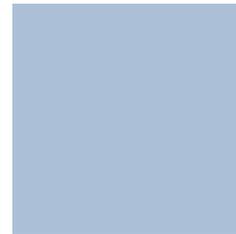
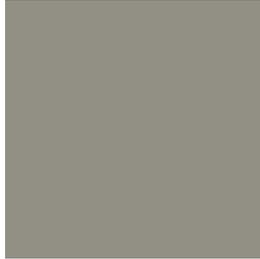


Getting More

out of the Little Things



by Michael Harper, MEd

We commonly hear about people incorporating a few extra activities into their day to help burn a few extra calories, but do we really get much out of the little things like those in the below list?

- Parking your car further away
- Taking the stairs instead of an escalator
- Carrying a hand basket instead of using a cart at the store
- Using a shared printer further away from your office
- Cleaning or vacuuming the house
- Skipping the drive-thru and walking into a business

For most folks, time is the biggest hurdle when it comes to consistent exercise and healthy eating patterns. Adding in a little extra activity here and there can be an effective strategy. Small changes add up throughout the course of a year. In fact, eating an extra 100 calories a day leads to a 10 pound weight gain throughout the course of a year. That is 20 chips or one cup of soda each day. It works both ways.

A recent study evaluated activities like those in the list to the left to see if incidental, or little, activity had an impact on cardiorespiratory fitness. This study of 135 inactive participants affected by excess weight and obesity measured the amount of incidental, sporadic activities. These are activities, or movements performed throughout the day (such as those in the list to the left), that alone does not provide enough activity to meet the health recommendation of 150 minutes per week of moderate intensity exercise.

Those who participated in more activity throughout their day did have higher cardiorespiratory fitness levels compared to those with less activity. The strongest predictor of those with higher cardiorespiratory levels was the intensity of the sporadic activities, not the duration. Thus, if deciding where to park your car, pick the spot that requires you to walk uphill versus just a longer distance.

Benefit of Sporadic Activity

Participants engaging in more sporadic activities throughout the day have higher cardiorespiratory levels than those doing less activity. The higher cardiorespiratory levels of those doing more sporadic activity were at the very low end when compared to those who met health benefits of 150 minutes per week of moderate exercise. Still, among the mostly inactive individuals affected by obesity, the separation between those engaging in more activity, while only sporadic, provided protective value.

Those who did 10 additional minutes per day of incidental activities consisting of at least eight minutes at a moderate intense threshold may be associated with a decreased risk of 6.5 percent for all-cause mortality and 7.5 percent for cardiovascular disease when compared with the least active group.

Those who accumulated 30 minutes of moderate activities compared to the group who only did approximately seven minutes may be associated with a risk reduction of 13 percent in all-cause mortality and 15 percent in cardiovascular disease.

Significant health concerns do still exist for the participants of this study due to obesity. Nevertheless, previous research has demonstrated that individuals affected by obesity, with higher levels of cardiorespiratory fitness, are at a substantially decreased risk of morbidity and mortality compared to those with low cardiorespiratory fitness.

Increase the Intensity

During cardio workouts, the higher the intensity, the more calories you burn. If your doctor has cleared you for higher intensity exercise, consider increasing the intensity of your workout. Higher intensity exercise burns more calories. If you are able to exercise for the same length of time at a higher intensity, then you burn more calories. Don't be tricked into exercising at a lower intensity to stay in the "fat burning zone" which actually burns fewer calories. A calorie is a calorie. Burning more calories means more excess weight-loss. Plus, you get the added bonus of greater improvements in aerobic capacity which decreases your risk of death due to both cardiovascular disease and certain types of cancer.

Still Pressed for Time

As you work toward the recommendation of 150 minutes of moderate activity per week for health benefits, if you are still pressed for time, try adding the following calorie boosters into your workout:



- Try splitting your aerobic workouts into two parts. Studies show that splitting a 30 minute session of cardio into two 15 minute sessions or three 10 minute sessions burns more calories post exercise. Although the amounts were small, subjects burned an average of 10-15 more calories during recovery when splitting the cardio sessions. Researchers believe that the body has to go through a recovery process which elevates calorie burning after each bout of exercise. Splitting the sessions means the body has to go through these same processes multiple times. This is similar to the concept of eating multiple small meals per day, which raises your metabolism more times as the body burns extra calories to digest the food. If you are really pressed for time, splitting your workouts might have some added benefit.
- When you have the extra time, longer cardio workouts yield more calorie burn post-exercise. In one study where participants walked at 70 percent of maximal aerobic capacity for 60 minutes, they burned an average of 76 extra calories post-exercise. However, after 20 minutes of exercise, they only burned an extra 43 calories and after 40 minutes of exercise, they only burned an extra 49 calories.

Don't be tricked into exercising at a lower intensity to stay in the "fat burning zone" which actually burns fewer calories. A calorie is a calorie.

The Bottom Line

All activity is beneficial. But as seen above, intensity is one of the most important factors. Many of the incidental activities, like parking the car further from the door, only provide low intensity activity if you walk slowly. Picking up the pace can improve fitness and increase the calorie burn. While incidental activities do provide benefit, more health benefits can be achieved by participating in 150 minutes of moderate activity per week. But doing something is better than doing nothing and continues to offer at least some health benefit. Think of ways to increase the intensity of those incidental activities by walking uphill or adding bursts of speed walking throughout the day



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ABOUT THE OBESITY ACTION COALITION (OAC)

The Obesity Action Coalition (OAC) is a National non-profit organization dedicated to giving a voice to individuals affected by obesity and helping them along their journey toward better health. Our core focuses are to elevate the conversation of weight and its impact on health, improve access to obesity care, provide science-based education on obesity and its treatments, and fight to eliminate weight bias and discrimination.



VIBRANT COMMUNITY



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ANNUAL CONVENTION



ADVOCACY



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LEARN, CONNECT, ENGAGE

The OAC knows that the journey with weight can be challenging but we also know that great things happen when we learn, connect and engage. That is why the OAC Community exists. Our Community is designed to provide quality education, ongoing support programs, an opportunity to connect, and a place to take action on important issues.

Through the OAC Community, you can get access to:

- Weight & Health Education • Community Blogs
 - Community Discussion Forum
 - Ongoing Support • Meaningful Connections
- AND MUCH MORE**



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