body's own resistance to shape and strengthen your muscles. No matter what method you choose, you will be pleased with the results.

### **Cardiovascular Exercise versus Weight Training**

All exercisers, whether beginners or old hands, will ask themselves at some point if they should switch to an all-cardio or all-weight training program. Trainers are asked this question every day in gyms across America and more curious folks write in to fitness columns to pose the query. Does it really matter if you do all-cardio or all-weights? The short answer to this question is yes, it does matter.

Cardiovascular exercise primarily focuses on developing and strengthening the cardiovascular system through aerobic training. This means strengthening your heart, lungs, and blood vessels so that they all work more efficiently, both together and individually. By training the body to meet higher and higher levels of aerobic endurance, you increase the efficacy of your system. This is a fantastic move to make your present life easier and more pleasant, but it's also a smart move to prepare for later life.

Research proves over and over again that adults who maintain a high level of fitness throughout early and middle life end up living fuller, more productive lives as seniors. That's in addition to living longer than people who don't exercise. The benefits of cardiovascular exercise are almost too numerous to list: lower blood pressure, lower 'bad' cholesterol and higher 'good', decreased incidence of heart attack and stroke, decreased risk of osteoporosis, overall decreased risk of most cancers, increased life span and more. Cardiovascular or aerobic exercise is the smartest choice around – or is it?

Weight training aims to strengthen the muscles by lifting weights. By increasing the overall strength of the muscles in the body, the support of the body is increased and allows for greater ease of living. Since the muscles connect to each other and all essentially hold up the skeleton, without them there would be no way to move to exercise. People who lift weights are shown to have many of the same characteristics as those who engage in cardiovascular exercise. Weight-lifters also experience a decreased risk of bone fractures since the weights help build bone through the resistance. Lifting weights is surely the best approach to fitness – right?

In reality, the number one way to achieve ultimate fitness in your life is to combine the two approaches of aerobic exercise and strength training to boost your health to the optimum level. The two methods, though targeting different systems, form a beautiful relationship that works together to develop and build all aspects of the body to create the strongest, healthiest body possible. Cardiovascular exercise strengthens the lungs and allows the body to build up stamina. Weight training uses that stamina to build muscles for longer periods of time. The muscles then act in their roles as support team for the skeleton and organs, and can work more efficiently. The increased efficiency of the body means that it can develop greater aerobic capacity through exercise – and you see how the cycle begins again. Cardio and strength training feed off each other to develop your best body ever.

The next question should be obvious: what's the best combination aerobic and strength training workout? The answer to this is swimming. Swimming is the ultimate aerobic conditioner as well as muscle builder. Thanks to the buoyancy you experience underwater, your muscles can concentrate more on working than on supporting your body. Doing all those laps, though, requires a great deal of aerobic stamina. Thus all of your body's systems get a thorough workout when you swim. One recommended program is to swim a certain number of laps in the pool but on each lap, swim a different style. On your first lap, swim freestyle to get into the groove and warm your muscles. On your second lap, swim breaststroke. Do backstroke on the third. Rotate the strokes so that your muscles are continually surprised and challenged. Do this as your swimming workout four to five times a week and you will be amazed at the change in your body both in shape and in endurance.

The smart exerciser knows that there's no choosing between cardiovascular exercise and weight training. The best programs always incorporate a variety of the two to provide maximum development and strength. Start adding your own combination workouts to your schedule and be delighted as your body starts to truly reinvent itself.

### **Best Moves for Waistline**

Shaping and toning the waistline is one of the top areas of concern for both men and women of all ages. Go to any gym and you'll see dozens of people lining up for belly dancing, crunch classes, and anything else that promises to shrink your waistline fast. The fact is that shaping and strengthening any part of the body always takes time and you typically have to wait two to three weeks before you can tell any real difference. The waistline in particular can be a challenging area to tone, but if you stick with it you will see results.

Most people want their waistlines to be slimmer for appearances' sake, but the government is concerned about waistlines for an entirely different reason. Several independent scientific studies over the past few years have shown that men with a waist

measurement greater than 40 inches and women with a measurement greater than 35 inches are at increased risk for heart disease and stroke. Think about it that way and it becomes even more important to slim the waistline down and keep it toned.

Shrinking your waistline should be addressed with a two-pronged plan: diet and exercise. It's not much use to spend hours working on the waist if you go out and eat a burger and fries afterward. The most successful programs to shape up the body address both exercise and food intake to increase the odds of success. When you're talking about slimming the waist, there will be some measure of fat reduction involved and that requires exercise as well as the proper diet to fuel your body and avoid empty calories that lead to more fat. You can see that in order to get the best results you need address more than one area; hence the exercise and diet approach.

Thinking about diet, there's not really a need to go on any specific diet to see results. Simply maintain a healthy diet that incorporates plenty of vegetables and fresh fruit as well as adequate protein and unsaturated fat. Keep a food journal to track your meals and exactly what is going in your mouth and body every day. This can be a powerful tool to identify problem areas and cravings.

One thing you may want to avoid while working on the waistline is too much fiber. Since fiber is bulky, it fills the stomach up faster but it can also lead to bloating. To have the flattest stomach possible, avoid eating too much fiber without pairing it with plenty of water or fresh fruit to help move it through the system. Also cut back on sodium to avoid bloating from water retention. The typical adult diet contains more than 3500 mg of sodium – over one thousand milligrams more than the recommended daily allowance. Smart people will cut back on sodium not just to avoid bloat but to decrease risk of high blood pressure and kidney disease.

You're eating healthy and keeping a daily journal to track your food intake. Now what? It's time to think about cardiovascular exercise! There are some cardio exercises that are better than others for toning, but if you have fat around the middle you need to lose that first before concentrating on toning and shaping the muscles of the middle. Excellent activities that promote weight loss are swimming, brisk walking, and interval training. Swimming is among the highest calorie-burning activities because of the way the water supports your body. Since your muscles don't have to split attention between keeping your frame upright and moving you forward, they will expend more effort (calories) in propelling you through the water. Swimming is also great because water requires a greater effort to push against it and move forward, requiring greater effort from muscles. Thus you burn a larger amount of calories and fat.

Brisk walking is also good for burning calories but try to stay away from flat surfaces and instead walk in hilly areas that will surprise and challenge your muscles. You duplicate that effect by using a treadmill that has an adjustable incline. Some treadmills have programs that replicate walking in a hilly area and adjust the incline throughout the workout to strengthen and tone more than one area. Include arm movements with your walk and you boost your heart rate and metabolism, firing more calories in the process. Interval training is a good choice as well because of the amount of calories you can burn during a workout. It can be incorporated with brisk walking whether you're at the

gym or on the street; simply make sure your strength training equipment is nearby so you can switch from cardio to strength training quickly and easily.

Burn the fat away from your middle and you're halfway to having the waistline of your dreams. The last step of the successful waistline shrinkage program is to work the waist with toning exercises. Performing sit-ups is a time-honored method of firming the stomach but won't really make your waistline any smaller. Instead, try a hula-hoop (seriously!) or take a waistline-focused class from your gym. Belly dancing is also great for slimming the sides and can burn a fair amount of calories, but don't let it take the place of your regular cardio workout. Cover all your bases with diet, exercise and toning, and before you know it your waistline will be slim and trim!

### **Shaping Up the Hips and Thighs**

For the vast majority of women, shapeless hips and thighs with excess fat are a major complaint. Thanks to female physiology, women's bodies are simply designed to retain fat in the hip/thigh area to assist with childbearing and be available for energy in case of famine. That was great back in the caveman days but in modern times the typical woman is not likely to need several months' worth of fat stored on her hips. Physiology is not likely to change any time soon, though, so women have to combat fat on the hips and thighs in a different way. Fortunately the area can be slimmed down through a combination of diet, exercise and specifically targeted toning movements so that your hips and thighs no longer resemble that of a cavewoman.

Begin by assessing your diet – do you eat a lot of junk food or dine out frequently? Oftentimes a busy schedule can prevent people from eating as healthy as they would like, especially since it can be difficult to get away from work for a real meal. What about cravings? Women especially are prone to cravings for high-fat, high-calorie foods that have no real nutritional value. Premenstrual syndrome can be responsible for many of those cravings but often emotional eating is a factor as well.

You should take an honest look at your diet and keep a food diary for a few days. Write everything you eat and how you felt at the time. That can provide insight into your choices for nourishment. If you're dealing with stressful situations at home or work, that can reflect itself in your daily diet. Make a commitment to yourself to change your eating habits and take care of your body by providing yourself with healthy, nutritious foods that give you the right kind of fuel to make it through the day. Eating a properly balanced diet can actually help to alleviate many symptoms of stress and may help you deal with your situation more effectively. When you know how to use it properly, food is a powerful tool.

As part of your program, you should keep a food journal to track your eating and also motivate yourself to eat better every day. Knowing that you will have to write down two chocolate bars including the amount of calories and fat can deter you from eating them

in the first place – one of the reasons that food journals are so powerful. Being able to track your feelings at the time you ate can help you identify emotional issues and encourage you to eat because you want to, not because your boss yelled at you. Consider also using your food journal to keep track of your weight and measurements once a week to provide yourself with an accurate record of your progress over the weeks.

Consider your exercise program – do you have one? You should! When the hips and thighs are chubby and out of shape, that's typically a situation that will require a lot of fat-burning. The issue is not so much that the muscles aren't in shape but that there's too much fat over the muscles to show any real definition. Fat-burning activities will be a vital part of reshaping your lower body and you should plan to work out at least four times every week for about thirty to forty-five minutes each time.

The good news is that you don't have to work out all at once – fit three 10-minute workouts into your day and you've done your exercise. Recent studies show that short, intense spurts of exercise can be just as effective as longer workouts. That's good news for everyone with busy days and busier nights. The best choices for fat-burning are swimming, power-walking, and high-intensity aerobics. All three of these options will blast calories from your body and help torch the fat from your body.

Burning the fat off is your first priority in order to see the true shape of your body underneath. In between your fat-blasting workouts, make time to strengthen your hip and thigh area by doing squats and lunges as well as lateral raises to tone the outer thighs. You may want to wait to focus on the strengthening exercises until you have lost fat from the hips and thighs, but fortunately this is an area that builds muscle fairly quickly. Squats are an especially powerful move to tone up the buttocks and increase the power of your workouts.

Shaping up the hips and thighs is by no means impossible. Make your plan, keep a daily food record, and burn fat through cardiovascular exercise – your lower body will start to reshape itself within a few weeks. There's nothing better than looking in the mirror and knowing that the strong, beautiful lower body is thanks to your hard work and effort.

### **Best Moves for Shapely Legs**

Legs are frequently the subject of self-recrimination among many people, men and women included, but it doesn't have to be that way. Your legs are a vital part of your body, carrying you around every day and rarely complaining. It's important to keep your legs in the best shape possible so that years from now the two of them will still be taking you up stairs and around town. Leg health is also important in case of illness that confines you to bed. Bedridden patients whose legs were not healthy before illness suffer Deep Vein Thrombosis (DVT) up to twice as often as those with strong legs. You may never end up in a hospital bed, unable to get out, but good leg health will ease your mind just the same.

The legs are made up of six major muscles and muscle groups. Located in the front of the thigh is a group of muscles known as the quadriceps. Opposite the quadriceps is another group of muscles called the hamstrings. The inside thigh is the location of the adductors. The lower consists of the gastrocnemius and soleus muscles in the back and the tibialis anterior muscle in the front. Connecting the leg and hipbone to the spine are the hip flexors and the iliopsoas.

All of these muscles must work together in perfect harmony in order for you to be able to walk, point your foot up, straighten your knee, and much more. When these muscles are strong and well conditioned they become firm and well defined, but let them get weak and the muscles will sag. Good muscle tone also helps prevent varicose and spider veins in the legs. While neither type of vein is especially dangerous, they are both unattractive and will rarely disappear on their own. Most varicose and spider veins must be treated by a doctor with either a laser or an injected saline solution. Keeping your legs healthy will prevent 95 percent of all varicose and spider veins.

Deciding to make a point of maintaining strong, healthy legs is a wonderful decision and fortunately many of the muscles in the legs are some of the fastest to respond to conditioning. Aerobic exercise is great for some toning but concentrated work is best to shape the individual muscles. Some of them, like the adductors, are used so rarely that they can be challenging to tone but it is possible. To see maximum results for your legs, you should plan to work out at least three times weekly. Four to five sessions during the week are better and will give you faster results, but if you can only do three for now that's fine to start.

The granddaddy of all leg conditioning movements is the lunge. Trainers across the nation put their clients through the lunging paces thousands of times every day and there's a reason for that. The lunge is the one movement that can target most of the major muscles within the leg and shape them up fast. Lunging down requires the use of both lower leg muscles to help stabilize you and then the upper leg muscles to raise your body back up. By performing the same movement over and over you condition the muscle to take on the strongest form possible.

If you have bad knees, though, lunging can be difficult and sometimes downright impossible. Rather than trying to force your body through pain, though, try modifying the movement. Instead of dropping your body all the way to the bottom of the movement, go only halfway or as far as you feel comfortable. Don't step too far forward in the beginning and that will lessen some of the strain on the knee joint. The ultimate solution is simply to not do lunges at all and for some people it may be the only option. There are plenty of other choices that will help strengthen your legs without placing so much demand on your knees.

Squats are another excellent choice for firming and shaping the buttocks and upper thighs. As you squat, you demand a lot of work from the muscles in your buttocks and legs both going down and coming up. That demand intensified by 20 times results in some serious definition after several sessions. To work the inner and outer thighs, lateral raises are wonderful. Begin with your weight on your left foot and your right foot

pointed slightly behind you. Hold on to a chair or wall for balance and slowly raise and lower your right leg out to the side. Raising your leg high isn't so much the issue as just raising it and asking your muscles to make the effort. Do at least 20 repetitions for 3 sets several times per week to tone hips and back of the thigh.

The inner thigh is a bit more challenging. Typically only used in climbing stairs or inclines, the inner thigh can get flabby fast without regular exercise. To condition the muscle, stand again with your weight on your left foot, raise and point your right foot in front of you, and slowly move your right foot and leg across your left leg. You should feel the stress in your inner thigh – if not, turn your leg so that the inner thigh is facing the ceiling and slowly sweep the leg back and forth across the other. Repeat for 3 sets of 20 repetitions.

Strong, healthy legs are worth the effort but the best part is that they respond quickly without putting in weeks of work. Incorporate squats and lunges into random parts of your day – brushing your teeth, doing laundry, washing dishes – and you'll be pleasantly surprised at how fast your legs shape up!

### **Building Upper Body Strength**

When you are considering beginning a training schedule for upper body strength, you should consider a few factors such as your age, health, and current strength level. If you are new to exercising and haven't really done any strength training before, it's best to start out at the lightest weight that's comfortable to you and work up from there. More experienced exercisers can better assess their own strength and decide what works. If you are older than 60 years of age, you may want to consult with your doctor to determine the best fitness program for bone and muscle health with the least amount of risk.

If you belong to a gym, ask a trainer to show you around the weight room and identify each machine and its use. Using weight machines can be a wonderful way to work your upper body but it's important to understand how they work first. Weight machines can be difficult at times, especially if you need to change the weights and have never done so. If you need to use a machine that you don't understand, ask a trainer or friendly nearby guest to give you a quick run-down. You may also want to consider arranging a private session with a trainer to help you get off on the right foot with your workout program. Trainers can also give you a general plan to follow to build strength over several months and that can be invaluable if you plan to go it alone at the gym.

For home exercises, you will need to invest in a set of weights that ranges from 3-10 lbs. You may require heavier weights later down the road, but this is the perfect set for beginners because of the range. Many discount stores sell a full set of weight with storage rack for \$25 or less, so this shouldn't be terribly expensive. Set up your weights in the room that you plan to use for working out. Keeping them in the same place is important so that you get into a habit of using them, but don't put them somewhere

that you rarely go. Out of sight, out of mind, is the rule for home weight lifting. If you don't see the weights, you're not going to think about using them.

Many people ask about weight benches and barbells. Those are great accessories and can be very useful in a home gym, but for beginning weight lifters there's really no need unless you simply want to buy them. Once you have bought and set up your weights, it's time to plan your schedule. Locate a calendar and using the schedule below, mark down the days you will work out in a brightly colored ink to make it stand out. Writing down your workouts seal the day in your mind so that even if you don't see the calendar that day, you still remember you're supposed to be doing something.

The following schedule is a sample one-week program for the beginner level. Rest days are scheduled in to allow muscles adequate recovery time. Warm up muscles by walking briskly in place for two minutes while swinging arms gently. Rest no more than two minutes between sets.

## **Week 1**

### Day 1

Set 1, *Bicep Curls*: With arms at sides and elbows held firmly against body, hold weight comfortably in hand and raise for 5 counts; lower for 5 counts. Repeat for 2 sets of 15 repetitions.

Set 2, *Lateral raise*: With weights in hands, hold arms at 90-degree angle with weights in front. Slowly raise the elbow directly upward; then lower. Repeat for 2 sets of 10 repetitions.

Set 3, *Overhead press*: Hold weights in hands and rise to shoulder height. Slowly press weights overhead until arms are not quite fully extended; slowly lower. Repeat for 2 sets of 15 repetitions.

Set 4, *Lateral fly*: Hold weights in hands; raise arms up and open to the side. Bring weights together in front of the body; slowly open and bring back to sides. Repeat for 2 sets of 10 repetitions.

### Day 2 – Rest & Recovery Day

### Day 3

Set 1, *Forward press*: Hold weights in hands and bring up to chest height. Slowly push weights forward for count of 5; bring back for count of 5. Repeat for 2 sets of 12 reps.

Set 2, *Tricep raise*: With weight in right hand, lift straight overhead and then slowly lower backward until the elbow is at right angle. Lift to original position; repeat for 2 sets of 10 repetitions. Repeat on left side.

Set 3, *Shoulder fly*: Hold weights in hands at sides; with palms down, slowly lift up until

just below shoulder-height; slowly lower. Repeat for 2 sets of 15 repetitions.

Set 4, *Hammer curls*: With weights in hands, turn palms facing each other. Lift weight up almost to arm; slowly lower. Repeat for 2 sets of 12 repetitions.

Day 4 – Rest & Recovery Day

Day 5

Set 1, *Backward lift*: Hold weights in hands and turn palms facing behind you. Lift arms behind you as far as possible, hold for count of 5, then slowly release. Repeat for 2 sets of 10 repetitions.

Set 2, *Alternating punches*: Hold weights in hands and raise to shoulder height. Beginning with right hand, press weight straight forward and slowly bring back; then repeat with left hand. Repeat for 2 sets of 10 repetitions for each side (20 total).

Set 3, *Upward row*: Hold weights in hands; step forward with one foot and lean forward. Extend arms downward, keeping the back straight; lift weights slowly as though starting a lawnmower in slow motion. Repeat for 2 sets of 12 repetitions.

Set 4, *Angled Bicep curls*: Hold weights in hands with elbows tucked against body. Angle arms slightly out to the sides; slowly raise and lower the weights. Repeat for 2 sets of 12 repetitions.

Days 6-7 – Rest & Recovery Days

All times are approximate.

0:01 – 1:00 – Begin by walking briskly in place to warm up the muscles. Warming the muscles makes them pliable and will allow you to work longer.

1:01 – 3:00 – Perform as many squats as possible in two minutes.

3:01 – 4:00 – Rest for one minute.

4:01 – 6:00 – Perform as many pliès as possible in two minutes.

6:01 – 7:00 – Rest for one minute.

7:01 – 9:00 – Perform as many lunges (both legs) as possible in two minutes.

### **Build a Better Butt**

Everyone wants to improve his or her rear views. For some, it's too flat; for others, too saggy. Still more people think it's just too big. The thousands of different complaints at the back end indicate that the majority of people dislike the way their buttocks appear. Fortunately the rear end is one of the easiest muscles to firm up and will respond to exercise very quickly, usually within three weeks. Shaping up the buttocks is not just about looks – a strong and toned rear end can make your daily tasks easier as well as

increasing your calorie burn during cardiovascular exercise. The muscles in the buttocks are used to walking, sitting, standing, and many more movements. When your backside is powerful and well-developed, you will be able to move better through the day since your muscles can respond to your body's needs better than ever before.

The muscles in the buttocks are actually considered part of the lower back. A group of muscles known as the gluteals, provide support and play important roles in development of both the legs and the torso. The largest one, the gluteus maximus, lies on the backside of the hip on each side of the body and makes it possible to extend and move the thighs outward. Just in front of the gluteus maximus are the gluteus minimus and medius, which enable the thigh to turn outward. The delicate and complex relationship between the gluteal group of muscles and the rest of the body allows you to squat, raise your body back up, step to the side, and perform dozens of other common daily actions. When your gluteal muscles are strong and fit, they can do a much better job of supporting your body throughout your challenging days.

Before you embark on a program to build a better butt, it's important to assess your attitude. Do you consider your back end to be a nuisance because of its shape? What are your reasons for changing it? While most Western cultures place some measure of sexual appeal on the shape, size and firmness of buttocks, your goal should be to appreciate what you have regardless of condition. Without being aware of it, your buttocks are working for you every moment, even when you're sitting, to keep your body centered and balanced. Work to change your butt because you want the strongest, healthiest body you can have. If your butt fills out your jeans better than ever, that's great, but let the change be for the sake of your body.

In terms of reshaping your buttocks, this can be one of the fastest and most rewarding fitness goals. If you are overweight, you will still see results but be aware that burning calories through aerobic exercise will reveal more of your newly firm buttocks. Because the muscle group is so large and is used almost constantly, it responds quickly to conditioning exercises. Most people see a difference within three weeks and many actually feel the difference in a matter of days. The exercises below are all wonderful for firming and strengthening the gluteal muscles, and should be done in 3 sets of 25 repetitions. Be sure to maintain good posture with your back straight and shoulders back. Work on your gluteal muscles three to four times a week and you will be amazed and pleasantly surprised at the fast response and amazing muscle tone that quickly becomes evident.

**Squats:** Prepare for squats by standing about six inches in front of a straight-back chair with your feet slightly wider than shoulder-width apart. You may want to put your hands on your hips or raise them in front as you squat. Begin to slowly lower your body backwards as though you were going to sit down in the chair. When you feel your buttocks just barely touch, slowly stand up.

It is vital to maintain excellent posture during squats to get the maximum benefit from the movement. Use your heels as the primary weight-bearers and imagine yourself pushing down through the heels to the floor. Because the gluteus maximus is so large, it requires plenty of calories to fuel its movement. Incorporating squats into an aerobic

exercise is a powerful way to torch even more calories.

**Leg Press:** Use the leg press machine at the gym for this exercise. If the machine is weight-based, adjust the weights to the appropriate level. If it is hydraulic-based, simply sit down and position your feet. You should place your body in the seat so that you are sitting up with good posture. Your legs should reach the pressing platform without stretching or feeling uncomfortable. Place the entire soles of both feet against the platform and slowly push away. When you have extended your legs almost fully, slowly allow the weight to push your legs back.

Performing this exercise slowly is the key to building up strength. Be sure to avoid using only the balls of your feet since that builds the calf muscles rather than the buttocks and thighs.

## **10-Minute Exercises with Big Results**

Many busy professionals feel that working out isn't worth the time unless they can exercise for forty minutes or longer and it's true that many healthcare workers and government agencies used to recommend that all adults get thirty consecutive minutes of aerobic exercise per day. But this is the twenty-first century and the fact of the matter is that you don't have to do all your exercise at once to reap the health benefits.

Research has shown that short, intense exercise segments throughout the day are just as effective as longer workouts at burning calories, increasing cardio endurance and lowering blood pressure and cholesterol. Even as little as five minutes can go a long way towards balancing hormones in the body and making you a happier person – is that great or what? You no longer have to worry about finding a large block of free time to work out; just take a coffee break and in five minutes you can feel totally rejuvenated.

One of the greatest things about shorter workouts is that they have tremendous potential to reshape your body with a minimum time commitment. Incorporating strength training exercises into your daily schedule is a powerful tool for both heart health and muscle strength. Spend five minutes doing lower body exercises and after several weeks you can tell a difference. Spend ten minutes on a power workout and results will show up in three weeks or less.

Use the following ten-minute express workouts on a regular basis for a month and you will see remarkable changes in your body's strength. You can do these workouts in your office with the door closed or, if your office is a cubicle, in the restroom or some other private area. Do whatever is necessary for you to fit in your exercise time at work.

### **Express Workout 1: Hips and Thighs**

Hips and thighs can be a frustrating area to shape up especially for women. Thanks to

the physiological design of female bodies, fat tends to be stored in the thighs and hips and can be very resistant to toning efforts. Perform this routine three to four times weekly in conjunction with aerobic exercise and your body will begin to reshape in six to ten weeks.

*Squats:* Squats are performed by standing with feet about shoulder-width apart and arms by sides. Keep strong posture and slowly lower buttocks as though about to sit down in a chair. Lower several inches and then slowly raise.

*Pliés:* Adopted from ballet, pliés are performed by standing with feet just wider than shoulder-width and toes pointed outward. With a hand on a chair or wall for balance, slowly drop body straight down for several inches and then come back up. To increase intensity, on the final pliè, stay in a lowered position and slowly pulse your body up and down about an inch. This fatigues the muscle faster.

*Lunges:* Lunges are performed by standing with feet about shoulder-width apart and hands on hips. Stand tall and take a large step forward with one foot, and remain in that position. Turn your back foot up until balanced on the toes and then slowly lower your body until your front knee forms a right angle. Slowly raise your body back up. Repeat on each side.

*Leg Stretches:* Stand with feet about shoulder-width apart and one hand holding a chair or wall for balance. Raise one foot behind you and reach back with your hand, grab the foot and gently pull it towards your buttocks. This stretches the quadriceps muscle on the front of the leg. Repeat with each leg.

For stretching the calf muscle, place one foot slightly in front of you and point your toes up, balancing on the heel. Keep your weight on the foot that is not being stretched. Repeat on both sides.

### **Maintaining Fitness**

When you're a busy professional and spend a lot of time at your desk, it can be difficult to stay fit with your crazy schedule. You worked hard to get in shape, though, so don't let it slip away without a fight! There are dozens of ways that you can maintain your fitness level without requiring a large investment time every single day. Studies from leading scientists now show that short workouts throughout the day are just as powerful for the body as one long workout, so don't feel guilty about not being able to spend a full hour or even 45 minutes working on your body. Appreciate the time that you have and maximize it for the best results.

If your company is one of the enlightened few in America that offer fitness facilities on site, you've got a major advantage. Check the facilities out and note the machines you would be interested in. Talk to the employees who manage the fitness center and find out when the busiest time of day is so that you can avoid it. Many times that magic time

is between 9-11AM and 1-3PM. It can be difficult to fit in a workout in during those hours, but remember, it doesn't have to be long and drawn-out. Visit the weight room for ten minutes twice a day, and you will be able to maintain the muscle you've built up over time. If possible, fit in a 15-20-minute aerobic workout at the end of the day before you head home. Figure out what will work best for you and then commit to it. With a time commitment of less than three hours of every week you can maintain your fitness without sacrificing your professional life.

For those who aren't so fortunate to have exercise centers available at work, there are other ways to get around that. Invest in some smart fitness equipment to keep at the office and set your computer to remind you when it's time for a brief 5-minute workout. Hand weights, yoga mats, resistance bands, and other accessories are perfect for the office, and can be stored without taking up too much room. Plan to have at least four 5-minute exercise segments throughout the day. Scheduling a 5-minute workout around the 3 o'clock snack time can help you avoid the calorie-laden pitfalls of the snack-room while keeping your fitness level up.

For aerobic workouts, try taking four flights of stairs for a brief, intense workout that calls on a lot of muscle to work hard in a short period of time. If you can walk around your company's parking lot, power-walk for ten minutes using your arms to boost heart rate. For some people a jump rope can be a great tool that allows them to burn fast calories with only a three minute investment of time. That doesn't work for everyone, since jumping rope can be hard on joints and difficult to do within the office, but if it works for you, go for it.

Make a point of sticking to your fitness schedule. Co-workers may find it amusing but you're the one building the great body! You may want to consider forming an office fitness group that could support and encourage each other during the work day or even present a request to upper management for a more fitness-friendly environment at work. More and more companies are realizing the benefits of having employees who are healthy and fit, and as a result of that some are installing fitness facilities, signing deals with local gyms for employee usage, and rewarding employees who demonstrate commitment to personal health and fitness. Find out what your company's policy is on employee fitness and make it work for you!

Above all, stay committed and encouraged! You made the original effort to get your body into shape and that is too valuable a commitment to waste. Figure out what works best for you during the workday and then do it! Your body will thank you!

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