



fresh moves | new music | pure motivation

Prolong Your Life with a Little Vacation Time

Want to live longer? Take a vacation. Two university studies have found a link between time off and longevity. In one five-year study, men who took more vacations had a 17 percent lower risk of dying during the next decade than their counterparts who vacationed less frequently. In addition, their risk of death from heart disease was almost one third lower.

Unfortunately, people today take 10 percent less vacation time today than one year ago, according to a survey by Expedia.com, which means we aren't getting the rest and relaxation we need. Even a short sabbatical from stress does wonders for your health. To make your vacations extra healthy try the following:

Eat well on the road. Don't let your vacation become synonymous with a feeding free-for-all. Pack your own healthy snacks (raw veggies, fruit, nuts) for plane or car trips; order broiled or grilled fish or lean meats with steamed vegetables when eating out; stay well hydrated; and don't overdo the alcohol.

Make it a physically active vacation. Try biking from town to town on one of the many rail to trail bike paths now available. Hike trails in state or national parks. Do your city sightseeing by foot. Register for a road race at your chosen destination; it's a great way to become familiar with a new location. Learn to snorkel, surf or wind sail (great for upper body conditioning).

Volunteer. Ask anyone who's spent a week building homes for Habitat for Humanity or performing a community service for those in need, and they'll tell you what a fulfilling experience it is.

Don't plan every minute of everyday or you may come home feeling more stressed than when you left. Schedule downtime and opportunities to make spontaneous decisions regarding activities.

Take some time alone, even if it's just a daytrip. From busy moms to executives to stressed students, all of us can benefit from spending time alone and being free to do exactly what we want, when we want.

Don't abandon your fitness program! Exercise keeps your energy high for trying new things and exploring new places. You may have to get creative, but that's part of the fun. Pack a resistance tube and/or favorite exercise video; choose hotels with fitness centers; check out local health clubs or fitness classes.

Exercise to try:

Travel time can be the most tiring part of a vacation. If you're sitting in a car or plane for a prolonged period, try the following upper body stretch to relieve tension and refresh your back muscles.

Sit up tall in your seat, tighten your abdominal muscles, and relax your shoulders. Place your hands behind your head, elbows to the sides. Let your head drop forward until you feel a stretch in the back of your neck and shoulders. Do not pull on your head - just allow your arms to hang, using their weight to assist the stretch. Avoid letting your chest or shoulders roll forward. Hold for 10 to 15 seconds.

Next, open up your elbows, pull your shoulder blades together, lift your chest to the ceiling and look upward. Make sure you keep your abdominal muscles engaged to support your lower back as you do this. Hold for 10 to 15 seconds and repeat each stretch 2 or 3 more times as desired.