



# Holiday exercise is easy with upfront planning

If you think that starting an exercise program during the holiday season is crazy, think again. There are some simple ways to use holiday activities to increase your physical activity and get everything done. With a little upfront planning, it is easy to get the 20 to 30 minutes of exercise a day known to benefit overall health.

**Question:** Why start an exercise program at this time?

**Answer:** You can avoid that New Year's resolution that always crumbles before February. More important, even walking as little as 30 minutes a day has countless health benefits. By the end of the holiday season, your regular exercise can markedly improve your endurance and overall fitness level, giving you a head start on keeping active in the new year.

**Q:** What do you need to know to convert holiday preparations into an effective exercise program?

**A:** Effective exercise programs have four important components:

1. Start with setting realistic goals and remember there are only 24 hours in a day. Work up to walking 30 minutes a day or 5,000 to 10,000 steps a day.

These are generally obtainable goals if done in small bits. Focus more on fitness and maintaining weight. Losing weight during the holidays is not realistic and certainly can lead to antisocial behavior.

2. Have a plan and seek even small opportunities to move. Everything adds up. Think about your normal daily activities and how you could add walking or standing time to each activity. For example: If you usually spend 30 minutes grocery shopping, allow 10 extra minutes. When you get to the store, walk through the store aisles and observe the store bargains before you get your cart. Then go back through the store to shop. Your rewards are extra steps and potentially better deals.

Shopping malls are a great place to walk. Park near the store where you think you will do the most shopping. Then walk 10 to 20 minutes briskly past the store and window-shop your way back to your initial destination.

3. Every evening, review your goals and your schedule for the next day. In this way you can determine where you can add a few extra minutes to walking or standing tasks, and you are less

likely to run out of time or be too tired to add the activity.

4. Don't forget about adequate nutrition. Start your activity well hydrated and maintain adequate hydration throughout. If you will be shopping for more than three hours and won't have time for a meal, pack a sports bar that has at least six grams of protein and some carbohydrate for energy.

Other ways to increase exercise success: Shop first thing in the morning if you know you will be too tired at the end of the day, and use the stairs instead of the elevator whenever you can. Also, if you are just starting an exercise program or are not as fit as you should be, start with shorter walks and add a few more minutes daily until you reach your time goal. If you are using a pedometer, add 250 to 500 steps a day until you reach at least 10,000 steps total.

The holiday season is about family and friends, so recruit others to join in your "active shopping" adventures.

Remember to pace yourself. There is no need to "shop till you drop." Just like training for the Honolulu Marathon, it's important to build up gradually.

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