



EAP Navigator

April 2009

Your Success is Our Compass

National Health Observances

April

Alcohol Awareness Month
Child Abuse Prevention Month
Couple Appreciation Month
Financial Literacy Month
Physical Wellness Month
Stress Awareness Month

Week of April 1 - 7

Laugh at Work Week

Week of April 7 - 11

National Public Health Week
www.apha.org

Week of April 12 - 18

National Personal Training Week

May

National Mental Health Month
Women's Healthcare Month
Family Wellness Month
Teen Self-Esteem Month

Week of May 3 - 9

National Anxiety and Depression
Awareness Week

June

Effective Communications Month
Professional Wellness Month
Home Safety Month

Week of June 7-13

National Headache Week
www.headaches.org

Week of June 7-13

National Business Etiquette Week

Week of June 15-21

Men's Health Week

Conquer Your Exercise Excuses

You're too busy. It's raining. You need to make dinner. You need to help your children with their homework. You just don't feel like it.

"Our research shows that people who exercise somewhat regularly have more excuses for not doing so than those who don't exercise at all," says Bonnie Berger, Ph.D., professor and director of the School of Human Movement, Sport and Leisure Studies at Bowling Green State University in Bowling Green, Ohio. "It's those who exercise every now and then, those who feel like they really need to be doing it more, who are the excuse makers."

To help yourself get moving, address that inner voice that lets you off the exercise hook. Here, we discredit three of the common reasons you may tell yourself you can't fit in exercise as often as you'd like – and what you can do to take a step in the right direction.

"I don't have time"

By far, one of the most common excuses for not exercising is "I'm too busy." To that, you should ask yourself: Do I not have time to exercise, or am I simply not making time?

Consider: Americans, on average, watch three or four hours of television a day. "Surely we can find a half-hour among those three or four hours to exercise," Dr. Berger says.

Also, if you stay physically fit, no matter how hectic your schedule, you can feel like you have more time.

"You have more energy and your thoughts tend to be clearer because you've taken a mental break," says Dr. Berger, both of which can make you more productive and efficient at work and at home.

To parents who say they can't exercise because they have young children to attend to, she suggests squeezing in exercise time at the end of the day between work and home.

"The health benefits of exercising increase if you exercise for more than 30 minutes a day," says Dr. Berger. "Three 10-minute walks throughout the day go a long way toward keeping your heart healthy, reducing your blood pressure and improving your cholesterol levels. Everybody has time for that."

"I'm just too tired"

After a long day, it's tough to argue with the fact you may be too tired to feel like exercising. But if you work out anyway, or even just go for a walk, you're likely to experience a noticeable energy boost because exercise sends blood sugar to muscles.

The same holds true if you tend to be a before-work exerciser. Once you get moving, you feel more alert and energetic, which can carry on throughout your day.

"The weather is bad"

If you like to exercise outdoors, you can always blame the weather for not being able to work out. Unless it's a perfect day, there's bound to be some condition — wind, rain, cold, heat, humidity — that throws a wrench in your plan.

The answer is to have a backup plan for a stormy day, such as a workout video or a gym membership.

'Deskercise' for the Office Bound

Most people who exercise regularly say that being active makes them feel healthier and more energetic. And that's not limited to joggers or tennis players. Many office workers are doing simple exercises at their desks, with surprisingly healthy benefits.

These activities give you a mental boost, fight stress and promote flexibility, health experts say.

The body dislikes staying still for long. The longer you're still, the more tension that accumulates from being in one position.

Yet, the average American sits for 7 1/2 hours a day! If you're stuck behind a desk for that long, you can do some simple exercises while sitting or standing. No special skills or equipment is needed. One of the simplest exercises, for instance, is to just lean back in your chair and stretch.

Mind you, the exercises won't develop your cardiovascular system, build strength or make

you look better in your bathing suit. But they will reduce muscle tension and stress and help maintain the strength, flexibility and muscle tone you already have.

Remember to breathe normally while holding your body in one of the stretching positions. When you're done, finish with some slow, deep breathing.

If you work at a computer terminal — and if you're reading this at work, then this is for you! — stretch your wrist muscles occasionally and take short breaks, health experts say. The idea is to prevent carpal tunnel syndrome, a painful wrist malady caused by repetitive movement.

The experts recommend doing the desk exercises every hour or so, even if you do only one exercise at a time. Anything is better than staying in one position.

In doing these exercises, go slowly and use the full range of motion. Sometimes joints won't move

Overall, Dr. Berger suggests focusing on finding a fitness routine that works for you, whether it be working out with an exercise buddy or by yourself, in the morning or after work.

"Try to establish habits that feel good and fit into your life," she says. "If you do that, after a while exercise becomes more of a want rather than a should, which is the most powerful excuse-buster of all."



quickly through a full range of motion, so if you do an exercise too quickly, you won't get the full benefit. You also risk pulling a muscle if you do the exercises too quickly.

It's important to get up once an hour and walk around, even if it's just to a filing cabinet. Sitting for long periods puts stress on the lower back, and leads to muscle atrophy and a loss of flexibility.

A 10-minute walk is the best exercise for the office bound, experts say. When that's not possible, the desk exercises are the next best thing.



Making Connections, Creating Solutions

1-800-433-2320

www.cascadecenters.com