

## Exercise While Traveling

Regular exercise is an important component of a healthy lifestyle. The American College of Sports Medicine, the American Heart Association, and other prominent organizations have issued recommendations to encourage individuals to establish and maintain participation in an exercise program. A potential impediment to an exercise program is the conflict that can be created by a business trip, which is a common event for many Americans. While it is not advisable for an individual to begin an exercise program while on a business trip, it is recommended that exercise habits be maintained while traveling.

Business trips can create a number of conflicts with your exercise program. It is important to recognize potential limitations so that you can plan accordingly and allow yourself to keep up your regimen. Here are some modifications in your exercise program that you might consider while traveling on business:

1. Consider exercise area and/or facility availability in your selection of lodging. If your exercise program includes a running component, you should be aware of restrictions that could exist in some urban areas. Ask hotel personnel for suggestions. If safe running routes are not available, you may find treadmill facilities in the hotel. Some hotels offer in-house exercise areas that might include weight training equipment, a swimming pool, and cardiovascular conditioning equipment. In some cities, perhaps a downtown athletic club will have an agreement with certain hotels whereby guests may use their facilities.

To prevent the muscular soreness that sometimes accompanies exercising new muscle groups or exercising differently (i.e. exercise equipment to which you are not accustomed), you may wish to reduce exercise intensity and duration. You may also consider packing such small pieces of exercise equipment as a jump rope or resistance bands.

2. Plan your trip schedule to include time for exercise. Business trips are fraught with time-crunched schedules and meetings and lunches that leave little extra time for the business traveler. However, there are a number of benefits to including time for exercise in your business trip itinerary. Exercise is known to be a stress reliever. Additionally, the distraction may even help you concentrate better and have the energy and focus to be more productive later. If a meeting is a must, then take attendees out for some exercise! This may provide a more informal setting to discuss matters while allowing you to maintain your exercise schedule.

3. Understand how reduced exercise time affects your fitness level. A common concern of exercisers who know they will not be able to exercise at all or as much due to restrictions imposed by their business trip is that they will suffer a reduction in their physical fitness level. It is important to understand that it is much easier to maintain your current level of fitness than it is to improve your fitness level. Current evidence suggests that you can take up to a week off from exercise training without any significant reduction in your fitness level. During longer trips you should be able to maintain your fitness with a regimen of either aerobic or strength training or both amounting to only twice a week, particularly if you maintain your exercise training intensity during this period of reduced training.

In conclusion, with advance planning and the willingness to make modifications to your exercise program, it is reasonable to incorporate exercise time into the schedule of a business trip. Because travel can be so disruptive to your normal schedule as well as other adjustments you must make (e.g., sleeping accommodations, food), this is NOT the best time to work on increasing your fitness level. Instead, the goal should be maintenance of your current fitness level.

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