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Step it Up: Power Your Walk with Intervals

Life is like interval training. You work and then you rest, and so on. You can include interval training in your physical activity routine at many levels, and it doesn't require special equipment. For those who feel they don't have enough time to fit in exercise, a routine of "high intensity interval training," or HIIT, could be appealing. The key is to start at a level that is right for you and build from there.

While HIIT sounds like a specific training program, it doesn't have to be. Think of what you do right now for physical activity. How can you add intervals, or short exercise "snacks," of vigorous intensity? For example, a HIIT treadmill routine could look something like this: Warm up with slower-paced walking for 5 minutes, as your muscles and nervous system need time to adapt to exercise. Then alternate 3 minutes of moderate-intensity walking (where you can barely carry on a conversation) with 30 seconds to a minute of vigorous-intensity running or speed walking — at least three times — and end with a 5-minute cool-down walk.

What are the benefits to adding these high intensity intervals? Research is showing that it improves blood vessel function to aid in managing high blood pressure; promotes better blood sugar regulation; and helps reverse muscle decline due to aging. There is also promising research that suggests that adding these vigorous activity bouts can prolong the lifespan of a healthy brain by delaying the start of Alzheimer's and Parkinson's diseases. If weight loss is a focus for you, HIIT helps because you burn more calories than you do in 30 minutes of steady walking.

Sedentary time is a big risk factor for poor health, so make sure you are moving regularly throughout your day. You can break up your 30 minutes of activity into three 10-minute bouts of exercise. Add spurts of activity by taking the stairs at a brisk pace, or do some squats or wall pushups. People who do this end up being more fit than people who wait for their few exercise sessions per

week. Need more ideas? Check out this [Wiggle While you Work](#) webinar.

The biggest take home is that adding these intervals to exercise is easy and there is no mandatory way to do it. You really can move your way!

Strong from Head to Toe: Upper Body Moves that Matter

It is common for your upper back to sag and hurt after a few hours at the computer or after driving long distances. As you scrunch in front of a screen or at the wheel, your chest muscles get tight and upper back muscles become overstretched and weak. To improve upper body posture and reverse the effects of “scrunching” try this **posture exercise** and pec stretch.

1. Sit on a firm chair or stool. Wrap your arms around your shoulders as though you are giving yourself a hug. Can you touch your shoulder blades with your fingers? Now, release your arms.



2. Lift your elbows and place your fingers behind your head. Keep your head in a neutral position while looking straight ahead (don't look down.) Squeeze your shoulder blades together, count to 5 slowly and then slowly release.
3. Repeat the shoulder blade squeeze. This time, think about holding an imaginary quarter between your two shoulder blades. Hold for the count of 5 and slowly release, then repeat the exercise one more time.

Now, try this **pec stretch**. Find a corner in a room, stand and face the corner. This stretch is almost like a push-up at the wall. You will stay in a position that will stretch and lengthen your chest muscles.

1. Place the palms of your hand on either side of the wall, approximately shoulder level.
2. Lean toward the wall, going to a point where it feels challenging, but causes no pain. Move your whole body as a unit, do not bend at the waist.
3. Hold this position for 5 to 30 seconds, then release. You should feel the stretch across your chest. Repeat the stretch.

Here are several upper body strengthening exercises you can do during your day at work or at home.

Wall Push-Ups:

1. Stand about an arm's length away from the wall with your feet flat and hip-distance apart. Reach your arms out straight and place your hands on the wall, fingers pointing upward, tips of fingers directly in line with your shoulders.
2. Bend your elbows so they graze the sides of your body (keep elbows in — no chicken wings) and slowly lower your nose and chest to the wall. Don't arch your back or sag your stomach.
3. Pause, then straighten your arms to return to the starting position. Do two sets of 10 repetitions.

Overhead Press

1. Stand (or sit in a chair) with feet shoulder-width apart. You can do this exercise with or without

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Walk Kansas Learning Lounge

Check the “Resources” section on your online portal for links to all Walk Kansas webinars, along with supporting information.



Link to join or scan the QR code:

ksu.zoom.us/j/92803723573

All webinars will be recorded.

hand weights. Raise your arms to start with your hands level with your ears.

2. Slowly push your hands/weights over your head until your arms are fully extended.
3. Pause, then slowly lower your hands back to ear level. Do two sets of 10 repetitions.

Reel in the Benefits: Seafood Deserves a Spot on Your Plate

If you can cook a fish fillet, you can have a healthful, easy dinner on the table in 10 to 15 minutes. If you think of seafood as fast food, shifting to include more in your diet might be easier than you think.

Current Dietary Guidelines for Americans, and the Mediterranean Diet, recommend eating fish and seafood at least twice per week (at least 8 ounces total) to get essential omega-3 fatty acids, which keep your heart and brain healthy. These important nutrients are found in every kind of fish, and especially those high in fat, such as salmon, trout, sardines, herring, canned mackerel, canned light tuna, and oysters. Other foods contain omega-3s as well, in smaller amounts. These include walnuts, walnut oil, flaxseeds, flaxseed oil, pecans, canola oil, cod liver oil, soybeans, and most greens.

Cooking fish is fast and easy, but it can be intimidating to cook because it is delicate and easy to overcook. The best way to prevent this is to use a food thermometer and cook fish to an internal temperature of 145°F. To easily prepare fish, you can bake it, pan-sear it, grill it, or cook it in a pouch of parchment paper or foil.

Even in a landlocked state like Kansas, there are plenty of practical ways to add seafood to your meals: Keep frozen fish fillets and shellfish on hand for quick meals; canned tuna, salmon, and sardines are affordable, shelf-stable, and easy to add to salads, sandwiches, or casseroles; and incorporate seafood into familiar dishes, like tacos and pasta.

Adding seafood to your weekly routine doesn't have to be overwhelming. Start small by replacing one meal a week with a seafood option and build from there. Here is more advice about eating fish: [Advice About Eating Fish \(October 2021\)](#)

*In the recipe that follows, pre-cook potatoes before assembling the packets by placing sliced potatoes in a microwave-safe dish and heating on high for about 3 minutes.

Shrimp Boil Foil Packets

Makes 4 Servings

Ingredients:

- 1 pound raw large shrimp, peeled and deveined
- 8 ounces turkey smoked sausage, sliced to ¼-inch thick
- 1 medium zucchini; slice in half lengthwise, then slice into ¼-inch pieces
- 1 pound baby red potatoes, halved
- 2 ears corn, each cut crosswise into 4 pieces
- 2 tablespoons olive oil
- 4 teaspoons Cajun seasoning
- 2 tablespoons chopped fresh parsley leaves
- Salt and pepper to taste



Directions:

1. Wash hands with soap and water.
2. Preheat oven to 425°F; or a gas or charcoal grill to high heat
3. Prepare produce and rinse under cold running water. Slice zucchini, potatoes*, and corn as directed.
4. Cut four sheets of foil, about 12 inches long. Divide shrimp, sausage, corn, potatoes, and zucchini into 4 equal portions and add to the center of each foil in a single layer.
5. Fold up all 4 sides of each foil packet. Add olive oil and Cajun seasoning; toss to combine. Fold sides of the foil over the shrimp, covering completely and sealing the packets closed.
6. Place foil packets on the grill and cook about 12 to 15 minutes, or bake in the oven for 15 to 17 minutes.
7. Serve immediately, garnished with fresh parsley. Add salt and pepper to taste.

Nutrition Information per serving: 419 calories; 16 g total fat (2.5 g saturated fat, 0 g trans fat); 36 g carbohydrates; 6.4 g sugar; 36 g protein; 0 g fiber; 1129 mg sodium. (Sodium content can be reduced to 609 mg if you make your own Cajun Seasoning without added salt.)