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Eliminate Excuses for Exercise

There's a certain familiarity to the reasons people cite for not exercising: no time, too tired, no childcare, bad weather. Heard them before? Chances are you've even said them yourself. And while there certainly are real-life obstacles to getting 30 minutes of physical activity every day, take a closer look at the most popular excuses for remaining sedentary.

— **No time.** Between work and family responsibilities, it's easy to feel strapped for time. But I'll bet a huge percentage of people find 30 minutes a day to watch television. What if you allotted that time to exercise instead? If time seems to slip away everyday, schedule your workout for a specific time and write it down on your daily planner, or get up 30 minutes earlier and enjoy an uninterrupted half hour to yourself at the start of the day.

— **Too Tired.** Believe it or not, regular physical activity actually boosts energy. When your body is healthy you have more vigor and vitality. Try it, you'll see!

— **No childcare.** This is a significant, but not insurmountable obstacle. Try exercising with your kids. Pop them in the stroller or bike cart and walk or ride for 30 minutes. If they are old enough, have them come along with you under their own power. Or, form a babysitting co-op with friends and neighbors that allows each of you time to workout. Join a health club or exercise program that provides babysitting. If you work, use your lunch hour to exercise. Get creative and you'll be surprised how your options open up.

— **Bad weather.** You can approach this two ways: find an indoor workout or invest in the right clothing. Both will allow you to keep exercising despite Mother Nature's mood. Now that you have viable solutions for the perceived barriers to exercise, here are a few "must-haves" for your new fitness program:

— **A support system.** Whether it's your buddies from the babysitting co-op, friends or family members, you need to surround yourself with people who encourage you to get fit.

— **Realistic goals.** Losing weight isn't a cure-all for life's woes, but there's nothing better for improving your quality of life. With that in mind, don't set goals in pounds but by consistency. In other words, rather than saying 'I'm going to lose 30 pounds,' say "I'm going to walk for 30 minutes everyday."

— **A balanced approach.** A well-rounded exercise program includes aerobic conditioning (walking, swimming, cycling, running), resistance training and flexibility exercises. You can focus on one aspect per day or get it all in one shot with a fitness class that covers all the bases. For best results, exercise should also be accompanied by good nutrition and plenty of sleep.

— **A fitness diary.** One of the best ways to stay motivated is to track your success. And every time you workout you're successful! Write down what you did and for how long, along with how you felt before, during and after exercise. At the end of each week add up your exercise minutes and pat yourself on the back.