

**As Seen in**



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**Five Minutes to FIT** by Linda T. Gottlieb, MA, CPT, CET

Ask around at the train station, grocery store or at the dinner table about New Year's resolutions and you are guaranteed to hear "getting fitter, doing more exercise or losing weight" as common responses. It's no surprise; the US Surgeon General estimates less than one third of adults engage in the recommended amounts of physical activity (30 minutes of moderate activity, like brisk walking, at least 5 days per week) and over 65% of us are overweight.



***Many of us live very sedentary lives, in fact 40% of adults in the United States do not participate in any leisure time physical activity and 43% of adolescents sit and watch more than 2 hours of television per day.***

Since we know that physical activity is important in preventing and treating overweight and obesity and is extremely helpful in maintaining a good attitude, improved sleep and decreased chances of potential diseases like cancer, you would think we could make daily exercise happen, right?

Unfortunately, it's not always that easy. With today's schedules, many folks feel that they have no time for themselves and when they do, exercise isn't usually the first thing they think of doing. How about if I could convince you that moving for as little as five minutes a day counts?

***Can you spare five minutes a day for improved fitness?***

Research proves that during any aerobic exercise, even walking for five minutes, your heart immediately begins to beat faster in order to pump more blood to your muscles. In fact, scientists have found that people's hearts beat faster even before they exercise- just by the brain anticipating it! Speeding up your heart rate is great because it encourages your arteries to widen naturally, vastly increasing blood flow and circulation.

In just five minutes of moderate exercise, your lungs begin to supply your body with more oxygen, carrying higher levels of carbon dioxide out of your body. More oxygen means you are more alert and aware.

If you can spare 10 minutes, there is even greater news. Just 10 minutes of moderate exercise cranks up your metabolism for an hour or longer. The Science Translational Medicine Journal reported that the

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level of molecules involved in calorie burning changed significantly for an hour after a 10 minute treadmill test. No matter what condition you are in, even a shorter amount of exercise triggers metabolism benefits that last long after you stop moving says Gregory Lewis, MD, a researcher on the study.

And for your core muscles, those in your belly, back, hips and pelvis that are all important for providing stability and balance for your entire body, spend as little as **one minute a day** doing the plank. (Get on your hands and toes, butt down to mimic a “plank”- hold and breathe- make it easier on the wrists by resting on your forearms to start). The best time to do the plank is at the end of any other exercise, forcing your abdominals to really kick in and work.

Got a few minutes for stretching? Great, you can easily decrease stress and strain on your neck and back with some pleasant yoga stretches, like cat and horse stretch or simply sit in a chair and stretching your torso to peek behind you.

And, don't forget to dress the part! Wearing baggy, bedraggled sweat pants don't honor you; they can actually perpetuate low body image. “Wearing clothes that you feel good in can boost your body image, simply because you like your new look” says psychologist Elizabeth Lombardo, PhD. Invest in some well fitting yoga pants and see if you feel inspired dance to the beat of a favorite song on your iPod.

Of course, I think the best five minute fitness result is that you just might be inspired to continue for five or ten minutes more!

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