



# Get Moving To Manage Your Stress

You know that exercise does your body good, but you're too busy and stressed to fit it into your routine. Hold on a second — there's good news when it comes to exercise and stress. For most healthy adults, the Department of Health and Human Services recommends getting at least 150 minutes a week of moderate aerobic activity (such as brisk walking or swimming) or 75 minutes a week of vigorous aerobic activity (such as running). You also can do a combination of moderate and vigorous activity. Also, incorporate strength training exercises at least twice a week.

## Exercise and stress relief

**It pumps up your endorphins.** Physical activity helps bump up the production of your brain's feel-good neurotransmitters, called endorphins.

**It's meditation in motion.** After a fast-paced game of racquetball or several laps in the pool, you'll often find that you've forgotten the day's irritations and concentrated only on your body's movements.

**It improves your mood.** Regular exercise can increase self-confidence, it can relax you, and it can lower the symptoms associated with mild depression and anxiety. Exercise can also improve your sleep, which is often disrupted by stress, depression and anxiety.

**Do what you love.** Virtually any form of exercise or movement can increase your fitness level while decreasing your stress. The most important thing is to pick an activity that you enjoy.

**Pencil it in.** Although your schedule may necessitate a morning workout one day and an evening activity the next, carving out some time to move every day helps you make your exercise program an ongoing priority.

Here are some tips for sticking with a new routine or reinvigorating a tired workout:

**Set SMART goals.** Write down SMART goals — specific, measurable, attainable, relevant and time-limited goals. If your primary goal is to reduce stress in your life and recharge your batteries, your specific goals might include committing to walking during your lunch hour three times a week or, if needed, finding a baby sitter.

**Find a friend.** Knowing that someone is waiting for you to show up at the gym or the park can be a powerful incentive. Working out with a friend, co-worker or family member often brings a new level of motivation and commitment to your workouts.

**Change up your routine.** If you've always been a competitive runner, take a look at other less competitive options that may help with stress reduction, such as Pilates or yoga classes. As an added bonus, these kinder, gentler workouts may enhance your running while also decreasing your stress.

**Exercise in increments.** Even brief bouts of activity offer benefits. For instance, if you can't fit in one 30-minute walk, try three 10-minute walks instead. Interval training, which entails brief (60 to 90 seconds) bursts of intense activity at almost full effort, is being shown to be a safe, effective and efficient way of gaining many of the benefits of longer duration exercise.

Any form of physical activity can help you unwind and become an important part of your approach to easing stress.

Source: Mayo Clinic

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