

The Thirty Minute Workout

The USDA recommends at least 30 minutes of moderate activity five to seven days a week. Did you know that 75% of the US population does not meet this recommendation? Regular physical activity is essential to weight control and good physical and mental health. Whether your motivation to start a fitness program is for weight loss, playing more with your kids, increasing bone density, or avoiding consequences such as heart disease, arthritis, stroke or depression, it is never too late to start a fitness program.

Where to Start?

Fitting 30 minutes into your life can be challenging, but remember you deserve 30 minutes a day for your health. You can start with small steps, knowing that you can always do more than you're doing now. Here are some achievable ways to get your fitness program going:

- You can divide the time up throughout the day, for example 30 minutes can be broken into: 10 minutes walking from the car to work in the morning, 10 minutes stair climbing during the day at lunch, and 10 minutes walking back to the car in the evening. The benefits are cumulative.
- You can add more movement into your daily lives. Household chores, yard work, walking to the bus stop, walking the dog, and carrying groceries all count as physical activity.
- You can sign up for a goal event with a specific timeframe. For example, run or walk a 5k in three months.
- You can persuade a friend to join your goal. Getting support from your family and friends is helpful to maintain compliance, stay motivated and have more fun.
- You can sign a contract with your healthcare provider or personal trainer so you have accountability for completing a goal.
- You can determine when you are going to do your workout: morning/evening, before/after work, or lunchtime and schedule it in your planner like an appointment.

Four Elements to a Fitness Routine

Whether you are on the road to a gold medal or you simply want to feel healthier, having a well-balanced fitness routine is key to achieving optimal benefits. Each element provides its own unique health and weight-control benefits. Together, all four elements give your body the ability to carry out activities of daily living throughout your life. The four key elements to a well-balanced fitness routine include:

1. **Aerobic Fitness:** exercise that involves or improves oxygen consumption by the body thereby improving respiration, strengthening the heart, reducing blood pressure, and improving mental health
2. **Muscular Fitness:** use of resistance to contract muscles thereby increasing muscle, tendon and ligament strength, improving joint function, reducing risk of injury, and increasing bone density

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3. **Flexibility:** allows muscles to elongate thereby increasing range of motion, reducing stress on joints, and reducing risk of injury
4. **Core Strength:** the body's core muscles found in the low back, abdomen, pelvis, and hips help provide a stable base of support for the body to move from thereby improving balance, minimizing postural sway, and reducing risk of injury

Putting it into Action

Now that you understand the four key elements to include in your fitness routine, it's time to create a program that will best fit into your lifestyle and help you achieve your goals. First, determine where you will do your workout routine, whether it's at home, the gym, outside, or by taking a class. Next, determine what equipment you will need to reach your goals. For a strengthening program a few options include pushups, TRX suspension trainer, resistance bands, physioball, free weights or weight machines. If weight loss is a primary goal, then your program should consist primarily of cardio. A few cardio suggestions include walking briskly, indoor cycling, elliptical trainer, cycling, running, water running, swimming, cross country skiing and Stairmaster. Remember that muscle burns more calories than fat, so be sure to include strengthening with your cardio routine.

A key to success is PROGRESSION. Start with 2-3 days a week and progress over a 4 week period to 5-6 days a week. Be active at a pace that is comfortable for you. It doesn't have to be hard or uncomfortable to be effective, and it should never be painful. You'll be more likely to build strength and stamina if you take small achievable steps rather than attempting giant leaps that may set you back. This progressive approach also decreases your chances of injury.

If you are having trouble determining how to start, seek out a specialist (physical therapist or personal trainer) to help set-up an initial program. Consult with your doctor if you have had heart trouble or high blood pressure.

Remember, no single plan is perfect for everyone and overall fitness is a balancing act. Select activities you enjoy or else you will not continue the plan. With a successful exercise program it should become a lifestyle that will last a lifetime. Now get off the couch and go for it!

See following handout for sample Thirty Minute Workout routines

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Elements of Your Fitness Routine

Exercise Type	Purpose	Guidelines	Examples
Aerobic Fitness: Cardio	Moderately increasing your heart rate for a sustained amount of time	Add variety to avoid injury; need at least 10 minutes for health benefits; 5-6 x/wk with 1-2x intensity, 1x slow and long	Walking briskly, indoor cycling, elliptical trainer, cycling, running, water running, swimming, cross country skiing, Stairmaster
Muscular Fitness: Strengthening	Overloading the muscles by adding stress and actually breaking them down; during the rest/recovery they get stronger	Do 8-10 different excises, including both upper body (shoulders, chest, arms, back) and lower body (hips, quads, hamstrings, glut, calves); do 10-15 reps of each exercise; 2 or more non-consecutive days	Push-ups, free weight activities, weight machines, physioball exercises, TRX suspension trainer, resistance bands
Flexibility: Stretching	Lengthening muscles, reduces the stress on joints and helps proper recruitment of muscles	Hold a muscle in a lengthened position for 20-30 seconds and allow it to relax in this lengthened position; perform on foam roller, physioball, floor, seated or standing	Hamstring stretching, calf stretching, knees to chest, neck stretching, lying on physioball, opening up chest in door frame
Stability & Balance: Core	Provides stability and balance for almost any activity or motion your body makes	Use muscles in your low back, abdomen, pelvis, and hip; proper form and function important	Physioball exercises, floor exercises, Pilates mat class, yoga

Sample Workout Routines

	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday
A	20-30' cardio 5' stretching	25' strengthening ex 5' core ex	20-30' cardio 5' stretching	25' strengthening ex 5' core ex	20-30' cardio 5' stretching	25' strengthening ex 5' core ex	Rest day
B	15' cardio 10' UE strength ex 5' core ex	15' cardio 10' LE strength ex 5' core ex	25' cardio 5' stretching	15' cardio 10' UE strength ex 5' core ex	15' cardio 10' LE strength ex 5' core ex	25' cardio 5' stretching	Rest day
C	25' cardio 5' stretching	20' cardio 5' core ex 5' stretching	25' cardio 5' stretching	20' cardio 5' core ex 5' stretching	25' cardio 5' stretching	20' cardio 5' core ex 5' stretching	Rest day

Note: Strengthening exercises should consist of upper and lower extremity, 6-8 different excises. UE means upper extremity (shoulders, chest, arms, back); LE means lower extremity (hips, quads, hamstrings, glut, calves)