

Help Yourself Over Exercise Hurdles

Make Options Instead of Excuses

-- By Liz Noelcke, Staff Writer

Hurdle #1: "I don't have enough time to exercise." Helpers:

- Take your gym bag to work and exercise during lunch. Having your gear with you will also make it easier to go straight to the gym after work.
- Exercise in smaller intervals of time. Three 15-minute "mini workouts" spread throughout the day can be just as effective as one 45-minute session. Try to fit in a mini workout first thing in the morning, during breaks, at lunch, and after dinner. Don't have 15 minutes? Any interval (even 5 minutes) is better than none.
- Do your workout first thing in the morning, when you are less likely to be distracted by other daily tasks.
- Find ways to squeeze extra activity into your normal routine. Take the stairs instead of the elevator, stretch at work, or ride the stationary bike while watching TV. Do crunches and other strength exercises during commercial breaks.
- Instead of meeting your friends for lunch this weekend, meet them for a leisurely walk or nature hike.
- Spend time with your family and kids doing fun activities. Instead of going to dinner and a movie, try: miniature golf, riding bikes, playing at a park, ice skating, playing in the snow, or practicing your child's favorite sport with them. [Geocaching](#) can be a fun activity for the whole family.

Hurdle #2: "I'm discouraged since I don't see immediate results." Helpers:

- Set challenging, yet attainable, short-term and long-term goals. Don't forget about [The Importance of Setting Medium-Term Goals](#).
- Track activity on a daily basis (what you ate, your activity level), but measure results (weigh-in, inches lost) every week or two in order to accurately observe progress.
- Use more than just weight loss to measure success. For instance, look for positive changes in your energy, stress, endurance, strength, blood pressure and cholesterol levels. All of these should improve when you implement healthier habits.
- Set rewards for meeting daily, weekly and monthly goals. Whether it's a massage, video rental, or a vacation, pick something that is meaningful (and financially affordable) to you.

Hurdle #3: "I'm experiencing 'burnout' on my current program." Helpers:

- Change your routine! Workout in the morning or midday instead of the evening. If you usually exercise outdoors, bring it inside and try a new piece of cardio equipment or fitness video. Take a class at your gym. Even just changing the order of your exercises can fight boredom.
- Set simple goals at first—ones that may even seem easy like walking for 5 minutes. Gradually build up by adding more difficult goals. Increase activity (time, distance) and intensity (speed, resistance, incline) as you gain success and momentum.

- Find a [fitness buddy](#) who has similar goals; make regular appointments to exercise together. A buddy can also be comforting when you're afraid to try something new like join a gym or take that Yogilates class.
- Do things you enjoy! Exercise doesn't have to be a "work" out. Play soccer, basketball or another game instead of just jogging or riding the stationary bike. Learn karate or tae kwon do. Take a ballroom dance class with your partner.

Hurdle #4: "I don't have the support of my family and friends." Helpers:

- Join a support group on the [Message Boards](#). When you're going through similar challenges together, you can encourage and make each other accountable.
- Ask a co-worker, friend, neighbor, or fellow gym member to be your workout buddy.
- Speak positively about your healthy nutrition and exercise routine.
- Develop a reward system for yourself. If others won't congratulate you, congratulate yourself!
- Tell them how important these changes are to your health and happiness—and how that affect their lives too. Your loved ones should be there to support you, not sabotage you. Ask them for support, even if they may not be willing to change their own habits.

Dana Gray, B.S., ACE-GFI
RAMC Health Educator