

Little habits, HUGE Health Payoffs

20
minutes

WALK OFF
TWO SIZES.

A University of Missouri-Columbia study found that people who walked their dog up to 20 minutes per day, five times a week, lost an average of 14 pounds in just under a year.



In an exclusive FITNESS survey, you told us that you have tons of health goals—but not enough time to make them a reality. We'll help you reach every one, without devoting your life to getting there. Here, super-speedy ways to improve your health in minutes a day.

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YOUR HEALTH REPORT CARD

FITNESS teamed up with the National Women's Health Resource Center and Harris Interactive to find out what exactly your get-healthy goals are, what's standing in your way and how we can help you clear those hurdles. Here's what we found out.

YOUR MAIN MISSION:

- 76% want to eat healthier
- 71% want to exercise more
- 61% want to lose weight
- 52% want less stress
- 40% want more sleep

88% OF YOU HAVE MULTIPLE HEALTH GOALS.

YOUR BIGGEST ROADBLOCK:

- 42% No time
- 25% Too expensive
- 21% Too much effort
- 15% Me-time guilt
- 14% No game plan
- 10% No support

ONLY 1% OF YOU CITE LACK OF WILLPOWER AS A GET-HEALTHY OBSTACLE.

- Half of you crave a better understanding of how small changes can affect your health. (You're in luck! Find out all you need to know on these pages.)

- Eating better gets easier. 44% of 18- to 29-year-olds are meeting their eat-right goals, while an impressive 60% of women in their 40s are.

YOUR RESTAURANTS REQUESTS:

MORE INFO

35% of you say knowing the nutritional breakdown of menu items would help you eat smarter.

LESS FOOD

37% of you say smaller restaurant portions would help.

YOUR HEALTHY TRADE-OFFS:

To lead a healthier lifestyle, 66% of you are willing to spend less time working (shocking!), enjoying leisure activities or tackling your to-do list. 15% of you are willing to give up some money; 25% aren't willing to sacrifice anything.

While our hearts are in the right place, our schedules often get in the way of our healthy goals. In fact, according to our exclusive survey, up to 97 percent of you aspire to live healthier lives. Unfortunately, you're hitting some serious roadblocks: Forty-two percent say there simply aren't enough hours in the day to make your wellness dreams a reality. **Starting right now, we'll show you how to take back your time.** With as little as 10 seconds here and 20 minutes there, you can completely transform your life—mind, body and spirit.

1 minute **Find your focus.** Instead of thinking, *I need to work out*, fine-tune your objective to something like, *I'm going to do my 30-minute DVD workout on Monday before work.* "Being detailed forces you to think through the steps necessary to accomplish the goal and makes it harder to find excuses," says Jackie Keller, trainer and author of *Body After Baby*.

2 minutes **Build a better brain.** Right-handed? Use your left hand to brush your teeth or vice versa. "This improves brain signaling, which helps prevent age-related memory loss," says Frederic Vagnini, M.D., coauthor of *Count Down Your Age*.

3 minutes **Set a healthier table.** Use short, fat glasses for water and tall, skinny ones for drinks that are less healthy. Researchers found you'll drink more with the former and less with the latter. Try portion-controlled plates too. Eating off of them, overweight diabetics lost about six pounds in as many months, reports the *Archives of Internal Medicine*. We like the EZ-Weight Plate because, well, it's easy. Each has four compartments with measurements inside (\$19.95, ezweighplate.com).

5 minutes **Get more from your doc.** Jot down everything you'd like to discuss with her before your appointment. It will improve your chances of leaving satisfied, concluded a recent review of 33 trials.

6 minutes **Start your day smarter.** Overweight women who ate two eggs for breakfast for eight weeks as

part of a low-fat diet lost 65 percent more weight than those who chose bagels. They also experienced an astonishing 83 percent greater reduction in waist size, say researchers at Louisiana State University's Pennington Biomedical Research Center.

7 minutes **Improve your zzz's.** Do absolutely nothing—besides silently repeating a relaxing word like *calm*—for 5 to 10 minutes before hitting the sack. You'll fall asleep faster and sleep better. "Sitting quietly and concentrating on your breath tells your body it's time to slow down," says Jacob Teitelbaum, M.D., author of *From Fatigued to Fantastic!*

10 minutes **Lower your blood pressure.** Carve out 10 minutes three or four times a week to relax and slow your breathing to fewer than 10 breaths per minute, and you may lower your blood pressure 5 to 10 points, according to the *Journal of Human Hypertension*. To help get to that snail's speed, try meditation (look to page 77 for some how-tos) or the expert-recommended Resperate, a device that uses rhythmic tones to help regulate breathing (\$300, resperate.com).

15 minutes **Giggle away jiggle.** As little as 15 minutes of daily laughter can burn up to 40 calories (about half a fun-size bag of M&M's), reports the *International Journal of Obesity*. Giggling also cuts stress-hormone levels and bolsters the immune system. There are even benefits for new moms: The *Journal of Psychosomatic Research* reveals that laughter ups melatonin levels in breast milk, which helps ward off allergies in nursing infants.

16 minutes **Sleep yourself slimmer.** Preliminary research shows that not getting enough shut-eye is related to obesity. Indeed, people who are at a healthy weight sleep 16 minutes a day more than their heavier counterparts, reports the *Archives of Internal Medicine*. Researchers believe this phenomenon may be connected to reductions in leptin, an appetite-regulating hormone.

17 minutes **Flatten your abs.** Americans get antsy after 17 minutes of waiting in line, finds an AP-Ipsos poll. To sidestep aggravation, tighten your lower, middle, then upper abs for 10 seconds each while you wait. Next, lean to one side slightly, then the other, holding each position for 10 seconds. Repeat the moves until you get to the head of the line. "If you do this every time you have to wait, your core will be stronger in just a few weeks," says Amie Hoff, a fitness consultant for *New York Sports Clubs*.

25 minutes **Outsmart the flu.** Doing biceps curls or riding a stationary bike a few hours before getting a flu shot may improve your response to the vaccine, say University of Birmingham scientists. Apparently, exercise activates the immune system, preparing it for the shot. •

10-second EAT-HEALTHY MOVES

ORDER VEGGIE SOUP. Starting a meal with it can reduce your total calorie intake by 20 percent.

DISPLAY FRUIT. Putting it in plain sight inspires good-for-you noshing.

DRINK WATER, NOT SODA. Swapping it three times a week will save you about 21,216 calories a year.

ASK FOR A SIDE SALAD. Compared with those who skip their veggies, you'll benefit from higher levels of folic acid and vitamins C and E.

TRADE SALT FOR A LEMON SQUEEZE. Taking half a teaspoon of salt from your diet every day can help reduce your heart disease risk by 25 percent.