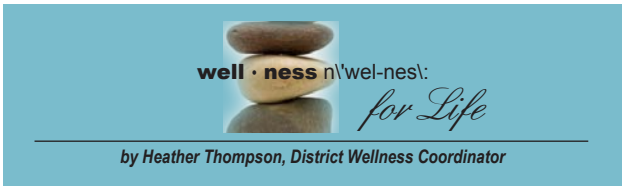


Can busy parents really find time to exercise?

Making time to exercise is possible even with a busy schedule



Whether you've been a parent for a month or a decade, the demands of raising children can derail even the best of exercise programs. It can happen to the most dedicated of exercisers once they become parents.

Fitness moves far down the priority list amid the whirlwind of diaper changes, pediatrician appointments, home improvement projects and, eventually, PTO meetings. Yet somehow there are parents who manage to work out. What's their secret?

Keeping up with your exercise program can be challenging, but the rewards are numerous. Importantly, in addition to the well-known health benefits, regular exercise can help you maintain your energy. It is possible to maintain a regular exercise program while managing a busy career, household and family life (it helps to have a little flexibility and imagination). In fact, each age range of your child/children may bring different



time constraints, and flexibility will be the key to fitting an exercise routine into your daily schedule.

Before you even begin to break a sweat, putting pen to paper about your exercise plan can be a big motivator. Consider potential

stumbling blocks and what you will do if they arise. Having a backup plan will keep you from getting sidetracked or making excuses. What if the weather is so bad you can't get out for your usual run, or the baby-sitter cancels on you?

Plan to pop an exercise video into the VCR or jump rope in the family room. Are you too rushed in the morning to remember to pack your workout clothes? Always keep a packed gym bag in the trunk of your car.

You have no one to watch your children during a scheduled fitness activity? With a little planning, you can sometimes take the kids along. Parent/child classes are popular, as they

do not take away from your time together nor do they require you to secure a sitter. Yet these classes provide a great directed exercise session.

If you and your spouse or partner can take turns covering the home while the other works out, it makes getting exercise time easier. Some health clubs have child care centers, although there may be age restrictions. Other options for getting time alone may include trading times with other busy parents, or, if you are lucky, perhaps you have family nearby that is willing to help out by babysitting. Still, even without help, you can get exercise in with a little ingenuity.

In the first few months after your child's birth, the regular interruptions to your sleep may leave you feeling too tired to think about exercise. However, starting back into some simple activities may help increase your energy levels. Walking is a great way to get back into a routine and can easily be done with your new child, using either a stroller or a carry-pack. During the hot months, get out early in the morning or just prior to sunset. If you are into running, check out some of the special jogging strollers designed for this purpose.

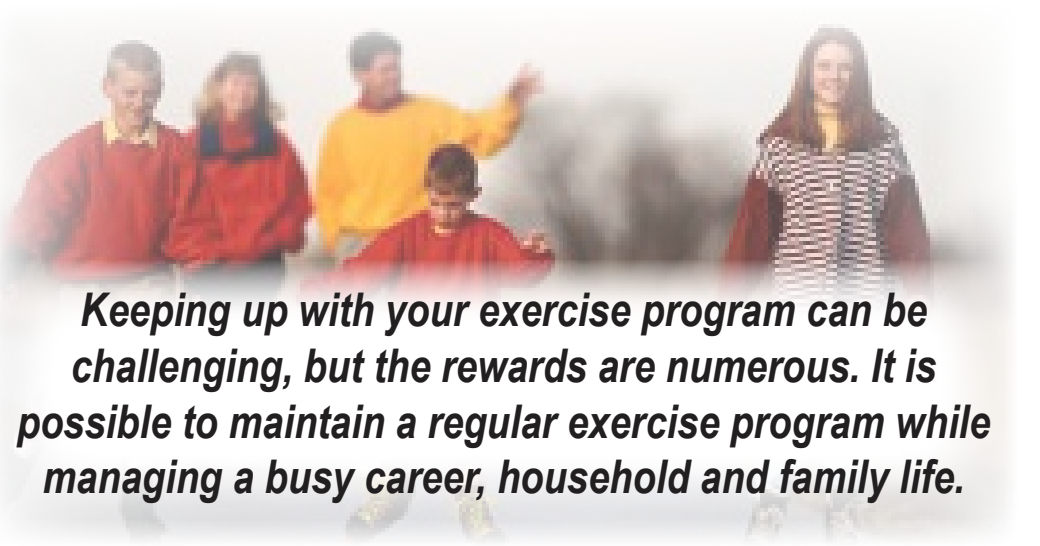
You should accumulate 30 minutes of moderately intense physical activity, but if you are having problems getting in 30 minutes of continuous activity, it's okay to do it in several mini-workouts, such as one brisk 15-minute walk on your lunch break and another after dinner.

Look for ways to sneak in exercise throughout your day:

- Walk to the store, to the library, to the school, to the park or anywhere instead of taking the car.
- Do exercises during television commercials.
- Get off the bus a few blocks early.
- Take the stairs.

Whenever you can fit a miniworkout into your day, jump at the chance.

Working parents might consider using part of the lunch hour to exercise. If you write it into your schedule, you are less likely to skip the session and will find it provides a nice pick-me-



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up for the afternoon.

The intensity of the session may depend upon the availability of showers. Other options are also available. Some ways to help you stay on track could include:

- signing up for a class at a local facility;
- planning your exercise before the kids get out of bed, thus getting it out of the way before work;
- stopping at the gym on your way from work and before the daycare pickup; or
- going for walks after getting the children into bed in the evening—outside on nicer days and on a treadmill in inclement weather.

As children get older, juggling work and their sports and school activities makes free time for exercise even more difficult to find. Try planning a workout session for the time when kids are involved in an activity when you can drop them off and return later without concerns for their safety. Otherwise, try using the time you are waiting.

For example, walk laps around the playing field or along one side of the field.

Once they are more mobile, you can even include them in your exercise session. Run or skate while your children ride their bikes alongside, take regular family walks, go swimming, or choose sports you can play together, such as tennis.

Exercising with your children can be fun, and better yet, sets a good example for them for lifelong activity.

Just remember, flexibility is the key. What works for you when your child is an infant may not work when he or she is older, especially as he or she becomes involved in activities outside the home.

Be creative, focusing on remaining active and healthy.



Goodson Middle School
April 3 at 7 p.m., \$4
Talent Show
May 6 at 7 p.m., \$3
Ax of Murder

The Berry Center
April 5 at 2 p.m., \$5
UIL Region 3, Area 1 One-Act Play Competition

Hopper Middle School
April 16 from 2:30 – 4:20 p.m.,
April 17 at 7 p.m., \$5
The Wizard of Oz Jr.

Cook Middle School
April 21 at 7 p.m.,
April 22 at 2:40 and 7 p.m.
\$3 students, \$5 adults
The Wishing Tree by Cleve Haubold

Cypress Springs High School
May 7 at 7 p.m., \$10 donation
Driving Miss Daisy
281-345-3070

Cypress Falls High School
May 16-18 at 7 p.m.
Senior-Directed Plays

Truitt Middle School
April 17 at 7 p.m., \$3
The Ransom of Red Chief
May 9 at 7 p.m., \$5
"The Seussification of Romeo and Juliet" and "Macbeth: A Kid's Cautionary Tale..."

Langham Creek High School
May 14 and 15 at 7 p.m.
\$10 Adults, \$7 Students
Senior Showcase