

## Fitness Facts for Women



Fitness can take a back seat for busy women, but it shouldn't. Regular physical activity is important for so many reasons, starting with reducing the risk of osteoporosis, heart disease, breast and colon cancer, and depression. Plus, moving the body can improve sleep, keep excess pounds at bay as we age, and give us the energy to tackle an ambitious to-do list.

Try these fit finds to help you develop strength, muscle tone, endurance, and most importantly, better health!

### SETTING UP FOR SUCCESS

**Make a date.** Schedule fitness into your calendar, as you would any other commitment. Even noting "lunch/walk," to prompt you to take a 15-minute walk around your place of work—inside or out—can improve the chances you'll get moving.

**Keep your date.** Regularly schedule time with a workout buddy. If you know someone is waiting for you to go walking or hit the gym, you'll be less likely to skip it.

**Plan for it.** Put your gym bag in your car, or by the door, so you are never unprepared. An extra pair of sneakers and sweats in the car can be enough to give you the opportunity for a quick walk before, during, or after work or other activities.



**Make it a family affair.** If you have a dog, make sure you're keeping up with walks, and involve the whole family. Walk around the soccer field as you're cheering the kids on. Make quality kid-time active too. Toss a ball or Frisbee, hop on your bikes, or walk to the corner store. You'll meet your fitness goals, and set an example for your kids that you take your own health as seriously as you take theirs.

**Find fit friends.** People who socialize with fit folks are more likely to be fit themselves. If your friends aren't fit-minded, be the leader. Suggest fit activities for a get together, or incorporate fitness into other outings. For example, if it's an option, walk or bike to and from a brunch gathering.

**Focus on health.** The biggest fitness benefits are realized when people go from being completely sedentary to doing just 15 to 20 minutes of activity daily. Even if you don't lose a single pound, your health will improve if you move more!

## TOOLS



**Use your body as a tool.** For effective muscle-building options, try pushups—begin on your knees if regular pushups are too difficult—dips using a chair, walking lunges holding a ½- to 1-gallon container of water in each hand, crunches (sit ups), and arm curls using canned food or books.

**Stretch it.** Use stretchy rubber fitness bands for resistance training. Stand on a band and perform arm curls and raises, and use circular bands around your legs during leg lifts and walking lunges—try forward, backwards, and side steps. Hang the bands on a visible doorknob to remind yourself to use them.

**App-ly yourself.** If you have a smart phone, use one of the many free fitness apps to track your fitness, set goals, and schedule activity sessions. Apps can be a great tool for those looking to track, and improve, their eating habits as well.

**Cross train and track it.** Keeping a fitness journal is an effective motivational tool, and helpful for cross training. For cross training, try an aerobic activity such as hiking, biking, or swimming three times per week; strength training—use fitness bands and body weight if you don't have a gym membership—a couple of times weekly; and loosening up, with twice-weekly yoga, or 10 to 15 minutes of daily stretching.

**Feel the beat.** Listening to music can help you to power through workouts. According to the *Wall Street Journal*, the most motivating songs have 125 to 140 beats per minute, such as "Beat It," by Michael Jackson; "Gangnam Style," by Psy; and "Edge of Glory," by Lady Gaga.



## NUTRIENTS

**Be smart about vitamins.** Your body uses B vitamins to turn food into energy. The Bs include thiamine (vitamin B1), riboflavin (vitamin B2), niacin or niacinamide (vitamin B3), pantothenic acid (vitamin B5), pyridoxine (vitamin B6), biotin, folic acid, and cobalamin (vitamin B12). Try a B-complex supplement or multivitamin with Bs to fill in the dietary gaps as needed.

**Prioritize minerals.** Zinc for immunity, calcium and magnesium for strong bones, and iron (if you are or tend to be iron deficient) are a good place to start. Be sure you get enough vitamin D as well, particularly to aid calcium absorption. Supplements that contain zinc should also contain copper.

**Power up with protein.** Our bodies best build muscle when we eat 20 to 30 grams of protein per meal, but many women come up short on protein early in the day. Add protein-rich foods to breakfast, such as hardboiled eggs, Greek yogurt, or chia seeds to your fruit smoothie.

**Factor in fat.** Fat is a slow-digesting nutrient, so you don't want too much of it just before or just after a workout. Healthy omega-3 fats, on the other hand, can dampen inflammation, a good thing when you're starting a new workout routine. Eat more fish, walnuts, flaxseeds, and other nuts and seeds, and consider taking a 1- to 2-gram omega-3 fatty acid supplement.

