

Only Five Minutes: Exercise Suggestions Working Moms Can Use

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Even if you only have five minutes, you can find an exercise program. Here are ways to make it work.

You know you should exercise. You even want to exercise. But on many days, the reality of working mom life is that, frankly, you just don't have the time. Finding a thirty-minute uncommitted block to go for a walk or a run, or pop in an exercise DVD, won't fit with all the other obligations and have-tos on your calendar for the day. And finding an hour or longer to actually go to the gym? Truly impossible.

The good news is that you can make do and do good enough with the small bits of time you do have. In fact, recent research shows that short bursts of exercise can sometimes even be better than one long block. For instance, when people with diabetes go for a ten-minute walk after each meal, their blood sugar is more stable than when they go for one thirty-minute walk a day. Similar results have been found with blood pressure, with brief bursts of exercise doing more to keep blood pressure low than one longer workout.

Today, we'll review some possible ways you can get moving when you only have five minutes to spare. In future posts, I'll offer suggestions for when you have ten or fifteen minutes you can put to good work for your own self-care.

Five minutes – Discretely, Anytime, and Anywhere:

Think about those times when you have five minutes that you can't do anything else but you're not really doing anything, either. For instance – waiting in line at the grocery store or the bank, or standing outside the school at pick-up time. You can put those to good use in promoting your health and fitness. A simple exercise is to combine Yoga Mountain Pose with pelvic floor exercise. Yoga Mountain Pose is a great way to strengthen your abs and your back, to increase overall core body strength. Exercise that improves your posture is great for maintaining strength and mobility as you get older – women, in particular, tend to experience worsening of our posture and reduced core strength as we get older. And pelvic floor exercises are important to prevent the occasional urine leaks that can plague us after pregnancy. As you stand strong in Yoga Mountain Pose while practicing pelvic floor lifts, no one will even notice – they'll just see you as the woman with amazing posture!

Five minutes – With your Partner

If you've got five minutes with your partner, rather than staring at the TV or each staring at your phones, why don't you put some music on and dance? Try a hustle and groove to great 70s music like Abba (Dancing Queen) or the BeeGees (Stayin' Alive) for an authentic hustle feel. Disco music often runs at 100 beats per minute, which is a great pace to get your heart rate up and moving.

Five minutes – With your Kids

If you've got five minutes to play with your kids, pick something that will leave all of you in a pile of giggles. It's also a great way to get out their energy before you begin the bath time-bedtime routine, so that they really wind down and settle down. (Although, don't do something that revs them up DURING the bath time-bedtime routine, because then you'll be fighting their adrenaline rush, and they won't want to go to bed). A great option is a fun game of chase-and-cuddle. It's exactly as it sounds – let your

kids chase you – all of you run fast – and when they catch you, you cuddle them. In our house, we call this “Gingerbread Mama,” – as in “Run, run, as fast as you can, you can’t catch me, I’m the gingerbread mama,” a fun revised version of the gingerbread man story. After a busy day of school and separation from you, it’s a fun way to give your kids an excuse to run, be silly, and get lots of hugs from mom.

Five minutes – Dedicated Time, Just for You

If you have five actual minutes, just for you, that you can use to exercise – for instance, five minutes before you go shower, five minutes while you’re waiting for a phone call at home, etc. – then a sun salutation is a perfect way to use the time. It provides a full body strengthening and stretching workout, combined with a mental focusing exercise. When you’re done, you’ll notice how you feel more open in your chest and hips, stronger in your arms and back, and more calm and centered in your mind.



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