

THE NEWS & OBSERVER

Fitness & Health Section
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You Can Make Time for Exercise

We have some ideas to help you get your workout at home

Your New Year's resolution to hit the gym didn't go so well. Maybe it was the pricey fee. More likely it was the time commitment — the packing up your gear, the driving to the gym, the getting dressed, the kibitzing with others who were also putting off their workout.

"Lack of time is the number one reason cited for not exercising," according to the American College of Sports Medicine, which accredits health and exercise professionals.

Whatever, here it is the middle of February and you're still your 2005 flabby self.

You say you don't have an hour and a half to spend every day working out? You don't need it. In fact, you can get by on a third of that. And your first step toward establishing a regular workout routine doesn't even require breaking a sweat.

"Write it down like you would any other appointment or obligation in your day," advises the ACSM. "It may be best to exercise in the morning before the day gets too hectic or while the children are still sleeping."

How much time should you allot? Once you schedule the time, then what?

We caught up with Melanie Dean, a personal trainer and wellness instructor for Rex Healthcare of Cary who took a few minutes to prescribe a generic no-frills workout for the person who wants a minimal hassle, minimal time workout that will tone him or her up, give a boost of energy and perhaps make it possible to at least bare calves and forearms by beach season.

Before getting started, though, she offers the obligatory warning that anyone launching an exercise program should consult his or her physician beforehand.

Time

Ideally, Dean says you should invest a minimum 30 minutes a day to an exercise program. "Daily is good," she says, "but a minimum of three times a week."

On the ongoing debate over whether those 30 minutes should be continuous or can be cumulative — collected in 5- and 10-minute spurts throughout the day — Dean believes 30 continuous minutes is best. ("That's just me," says Dean, who is wrapping up her master's degree in exercise physiology at UNC-Greensboro.)

Working out five or six times a week, says Dean, is a good way to enable you to address both cardiovascular fitness and strength and conditioning.

Cardiovascular

Dean says some of her clients get their cardiovascular workouts on in-home treadmills, stationary bikes and elliptical trainers. But because you're trying to keep this low budget, she has a cheap alternative: walk the greenway. Do a half-hour walk, starting slow and gradually increasing your speed and intensity.

Another cheap alternative: jumping rope (a serviceable jump rope can be had for about \$5).

"The goal is to jump for 30 minutes," says Dean. And if you can't?

"Then jump for 30 seconds and add 5 or 10 seconds each time you jump."

To get the most of your cardio workout, Dean advises monitoring your heart rate. Heart rate monitors — a belt clasps around your chest sending data via a wireless device to a wristwatch — are extremely popular, says Dean, in part because the prices have come down (you can get one for about \$50, according to www.heartratemonitorsusa.com) and they aren't as bulky and hard to use as they once were.

Your ideal heart-rate target range during a workout, she says, should compute as such: 220 minus your age times 60 percent to 85 percent. Thus, for a 50-year-old you should be in the 102-145 beats-per-minute range.

An older, less technical way of computing heart rate is the RPE — Rated Perceived Exertion — scale. This subjective scale starts at 6, just starting a workout, and goes to 20 — "can't breathe or talk," says Dean. An RPE of 12-14 is ideal.