



Physical activity for busy people

We all know that physical activity is an important part of health and well-being. But sometimes it's hard to find time for physical activity. A lack of time is the number one barrier that people say prevents them from participating in physical activity on a regular basis.

The good news is that even short sessions of physical activity help your health. While the Canadian Physical Activity Guidelines recommend that you accumulate at least 150 minutes of moderate- to vigorous-intensity aerobic physical activity per week, you can collect them in bouts of 10 minutes or more. There are numerous strategies that busy people can use to be more active including

- multitasking;
- being active at work;
- being active with loved ones; and
- scheduling activity into daily life.

Different strategies work for different people. Being familiar with the different strategies is key to adopting and maintaining an active lifestyle. Read on to learn more about strategies you can try.

Strategy #1: multitasking

Multitasking means doing things you already do, but in a more physically active way. This way, you get things done and get physical activity at the same time.

For example, you could try using active methods of transportation like walking, biking, rollerblading or skateboarding instead of always taking the car or the bus to work or other places. If you can't use active transportation for a whole trip, try to be active for at least part of the trip. If you're riding the bus, for example, get off a few blocks early and walk the rest of the way. Active transportation benefits your body by increasing your activity level, and it also benefits both your neighbourhood and the environment by reducing the number of cars on the road.

You can also get physical activity while doing housework and chores. When you're working around home, try to be creative and look for the active choice. If you're doing outdoor work, opt for the old-fashioned way of doing things, as it's usually more active. For example, use a snow shovel rather than a snow blower.

Strategy #2: be active at work

Many Albertans spend eight hours a day or more working at a sedentary job. There are a few simple ways to keep your body moving during the workday; the physical activity will revitalize you and help you be more productive.

- When working at your desk, try sitting on a stability ball or disk for part of your day (30 minutes to an hour). This gives your back and abs a workout. Be cautious of using a stability ball for long periods of time, however, as it can have an adverse effect and cause back problems.
- Take active breaks at least once a day. During your coffee break, try doing some yoga, stretching or taking a quick walk. You might find that walking up and down the stairs a few times does a better job of rejuvenating you than the java jolt.
- Speaking of the stairs, take them instead of the elevator whenever you can. The stairs in your building are an opportunity to get your heart pumping.
- Organize walking meetings at work. Getting outside and having meetings in a less formal setting is a great way to be active, make the workday more fun and encourage creative ideas for projects.

Strategy #3: be active with loved ones

Enjoy physical activity with your family, friends, neighbours and pets. With this strategy, you and your loved ones are doing some great multitasking together—enjoying quality time with each other and getting some of the physical activity that you all need to be healthy.

Go for walks, swims or bike rides together, or play Frisbee, soccer or other games and sports. When you take your kids or dog to the park, play with them instead of just watching them play. You can also take advantage of the many community facilities that offer classes that keep you and your kids active at the same time.

Strategy #4: schedule physical activity into your day

Schedule your physical activity directly into your daytimer or agenda; set a specific time and place for exercising. Make your physical activity appointments a priority—just as important as any other appointment in your daytimer.

To help you stay committed to your appointments, you might want to schedule activities with other people, such as by meeting with a personal trainer, taking an exercise class or jogging with a friend.

If you're not sure how many appointments to make or what you should be doing during your appointments, try consulting with a personal trainer. They can help you develop a physical activity plan and schedule that works for you.

The bottom line: find out what works best

Experiment with strategies and find inspiration by talking to other people about how they keep active and what strategies they use. Be creative and patient while you figure out what works best for you and be aware that your best strategy may change from time to time.

Learn more

[Physical Activity @ Work](#)

This web site by the Alberta Centre for Active Living gives step by step instructions for how to bring daily physical activity into the workplace. There are also success stories, links and more.

[Physical activity](#)

This web page from Health Canada explains the value of physical activity and how you can incorporate it into your daily life.

[What is Active Transportation?](#)

The Healthy Living Unit of the Public Health Agency of Canada explains active transportation.

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