

How much exercise do I need to be healthy?

Before you make a decision about how much exercise you need and how often you need it, have an idea of your goals. Are you exercising for:

- fitness?
- weight control?
- stress management?
- all of the above?

For general health and well-being, aim for:

- **Strength training** at least **2x/week**
- **30 minutes of moderate exercise** at least **five x/week** (increased heart rate, but able to carry on a conversation) (**150 minutes/week**)

OR

- **20 minutes of vigorous exercise** at least **three times/week** (sweating, breathing heavily) (**75 minutes is optimal according to the CDC**)
- If you struggle to fit working out into your schedule, even moderate exercise in **10-minute** chunks can lead to health benefits.

Need more ideas? Check out the CDC's physical activity recommendations online:

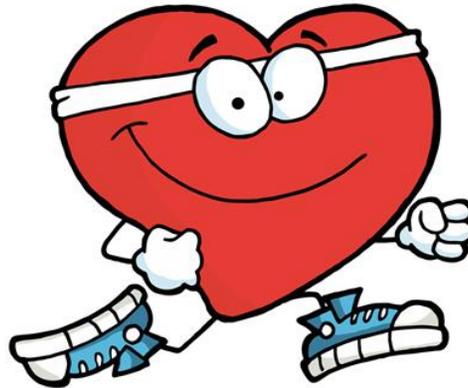
www.cdc.gov/physicalactivity/

What's the best time of day to exercise?

Figure out what time of the day is best for you and is the most **practical** (i.e., if you have trouble getting up in the morning, scheduling exercise at 7 AM may be setting yourself up for failure)!

Any time of day that you can fit working out into your schedule is the best time to work out. People who exercised at **any** time of the day reported **better sleep** than those who did not. So, unless you know that working out late at night makes it so you cannot fall asleep you have nothing to fear from late night exercise.

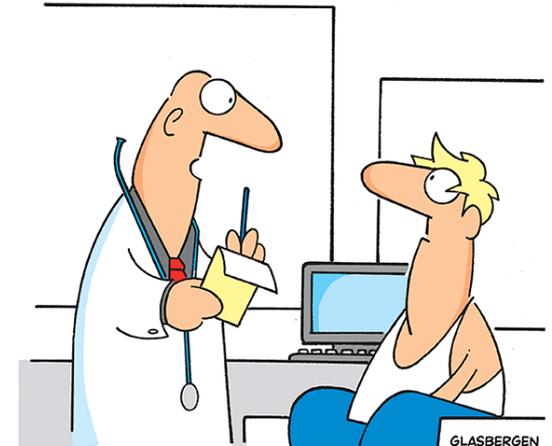
Whatever time of day you choose, make sure to **schedule it** like you would any other appointment. If you wait until you "feel like it" you might be waiting for a long time!



Health Promotion Services 2017-2018

Exercise and Stress

© Randy Glasbergen / glasbergen.com



"I'm prescribing exercise. Think of it as a stress pill that takes 30 minutes to swallow."

 Habif Health and Wellness Center

STUDENT AFFAIRS AT WASHINGTON UNIVERSITY

 Recreation

STUDENT AFFAIRS AT WASHINGTON UNIVERSITY

What's the best exercise for reducing stress?

There is no one *best* exercise to help reduce stress.

To help you get started, think about these questions:

- Do you prefer exercising **alone, with a friend**, or in a **group**?
- Does the **gym** appeal to you, or would you rather be **outside**?
- Would it help you to be **accountable** to someone else?
- Will you **get bored** if the exercise is too easy, or **give up** if it is too hard?
- Do you prefer **variety** or a set **routine**?

Unsure about the best way to start exercising? Sign up for one the many free **Bearfit classes** located in the Sumers Rec Center.

Or look into a **FREE** fitness consultation with a BearFit trainer who will help you find what you are looking for in an exercise program, answer questions, discuss nutrition, and set you up for success.

The secret? **Find out what works best for you!** Treat exercise as a form of self care, instead of a burden or unpleasant task. It can help you establish a lasting place for fitness in your life. For more information contact: *Meghann Feely, Assistant Director of Fitness and Wellness at the Sumers Recreation Center:*

314-935-5023 or meghannfeely@wustl.edu

Did you know?

We have **Fitness/Nutrition Peer Health Educators (PHEs)**.

Email wellness@wustl.edu with questions.



I've heard that slower forms of exercise, like yoga, help to reduce stress. Does cardio have the same effect?

The physiological effects of cardio are very similar to what happens when practicing meditation or yoga. **Breathing and repetitive movement** may contribute to **feelings of tranquility**.

Cardio also helps to regulate the body's sympathetic ("fight or flight") and parasympathetic ("rest and digest") branches of the nervous system.

Additionally, both cardio and slower forms of exercise help to improve **self-esteem, relaxation, sleep quality, and overall mental health**.

The bottom line:
Get out there and start moving!



How does exercise help?

- **Exercise boosts mood** by decreasing cortisol (the stress hormone) and increasing endorphins (feel-good chemicals).
- **Exercise provides an outlet** to work out frustration and anxiety. If cortisol is already in your system, work up a healthy sweat to remove stress-induced toxins in your body and feel better faster!
- **Exercise can take your mind off your stressors and give you a sense of control and confidence.**
- **Exercise can strengthen your immune system** to better fight colds and other minor illnesses that can affect your stress levels in the future.
- **Exercise lowers blood pressure.**
- **Exercise can improve your resilience** (your ability to recover from adversity).

