

Jeni's Health & Fitness Tips

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Hi Everyone!

The most common excuses/reasons I hear for not exercising are "I don't have enough time" and "I'm unwell" or "I have an injury". Let's have a close look at these:

Time

Recommendations from the Australian Department of Health are that adults should get a minimum of 30 minutes of exercise each day; and many of us cannot find that extra 30 minutes. The good news is that exercise does not have to be done in one session. All those small increments add up over the day. Sometimes I observe parents sitting and watching their children play sport or dance. Rather than sit and watch, why not walk up and down whilst watching? Sometimes I see people waiting for the kettle to boil or their food to cook/heat up. Why not take these few minutes to do a few push-ups on the kitchen bench? If you happen to be in a public place where you are unable to move about (on a train for example) you could work on your core and pelvic floor muscles, no one need know you are exercising! If you drive somewhere, look for a parking spot as far away as practical from your destination so you have an opportunity to walk some of the way. Walk up the escalators or take the stairs. See movement as a great opportunity, not an inconvenience.

If you wear a pedometer you can observe how many steps you take each day. The minimum number of steps required is 7,000 each day and more if you want to lose weight. This will give you a rough idea of how active you need to be. As they say "every journey starts with one small step" and equally "every step counts towards your daily quota"!

Every movement counts – take every opportunity to move throughout the day. All you need is fifteen 2 minute sessions or six 5 minute sessions, as long as it adds up to minimum of 30 minutes each day. Of course more is better and, if you can find time, increase this amount of exercise. Surely we can all manage to fit this minimum 30 minutes each day in!

Sickness or injury

There are times when the body needs to rest to recover. You may have to modify your exercise program so that the injured part stays rested, however it is often appropriate to exercise the rest of the body while resting the injured part. Speak to your physio or trainer about what kinds of exercise would be suitable for you at the time.

If you are unable to exercise at all, the good news is that just concentrating and imagining that you are exercising sends signals to the muscles that keep them working. In his book, *The Brain That Changes Itself*, Dr. Norman Doidge reports of an experiment by Doctors Guang Yue and Kelly Cole that showed imagining one is using one's muscles actually strengthens them. Their study looked at two groups, one group physically moving muscles in their finger while the other did the same amount of exercise by imagining movements with their mind only. The results showed a 30% increase in muscle strength from the physical group and an incredible 22% increase in the group that worked only with their minds.

So during periods of sickness or injury, keep imagining your body as being active. Set aside a period of 15-20 minutes (or more if you have time) just to focus deeply on this each day that you cannot exercise.

Yours in health,

Jeni

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