

Other ways to exercise



Exercise is a crucial part of being healthy. But what if the mere thought of running, biking, etc. makes you want to head for the nearest couch? Well, you don't have to give up on fitness – there are lots of other “hidden” ways to get your recommended daily dose of physical activity. (You should get at least 30 minutes of exercise daily, five days a week, according to the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.)

Below are some activities that you may not even have realized were good for you. They're a simple way to fit exercise into your day, which will help you reduce stress and lower your risk of heart disease, high blood pressure, and diabetes.

Doing a continuous 30 minutes or more is best, but you can also break things up into increments of at least 10 minutes long, or do a mix of different activities. The key, regardless of what you do, is to keep moving.

Gardening - Plant and tend a flower or vegetable garden. You'll get exercise, plus some lovely veggies and flowers.

Yardwork - Don't spend money on a landscaper. Mow your own lawn with a push mower, rake leaves, prune, pick up litter, etc.

Housework - Put on some music and start cleaning. You and your home will both look better for it.

Walking the dog - A brisk daily stroll will make you and your best friend happier. But make sure you're actually walking -- just standing there while your pup runs around doesn't count!

Dancing - It's great exercise, especially the faster types. Practice your moves solo at home, or schedule a regular outing with friends.

Shopping - If you can walk to local stores, do it. If you're going to the mall, do a few extra laps before you hit the stores, and park in the far corner of the lot. Remember to wear comfortable shoes you can walk in.

Commuting - Work some exercise into your day by getting off the bus a few blocks from your home or office, or taking the stairs to your floor. If you can't handle climbing from the lobby, get off the elevator at a lower floor and then take the stairs. If you drive, park as far as possible from your building.

You can get more information on exercise at Healthy Lifestyle Rewards, an online program that helps you lead a healthy lifestyle. Just log in at blueshieldca.com/hlr.

This chart shows the calories burned in 30 minutes of various daily activities and sports:

Calories burned in 30 minutes	125-pound person	155-pound person	185-pound person
Sports activities			
Walking: 3.5 mph (17 min./mile)	120	149	178
Walking: 4 mph (15 min./mile)	135	167	200
Bicycling: 12 - 13.9 mph	240	298	355
Bicycling: 14 - 15.9 mph	300	372	444
Swimming: general	180	223	266
Swimming: laps, vigorous	300	372	444
Running: 5 mph (12 min./mile)	240	298	355
Running: 6 mph (10 min./mile)	300	372	444
Dancing			
Dancing: slow, waltz, foxtrot	90	112	133
Dancing: disco, ballroom, square	165	205	244
Dancing: fast, ballet, twist	180	223	266
Gardening/yardwork			
Planting seedlings, shrubs	120	149	178
Raking lawn	120	149	178
Sacking grass or leaves	120	149	178
Gardening: general	135	167	200
Mowing lawn: push, power	135	167	200
Plant trees	135	167	200
Weeding the garden	139	172	205
Digging, spading dirt	150	186	222
Mowing lawn: push, hand	165	205	244
Daily life activities			
Child care: bathing, feeding, etc.	105	130	155
Food shopping: with cart	105	130	155
Playing with kids: moderate effort	120	149	178
Heavy cleaning: wash car, windows	135	167	200
Playing with kids: vigorous effort	150	186	222

Source: Harvard Medical School