

Hate to exercise? Do a zero-minute workout instead

Boost the intensity of your everyday movements and better your health

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Let's face it—if you're 45, 55, or 65 years old and you're not already exercising regularly, you're probably not going to join a gym today.

“The fact is, the exercisers are already exercising,” says Janis Isaman, a certified movement specialist and owner of the health studio My Body Couture in Calgary, Canada.

Most non-exercisers can point to two reasons that keep them from working out—lack of time and lack of interest.

A report published in the *BMJ*, a British general medical journal, says that high-intensity incidental physical activity can get you past those excuses. It can bring you many of the health benefits of regular exercise—especially if you're middle-aged, inactive, and overweight. (That's a lot of us.)

And you don't have to clear your calendar or sign up for a 5K run.

Do what you need to do anyway

High-intensity incidental physical activity is a fancy way of saying that you should exert yourself while you're doing the things you normally do, like shopping, housework, yard work, and walking.

Exertion is considered "high intensity" when you push yourself to six times your normal energy expenditure. So, it's different for everyone, depending on your fitness level.

"My maximal effort isn't going to be anywhere near the maximal effort of LeBron James. He's going to have a much higher physical fitness capability," says Hallie Zwibel, a doctor of osteopathic medicine and director of the Center of Sports Medicine at the New York Institute of Technology. "But we're both pushing our bodies to new limits."

If you're not in good shape, activities like these can get you to a high intensity level:

- Carrying groceries upstairs
- Organizing a room
- Scrubbing bathrooms or floors vigorously
- Playing with children
- Taking care of home repairs
- Mowing the lawn
- Climbing stairs quickly
- Walking quickly, or walking uphill

Quick hits make a difference

You don't have to spend hours cleaning your house or working in your yard to see gains.

“Any increase in heart rate and respiration is going to have some positive effect,” Zwibel says.

Doing three to five of these activities for a total of 10 minutes most days would meet more than two-thirds of your physical activity requirements, the report says.

And even much lower levels of activity can benefit your health. Another study published in the BMJ found that people who were active for as little as 10 minutes a week had less risk of dying from heart disease and cancer than their inactive peers.

Every minute matters

A key factor behind this push for everyday activity is a recent change in the U.S. physical activity guidelines—there's no longer a recommendation that activity needs to last for at least 10 minutes.

That change stems from new technology that can assess activity better, says Ky Russell, a faculty instructor in kinesiology at San Jose State University. “We can see now that short bursts of activity have benefits.”

Those revised activity guidelines also note that people with the lowest activity levels stand to benefit the most from adding moderate to vigorous activities to their days.

Just DIY

Isaman points out that in our culture, it's easy to pay someone else to move for you—you can sit back and order groceries online, hire housecleaners and landscapers, and drive through the car wash. Take on some of these tasks yourself and your activity level will increase.

“Nobody needs to join a gym, or do anything for a half-hour. As long as they're living their life and exerting themselves a little bit they should be okay,” Isaman says.