

[IMAGE]

Don't Be Fooled: Every Step Counts (So Start Counting)

By Editorial Staff

April Fool's Day aside, it's easy to be fooled by the sheer volume of fitness advice circulating in Internet chat rooms, infomercials and the like. What works and what doesn't? While we've discussed some of the tried-and-true principles previously, there's no challenging the simple fact that more steps – in any direction and at any pace – count. After all, those steps add up, burning calories, increasing metabolism (which burns more calories, even when you're not moving), and toning / tightening muscles you may not have exercised in *far* too long. Here are a few ways to make those steps count throughout the day, no matter how hectic things seem:

- *Save Some Gas*: What better method to add to your daily step total than choosing a distant parking space and footing it to your destination? You can even park a 1/4th or 1/2 mile from your arrival point to maximize your step count. *Added benefits*: You'll always get a great parking spot, because increasingly, people want to park as close to the store, restaurant, etc., as possible; and you'll enjoy a little fresh air and some time to yourself – an increasingly rare opportunity these days.
- *Run Errands (Literally)*: We've become a nation of cars; all but gone are the days of the single-car household. We all have cars and we like to use them, even if we're just driving around the corner (literally) to the grocery store. If you're within a mile of your errand, why not bypass the car altogether? Get out there and enjoy your community. So much of life these days is about getting from point A to point B as quickly as possible; why not throw life a curve and reap the physical (and mental; see above) health rewards? *Added benefit*: You can't stress about being stuck in traffic if you're never in any traffic; except for a few locales (N.Y.C, Las Vegas, etc.), cars outnumber pedestrians exponentially.
- stair exercise - Copyright © Stock Photo / Register Mark Break Like You Mean It: No, we're not talking about cars again; we're referring to those moments during your workday when you're actually supposed to get up from your desk and separate yourself (physically and mentally) from your never-empty In Box. Work in a large office? Try walking from one end to the other and back again – once or several times, depending on how long it takes. Confined to a smaller setting? Then map an outdoor route that takes you around the building a few times over the course of 5-15 minutes. *Added*

benefits: Take a break from screen (scream) time and enjoy the mental-health value; visit co-workers you haven't seen all day during your walk through the building, or recruit them to join you for a walk outside.

- *Become a Stair Master:* Finally, consider adding to your step total with a more challenging endeavor: walking up and down stairs. If you work in a multi-floor building, this is easy; if not, there might be a building nearby that meets your needs. And it's not just the workplace; multi-story homes, department stores, etc., all offer similar natural opportunities. *Added benefit:* Depending on the number of flights and your pace, stair climbing delivers an even greater workout than standard walking because of the elevation component.

Sticking to an exercise regimen is challenging enough; don't make it harder by locking yourself into the gym mentality or feel as if you need to do only a certain type of exercise with a certain type of equipment or system. Just try a little walking; after all, it's free, you can do it almost anywhere, and you can actually accomplish something (e.g., get you from one place to the other and back).

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