

Fitting Fitness Into Busy College Life

Physical activity is critical during college. It helps manage stress, keeps your energy up, promotes deeper, sounder sleep, and prevents weight gain. In addition, regular physical activity improves overall health. It lowers blood pressure, blood cholesterol, and blood sugar levels and fights depression, diabetes, heart disease, and some types of cancer.

Students (like all busy adults) don't have time to exercise - they have to make time. The key is planning ahead to make it fit into your schedule.

- **Choose activities that you enjoy doing.** It should be something you want to do, not something you have to do.
- **Choose activities that are convenient for you.** If you have a 3 hour break between classes on Tuesday and Thursday, go to the Recreation Center and take a fitness class or read on a stationary bike. If you don't have a big chunk of time free to exercise, just try to incorporate more activity in your daily routine: take the stairs instead of the elevator, park your car further away and walk 20 minutes to and from school, etc.
- **Be realistic.** You may not be able to work out as much as you had in the past or as much as you would like to, but you can still maintain your fitness level with at least 3 days of physical activity per week.
- **Find a work-out buddy.** Friends help you stay motivated and make physical activity more fun!
- **Take fitness breaks instead of food breaks.** Go for a 10- minute walk, do a couple sets of push-ups or sit ups, or stretch in your room instead of hitting the chips, cookies, and crackers. Not only will you feel more energized, but you'll have burned (instead of gained) several more calories.
- **Remember that you will perform better in school if you take this time for yourself.** Many students feel guilty for working out because they think they should be studying. You will be more focused and alert in your studies if you participate in regular physical activity.

Physical Activity Recommendations

For Health:

- Accumulate at least 30 minutes of moderate physical activity daily.
- Most college students can easily meet this guideline by walking or biking to school, racing around campus to get from class to class, and taking the stairs vs. the elevator.

For Optimal Fitness:

Do aerobic activities for cardiovascular fitness and fat burning.

- How much? 3-5 times per week, for 20-60 minutes, at 60-90% of maximum heart rate.
- e.g. jogging, cycling, roller blading, swimming, dancing

Do resistance training for muscular strength, bone health, and revved up metabolism.

- How much? 2-3 times per week, minimum of 8-10 exercises for upper and lower body, 1-3 sets of 8-12 repetitions to fatigue.
- e.g. resistance exercises with free weights, machines, or own body's resistance.

Stretch for flexibility and relaxation.

- How much? 3-7 times per week, stretch for several minutes, holding each stretch for 20 seconds (without bouncing) to the point of mild discomfort.

NOTE: Avoid over-training!

- Too much exercise can prevent fitness gains, cause wear-and-tear injuries and fatigue, interfere with sleep, and damage health.
- For example, if you don't give your muscles adequate time to recover between resistance training sessions, they can't rebuild and grow.
- Women who fail to consume adequate calories to support what they are burning in hard aerobic exercise can stop menstruating, lose significant amounts of bone, and suffer stress fractures and osteoporosis.