

15 Sneaky Ways to Get Fit

How to Create a Home Gym

We're not talking about spending thousands of dollars on a treadmill and other high-tech gear. "Believe it or not, you can get a full-body workout by buying just a few inexpensive pieces of equipment that you can use in your TV room," says Sue Fleming, director of physical education at Riverdale Country School, in the Bronx, and author of *Buff Moms-to-Be*. Check out Fleming's suggestions for getting fit on the cheap.

*Dumbbells. If you're a beginner, buy 3- and 5-pound sets of weights. Use them to strengthen your arms, chest, back, and shoulders. (\$10 to \$20)

*Resistance bands or elastic tubing. These provide great resistance for leg and arm exercises. (\$15 to \$25 for a set of several bands)

*An exercise step. Use a sturdy, hard plastic step or bench with a slip-proof rubber covering for toning moves like squats and lunges, in addition to heart-pumping cardio workouts. (\$25 to \$50)

*Fitness ball. Strengthen your abs, back, and lower body with the help of this oversize plastic ball. It's also good for safely modifying moves when you're pregnant. (\$30)

1. Keep your trunk well stocked

Feel like you spend your life in the car driving your kids from one activity to the next? Try storing a pair of sneakers and a jump rope or resistance bands in the trunk. Next time you find yourself waiting for your daughter's ballet class to let out or your son to finish his piano lesson, you can get in a quickie workout.

2. Bop 'til you drop

Every morning, turn on the stereo and get your kids energized for the day with a 10-minute dance session in your living room. Not only will they love learning how to do the Twist and the Electric Slide, but you'll break a sweat and burn a few calories.

3. Get the babysitter to come early

Having dinner plans means you have even less time for yourself, right? Not always. The next time you and your spouse have a dinner date, ask the sitter to come an hour earlier. While she watches the kids, use the first 30 minutes to exercise and the rest to get gorgeous. Remember, working out before a big meal helps rev up your metabolism and makes you more likely to eat healthier.

4. Take a walk at naptime

Don't just sack out on the couch while your little one naps in his crib! Once or twice a week, strap him into the stroller instead -- the vibrations from being on the move will help him fall asleep quickly while you take a power walk around the neighborhood.

5. Send Dad out with the grocery list (and the kids)

"The key to finding time to exercise is to look at your schedule and find a few tasks that you can assign to your husband," says Julie Morgenstern, a professional organizer and author of *Time Management from the Inside Out*. "Maybe it's having him pick up the kids from daycare or going to the bank and post office." A good place to start: Every Sunday afternoon, have Dad take your little ones to do the grocery shopping while you hop on the treadmill, go for a jog outside, or head to the local pool to swim some laps.

6. Plan around playdates

Ask around at your child's preschool and you're bound to find another mom who wishes she had more time to exercise as well. Then set up a playdate schedule: One week, you host the playdate so the other mother can exercise for an hour; the next week, she watches the kids so you can use the time to hit the gym.

7. Play T-Ball before pizza

If you're like most families, you probably order pizza or Chinese food at least once a week. The next time you're waiting for your food to be delivered, get the whole family outside for a pickup game of touch football, softball, catch, or even tag.

8. Start a video library

Buy a few inexpensive, 30-minute workout videos to use while your child is napping or right after he goes to bed. To keep costs down, borrow tapes from your local library, see whether your video store has any used videos for sale, or check out sites like half.com, collagevideo.com, and secondspin.com.

9. Pump some iron

"Women don't realize that just five or 10 minutes of strength training provides enormous benefits to their muscles, boosts their metabolism, and reduces their future risk of osteoporosis," says fitness expert Kathy Smith. Every other night, while you and your family watch television, use 3- or 5-pound weights to do three sets of 10 biceps curls, triceps kickbacks, and chest flies.

10. Cheer on the move

Don't just sit in the bleachers or on the sidelines during your child's soccer and basketball games. Instead, walk the perimeter of the field or court as many times as possible. If you find it too distracting to walk while you watch, try to slip in some yoga moves while no one's looking.

11. Use your lunch hour

If you work, make your lunch break your designated time to exercise. "My company has an on-site fitness center, so I try to hit the gym for a 30-minute workout three times a week. On those days, I bring my lunch and eat at my desk," says mom Sara Schmid, of Atlanta. If you don't have a fitness center nearby, keep a pair of sneakers under your desk, grab a coworker, and climb up and down the stairs in your building.

12. Enlist the kids

Need a fitness buddy? Look no further than your child! Most community YMCAs offer "Mommy and Me" swimming or yoga classes, many big cities have stroller-walking programs, and any yard is big enough for an impromptu obstacle course. "When the swim class I take with my 12-month-old son ends, I hand him to my husband so I can squeeze in 15 minutes' worth of laps," says Lynzi Ziegenhagen, of Baltimore.

13. Window-shop before you buy

Even if you know exactly what you want, always do two laps of the entire mall before you buy a thing. Not only will you burn calories, but you'll also find out who's having the best sale.

14. Tone and tighten around the house

Doing little exercise moves throughout your day will leave you with strong, shapely muscles. Try calf raises while you iron, leg lifts when you're washing dishes, and deep squats and lunges as you feed your toddler lunch in his high chair.

15. Get up earlier

It's true: The morning is often the best time for moms to fit in an uninterrupted workout. Just once a week, set your alarm for 45 minutes earlier so you can ride your bike, practice yoga or Pilates, or go running and start off the day refreshed.