**Join the (micro) movement: save time + gain fitness**

**Social media**

Save time + gain fitness. That’s the micro-movement formula to help you start getting more active; more often. And it’s got some impressive health benefits, backed by research; Join the (micro) movement

**Article**

**Vigorous intermittent lifestyle physical activity ✓**

**Bite-sized fitness ✓ Snack-ercise ✓**

Whatever you want to call it, micro-movement is a workout trend that’s here to stay – popular with people around the world looking to add more movement to their day but with little time to spare.

“For many people,” says Mari Leach, Biokinetics and Wellness Specialist at Vitality SA, “it can be a challenge to get the recommended 30 minutes of exercise 5x every week in one consecutive go. Our schedules are often packed and even when we do have the time, something always has a way of creeping up on us. This is why I’m such a big fan of the micro-movement – small amounts of activity spread throughout the course of your day to help get your heart rate up and your body moving.”

**So, what exactly is micro-movement?**

Snack-ercises are short, intense bursts of exercise that can be done anywhere, at any time, built to help break up periods of sedentary time during our busy work/life schedules. Think burpees, push-ups, squats, lunges, star jumps, step ups – even running on the spot – that you can do throughout your day to increase blood flow, loosen up your muscles and help with concentration.

“Any movement you can comfortably maintain for 1-2 minutes that gets your heart pumping can be considered a micro-workout,” adds Mari, “And you should aim to do these frequently throughout your day.”

Proponents of micro-workouts have long promoted the health benefits associated with this type of exercise and now, more and more research backs up their health claims. According to the *Society of Behavioural Medicine*, high intensity exercise that lasts as little as 1 minute can have impressive cardiovascular and insulin resistance benefits.

In one study, findings were that a 10-minute workout 3x per week helped to increase endurance by nearly 20% and by the end of the study, participants had increased their insulin resistance.

Researchers from Harvard Health also highlight considerable benefits linked to shorter, more frequent workouts. They found that doing at least 19 minutes of these short workouts per week was linked to a 40% lower risk of developing heart disease in that time, and doing 16 minutes weekly was associated with a 16% drop in cancer risk. The risk for disease dropped even more as the weekly amount increased.

**Micro-bursts of energy: every bit counts**

“As part of our research at Vitality on building healthy habits, we recognise that just getting started is one of the biggest barriers to exercise that people face,” says Mari. “Cultivating a new habit with these micro-workouts can go a long way in helping people to find exercise more manageable to reach the desired targets of 150 minutes every week.”

The research Mari is referring to is called the [Vitality Habit Index](https://www.vitalityglobal.com/documents/d/guest/gvc_files__the-habit-index-booklet_11mar2024__pdf), published in partnership with the *London School of Economics*. It explores what it means to form a habit and why healthy habits are so important for better health outcomes in the future.

“Starting with a small commitment is far more effective than jumping headfirst into a full exercise regimen,” adds Mari. “When it’s manageable, and just a few minutes here and there in your day, suddenly making this a habit and repeating it regularly becomes much easier.”

**A top tip from micro-exercise enthusiasts?**

“Set reminders in your daily planner to remind you it’s time for your snack-ercise. Start with 1 minute a day and once you have gotten used to this and in a habit of doing these you can add more. As with anything, variety is important. Not only do you need to mix things up to keep it interesting for yourself, this also helps you to work different muscle groups and get the most out of your movements.”

“As an addition to my weekly exercise plan, these micro workouts are an effective way to break up continuous sedentary time, particularly when working, and because they’re such short bursts of activity, they are easy to incorporate into my day,” says Mari. She adds: “It also helps to prevent my muscles getting tight from sitting in the same position and improves my blood circulation and concentration, so I am more focused when I start to work again.”

**Your workout menu**

While we’re using the snack-ercise metaphor, it’s helpful to also think about a “workout menu”. What are YOU ordering off the movement menu?

Here are some smart ways to incorporate exercise snacking into your daily routine:

* Always take the stairs at work, airports or in shopping malls
* Add active breaks with intense short bouts of exercise every few hours
* Go for short walks while on calls or in virtual meetings
* Do squats and lunges while you brush your teeth
* Dance while cooking or cleaning at home

Remember that every bit(e) of exercise – no matter how small **–** helps in the long run. **Happy snacking!**

*For more information about Vitality’s evidence-based approach that encourages and rewards members for healthier living, visit the* [*Vitality website*](https://www.vitality.com/)*.*

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