

Healthy Living

I don't like the gym. Now what?

Exercise is an important component of overall health. Experts say that adults should aim for at least 150 minutes of moderate-intensity aerobic exercise or 75 minutes of vigorous-intensity aerobic exercise each week, along with muscle-strengthening activities at least two days a week. Some believe heading to the gym is the best way to get the exercise they need, and it very well may be... unless it's not. Some people don't like going to a gym and are therefore unlikely to do so with enough consistency to benefit from a membership. However, the gym is not the only place where individuals can meet fitness requirements.

Those who are not necessarily enamored with the idea of exercising at a gym for a variety of reasons can rest assured that it's still possible to be fit and healthy. In 2023, Civic Science polled thousands of Americans on how they chose to exercise and found that exercising at home is more popular than heading to the gym. Fifty-two percent

of respondents said they exercised regularly at home, while 28 percent exercised regularly at a gym. At-home exercisers also were 21 percent more likely than gym-goers to say they worked out once a week or more.

People who want to find ways to stay fit without a fitness club membership have plenty of options.

- Get at-home equipment. Setting up gym equipment in a spare room, the basement or the garage can help at-home fitness fans exercise. All it takes is some compact weights, perhaps a treadmill or elliptical and a few additional items to exercise effectively at home.

- Tune into streaming services. Many content providers upload exercise videos online so people can follow along at home or elsewhere. A quick search of YouTube offers a variety of options that fit with the type of exercise one desires. From 30-minute aerobic walking workouts to rebounding to yoga videos, content is there and also may be free to watch.

- Head outdoors. Walking or jogging around the neighborhood or on local trails can be effective. Plus, it exposes a person to sunlight and fresh air, and provides an opportunity to see people in the community.

- Play a sport and/or join a club. Indi-

viduals may want to take up a physical activity, like joining a sports team or participating in a club that has physical activity, such as a hiking club. The Better Health Channel says exercising with a friend is a great way to stay motivated, as each

person can spur on the other.

- Turn on some tunes. Dancing around to favorite songs is a fun way to engage in physical activity. If other exercise ideas seem uninspiring, upbeat songs that get a person moving can help. Union Health says

keeping one's heart rate between roughly 114 to 135 beats per minute is a good workout. Search for songs that will help achieve that rate.

If heading to the gym isn't a person's first choice for exercise, there are several other ways to exercise.

Shine a light on vitamin D

Many vitamins are important for personal health, but come the wintertime, vitamin D may dominate the headlines. That's because hours of sunlight dwindle in the winter, which can lower levels of vitamin D in the body.

Vitamin D sometimes is referred to as the "sunshine vitamin" because of its ties to the sun. The Cleveland Clinic says sun exposure on the skin is one way for people to get vitamin D. However, people with darker skin or those in certain geographical locations that do not get enough sunlight may not get sufficient vitamin D. Supplementation with foods that contain vitamin D or through pills may be necessary.

Vitamin D helps

maintain a balance of calcium in the body and facilitates the building and maintaining of strong bones. The Mayo Clinic says low vitamin D levels have been tied to cancer, cognitive decline, multiple sclerosis, rickets, and psoriasis. But how much vitamin D does a person need? The recommended daily amount of vitamin D is 400 international units for children up to age 12 months, 600 IU for those ages one to 70 years old, and 800 IU for people over 70 years of age. However, some doctors recommend people take higher amounts. The Endocrine Society, for example, suggests higher daily doses of 1,500 to 2,000 IU may be needed for some adults.

Although vitamin D deficiency may compromise health, it's important to note that going too far in the other direction also is unhealthy. Harvard Health advises against taking more than 4,000 IU per day, which is considered the safe upper limit. High doses of vitamin D can cause too much calcium to form in the blood, a condition called hypercalcemia. This raises the risk of fatal heart conditions. Increasing vitamin D intake also increases the risk for kidney stones, so the pros and cons must be weighed. Symptoms of too much vitamin D can include vomiting, nausea, stomach pain, fatigue, dizziness, confusion, increased thirst, and frequent urination.

Getting vitamin D naturally through sunlight and food sources is preferable to supplements. Fatty fish, mushrooms, liver, shrimp, and oysters are some

foods that are excellent sources of vitamin D. UCLA Health says eight to 10 minutes of sun exposure at noon produces the recommended amount of vitamin D. However, in the winter when only 10 percent of the body is exposed, nearly two hours of sun exposure at noon is needed to produce a sufficient amount of vitamin D. Geographic regions may produce different rates of exposure needed to ensure sufficient vitamin D production.

Vitamin D is necessary for health, but many people are not getting enough. Increasing exposure to the sun, eating the right foods and supplementation when needed can improve vitamin D levels.



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