

Got a few extra minutes? Why not burn some calories?

While people are constantly searching for the elusive answer to successful weight loss, diet and exercise seem to be the only long-term solution. It is recommended to get at least thirty minutes of physical activity most days of the week. Ideally that exercise should raise your heart rate and also strengthen your muscles to receive the greatest health benefits. But, it can be difficult to find the thirty minutes or more a day to exercise. Here are a few suggestions for burning some extra calories or toning up, making the most of your time.

While standing in line at the store, bank, etc.

Standing calf raises – While standing up straight, rise up onto the balls of your feet and contract your calf muscles. Hold for a count of 2 and relax. Repeat at least 25 times.

Glute squeezes – Contract the muscles of your behind for a count of 2 and relax. Imagine your behind lifting up and in. Repeat at least 25 times.

Ab squeezes – Contract your abdominal muscles for a count of 2 and relax. Imagine putting on a tight pair of pants, pulling in your navel. Repeat at least 25 times.

*Note: You could also perform the glute and ab squeezes at the same time.

While sitting at your desk, talking on the phone, etc.

Hip hikes – Sitting with proper posture, knees at 90 degrees to the floor, lift one leg for a count of 2 and relax. Lift the opposite leg. Repeat at least 25 times.

Shoulder raises – Lift your shoulders up to your ears like you are shrugging your shoulders. Hold for a count of 2 and relax. Repeat at least 10 times.

*Note: This is also an excellent release of muscle tension and good for relaxation.

Triceps dips – Perform only if your chair is stationary. Lower your body off the edge of the chair, with your elbows slightly bent. Walk your lower body out away from the chair at a distance that is comfortable. Lower your body until your elbows are at a 90 degree angle to the chair and raise yourself back up. Repeat until exhaustion.

At commercial breaks of your favorite TV show.

Stair climbers – Run up the stairs as quickly as possible. For greater challenge trying skipping a step or two. Carefully come back down the stairs and repeat until the program comes on again.

Jumping jacks or jumping rope – If you have difficulty completing the task due to pain, modify the jumps by tapping one leg out to the side while the other stays in place. Then switch to the opposite side.

Push ups – One of the best overall upper body toning exercises. These can be modified in a number of ways. They can be performed leaning against a wall, or on bent knees on the ground. For a greater challenge, trying performing them on a declined surface or a small medicine ball.

Other suggestions for burning calories

Try parking farther away at the store, walking your cart back inside the grocery store, taking the stairs at stores or work, ride your bike or walk instead of driving short distances, make an extra trip up and down the stairs when doing laundry or cleaning.

Good luck and always perform exercises with caution. Consult a physician if you notice pain with any of the exercises.