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Provided By: Northwest Iron Workers Health & Security Trust



HealthyLife® Letter

September 2018

Promoting Health. Enhancing Life. Reducing Costs.

10-minute workouts: do they work?



When it comes to exercise, any amount is better than none. The National Institutes of Health recommends at least 30 minutes a day most days of the week. But, this amount is hard for many people to fit into their day. What if you could get healthier with less exercise? Some research suggests that even a few minutes of exercise each day is helpful.

A study published in the Journal of the American Medical Association says just 72 minutes of exercise a week improves fitness and health. This is just over 10 minutes a day. They found that people who did this amount were healthier after six months than those who didn't exercise at all.

Obviously, the more exercise you can do, the better. But, if you're short on time, you can still get healthier with the time you have. Try to set aside 10 minutes a day for fitness. You may find that it boosts your energy levels, helps you sleep better, and makes you feel healthier.



Get started today with your 10-minute workout:

- **Ask your doctor.** Before you start any exercise program, talk to your doctor. There may be certain exercises that aren't right for you.
- **Make it count.** If you're only going to exercise for 10 minutes, try to make it a harder workout, but still within your fitness level. Don't overdo it but be sure to increase your heart rate.

- **Do it often.** Do your 10-minute workout as frequently as you can to help boost your fitness level.
- **Alternate muscle groups.** Work leg muscles one day and arm muscles the next day. This gives your muscle groups time to rest between workouts.

Don't get discouraged if you're not exercising 30 minutes a day. Just make exercise a part of your life in a way that fits your schedule!

Cold medicines for kids: what's safe?

Are cough and cold medicines safe for children? It depends on the child's age. The American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) says over-the-counter cough and cold medicines can be dangerous for kids under four years of age. These medicines have never been studied in children, so experts don't really know if they work. They can also cause serious side effects.

For older children, AAP recommends that cough and cold medicines only be used if a doctor says it's okay.

My child is sick: what can I give them?

It's hard to watch your child suffer with a bad cold or cough. But, if you can't give them medicine, what else can you do to help them?

The AAP says home remedies can make a child feel better. Try:

- **Saline nose spray and/or a humidifier in their room.**

Keeping the nasal passages moist can help them breathe easier at night.



- **Plenty of clear fluids like warm water or diluted apple juice.** Keeping them hydrated helps thin out secretions in the nose and throat. This may help with a stuffy nose and coughing.



- **For children older than 1 year, a teaspoon of honey.** This can soothe an irritated throat and may be helpful for a cough. Some natural cold medicines for kids contain honey and herbs. Ask a doctor about these before giving them to your child. Do not give honey to infants under one year of age.
- **Plenty of rest.** Consider keeping your child home from school or daycare so they can get plenty of sleep. This helps their immune system fight off the illness.
- **Mentholated rub on the throat for kids over 2 years of age.** This can help with coughing and may bring some relief from a stuffy nose.

What NOT to do

Remember that antibiotics do not help with viruses like colds and coughs. Never give antibiotics to your child unless your doctor prescribes them.

In addition, don't be quick to lower a mild fever if the child feels fine. A fever helps the body fight off a virus. It's helpful to leave it be if you can. Only give fever-reducers with single ingredients like acetaminophen or ibuprofen if the child is uncomfortable or if the fever is 102 degrees F or higher. Call a doctor if your child has a high fever.

Children ages six and up can use cough and cold medicines designed for their age. But, check with your pediatrician first. Also, be sure to read the packaging and give the correct dose. If you aren't sure, ask your pediatrician or pharmacist.

Ovarian cancer: Know the signs

September is National Ovarian Cancer Awareness Month. The American Cancer Society says more than 14,000 women will die from ovarian cancer in 2018.

The ovaries are small, almond-shaped organs on either side of the uterus (womb). Because they are deep inside the abdomen, many women don't feel or see symptoms of ovarian cancer. In fact, less than 20 percent of ovarian cancer cases are diagnosed in the early stages, when it is more treatable.

Signs are hard to spot

Symptoms of ovarian cancer can be confusing. They may seem like other illnesses. Sometimes, a woman has no symptoms at all. When signs do appear, they may include:

- Bloating
- Pelvic or stomach pain
- Appetite changes or feeling full without eating much
- Having to urinate more often or more urgently
- Feeling very tired
- Heartburn
- Nausea
- Constipation
- Back pain
- Pain during sex
- Menstrual changes

Usually, these symptoms don't mean a woman has ovarian cancer. They may be signs of a digestive problem, hormonal imbalance or another illness. But, if the symptoms don't go away, it's best to see a doctor.



How is ovarian cancer detected?

There is no single test to check for ovarian cancer. But, women who have symptoms or who are at high risk may need one or more of the following tests:

Pelvic Exam

All women age 18 and up should have an annual pelvic exam from their primary care provider or gynecologist.

Transvaginal ultrasound

An ultrasound wand is used to look at the ovaries and other organs.

CA-125 blood test

A protein called CA-125 is produced by ovarian cancer cells. If a blood test shows higher levels of this protein, a woman may need more tests to check for cancer.

Additional tests may include Computed Tomography (CT) scans or laparoscopy, which uses a lighted tube inserted in a small incision. If there is a risk that cancer has spread, further testing is done.

Unfortunately, there is no foolproof way to find ovarian cancer early. The key is to talk with your doctor, have regular checkups and be sure to discuss any symptoms you are having. If anyone in your family has had ovarian cancer – or any other cancer – be sure your doctor knows about this. Some cancer types can run in families.

Kitchen shortcuts for faster homemade meals

It's hard to find time to get a home-cooked meal on the table when meal times come around. Many people are juggling work, responsibilities with family, housework and kids' activities, to name a few.

Plus, for those who aren't experts in the kitchen, cooking dinner can seem like an impossible task. But, if you learn to take some shortcuts, it can be easier than you think. Try these tips to help you make a homemade meal with fewer hassles:



- **Purchase a few meals at once.** If you can't shop for a whole week, aim for three meals. Get the ingredients for those meals, and you'll be ready for half of your week without any extra trips to the store.
- **Do a big chopping session.** Clean and chop all veggies and fruits at once while you've got out your cutting board and knife. Then, put the ingredients in bags or containers with lids, and put them in the fridge or freezer. Once you're ready to cook dinner, your chopped ingredients are ready to be cooked or thrown into the dish you're preparing.
- **Freeze extra.** Consider buying extra onions, carrots, green beans, or other veggies that frequently need to be chopped. Chop up more than you need, put the extras in freezer bags, and freeze until the next time you need them.
- **Make a big batch of rice or whole grains.** When cooking rice, quinoa, or other grains, cook extra, place it in bags, and freeze. Simply thaw and microwave your grains when you're ready to use them.
- **Plan ahead.** Tackle the next meal before you go to bed the night before. Start thawing any frozen meats or other ingredients in the fridge. Make sure you have the ingredients and recipe you need for the next day.
- **Double up.** Whenever possible, make a double recipe and freeze the extra. Soups, stews, meats and tomato-based sauces often freeze well. Frozen leftovers make a quick and nutritious meal on a busy night.
- **Check out make-ahead meals for the slow cooker.** You can find slow cooker freezer meals online that allow you to make it ahead, throw the prepped meal in a bag, and freeze. Then, you have a meal that's ready to put into the slow cooker in the morning to be ready for dinner time.

Most successful meals come down to planning in advance. This means you may need to do the prep work the night before or on the weekend. Though it requires some effort to make a home-cooked meal, it's worth the time and energy. You'll be able to make a healthy meal for you and your family and may save some money, too.

6 benefits of drinking water

Your body needs water for nearly every function. But, many people aren't getting enough. While fluids from other drinks and even some foods can help hydrate you, drinking plain water has some advantages. It's calorie-free, doesn't cause cavities and doesn't cost anything. Start filling up a reusable water bottle today and take advantage of these water perks:

HEADACHE PREVENTION:

Dehydration can cause a severe headache. If you drink water throughout the day, you can avoid this.

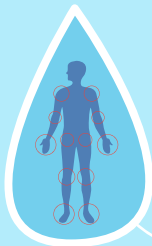


HEALTHIER SKIN:

Staying hydrated helps your skin stay hydrated, too. This can make skin feel healthier.

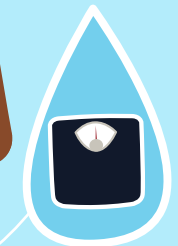


BETTER WORKOUT: Water is needed for proper energy levels and muscle function. Drink enough before and after workouts to avoid dehydration and sluggishness.



JOINT PAIN RELIEF: Dehydration can cause achy bones and joints. Water is needed to keep joints lubricated and healthy.

Talk with your doctor about how much water you should drink each day. People with end stage kidney disease, heart failure or certain other conditions may need to limit their fluids.



HEALTHY WEIGHT:

Drinking water instead of soda or sugary drinks can save you hundreds of extra calories and help get to, or stay at, a healthy weight.



HEALTHIER KIDNEYS AND BLADDER: Drinking enough water helps prevent kidney stones and urinary tract infections.

4 reasons you feel stressed all the time

Stress is a part of life. Some stress can be good for you, because it can help you focus and do your best. But, when stress lasts a long time, it can take a toll on your physical and mental health. Maybe you've tried to "just relax" with no luck. Perhaps you've tried to cut things out of your schedule, but you're still overwhelmed. Stress can be more complex than we realize. If you feel stressed all the time, consider these possible causes:



1. You need more support.

It can be hard to take on life without someone to talk to. Reach out to family members or friends. Tell them how you're feeling and ask for guidance. A listening ear can be valuable in times of stress. Don't try to go it alone.



2. Your health isn't a priority.

You deserve to take good care of yourself physically. And, healthy changes can help you feel better mentally. Try to make one simple healthy change in your life, starting today. Maybe it's taking a 10-minute walk each day. Exercise releases feel-good brain chemicals that may help you cope with stress.



3. Negative thoughts have taken over.

It's easy to let negative words from others, or even ourselves, come to mind too often. Make a point to look at stressful situations as an opportunity to learn and grow. Don't try to be perfect at everything. You're not a failure if you make a mistake. Tell yourself that difficult circumstances have a way of working out.



4. You're not sleeping enough.

If you get better sleep, you'll be able to handle stress better, too. Go to bed at a regular time each night, striving for at least 7-8 hours of sleep. Avoid big meals or intense exercise immediately before bedtime. If you tend to lie in bed and worry, get a journal and keep it nearby. Write down your concerns before bedtime and then try to put them out of your mind until tomorrow. Try cutting back on caffeine. This can relieve anxiety and help you sleep better.

If you continue to feel overwhelmed, are feeling hopeless or are having trouble getting through your daily routine, talk to your doctor or get medical help.

Going back to work after a leave



Many people take a leave of absence from work at some point. It could be for a life event, such as maternity or paternity leave, or because of an illness. A leave of absence is usually an extended period of time off that goes beyond vacation or other type of leave.

No matter how long your leave is, going back to work can be a big adjustment and cause you plenty of anxiety. But, you can make the transition smoother if you prepare for your new routine. Try these tips:

- **Get organized.** A week or two before you go back, start jotting down things you will need to do every day. Whether it's packing lunches, walking the dog or dropping kids off at daycare, it helps to have it all written down to feel more in control of the situation. You can then create a schedule or to-do list which helps make it more manageable.
- **Start moving back to your work schedule.** It can be quite a shock to go back to a 6 a.m. work shift if you've been staying up late. At least two weeks before you go back, start transitioning your sleep schedule. Give your body time to adjust to getting up at that same time and change your bedtime accordingly. Aim for seven to eight hours of sleep so you can feel rested and productive.
- **Allow for extra time in the morning.** Set your alarm for earlier than you think you need to. You'll be glad to have the extra time without rushing in the morning. Or, you may find that it takes you longer to get ready than you thought.
- **Talk with your supervisor before going back.** You can discuss your specific job duties and schedule. And, you can touch base about any changes or updates that may have taken place while you were gone. This could save you time and stress on your first day back.
- **Discuss breastfeeding in advance.** Moms who plan to pump breastmilk at work should ask their supervisor or human resources department about this before going back. Come up with a pumping schedule that works for you and your employer. Discuss where you can pump. You'll need a clean and private area with access to a sink.



Going back to work can be less stressful with some planning and open discussion with your employer. Don't wait until you go back to deal with these questions and details.

When you don't like your spouse's friends



If you don't like your significant other's friends, it can add tension to your relationship. If you find you don't get along with some – or all – of them, take a calm approach:

- **Get to know them better.** Sometimes, first impressions are misleading. Try not to form a solid opinion of your partner's friends until you've spent more time with them. You may start to like them if you form your own relationship with them.

- **Focus on behaviors, not people.** Think about what the person has done that you are upset about. If they are doing something irresponsible or illegal, for instance, this should be discussed with your spouse. But, if you just don't like their sense of humor or love of football, you may have to accept your differences.
- **Be open, but kind.** You should be able to talk to your partner about things that are bothering you. Bring up specific behaviors of their friend that bother you and tell them why you are upset. Try not to insult your partner's friend or accuse them. Together, with your partner, discuss ways to avoid future problems with the friend.

Focus on keeping your own relationship healthy, even when you must have tough conversations about their friends.



Friends are good for you

It feels good to talk to a friend and share a few laughs. But having friends may have more benefits than smiles and memories. Research has shown that a good network of support from friends may lower your risk of some health problems. Some evidence suggests that people who have social connections may be less likely to have a heart attack. In addition, people who give support to others can help lower their blood pressure.

Source: *Current Opinion in Psychiatry*. 2008;21(2):201-205.