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Keeping fit during vacation

By Christine Haas

Spring break is quickly approaching. Unfortunately, when most people travel, they also leave behind their exercise routine. If your spring vacation plans limit your fitness options, here is a complete cardiovascular and strength workout that does not require a gym or any exercise equipment.

Before we get started, I need to remind everyone that eating out and celebrating is never calorie-free. Fortunately, aerobic exercise will burn calories, curb your appetite and maintain your fitness while you are away. Aerobic exercise can be done just about everywhere. Spend a minimum of 30 minutes each day walking briskly. Walking can be integrated into your shopping, sightseeing or beach activities. Grab the baby stroller and make it a family activity.

Strength training is just as important as aerobic exercise, but traditionally has required exercise equipment to provide the required resistance. Fortunately, these upper and lower body core exercises require no equipment and can be performed in your hotel room or, if you prefer, at a park or the beach.



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For your upper body, push-ups have made a serious comeback in the world of strength training. Not only do push-ups work your chest and arms, but they also strengthen your abdominal muscles and lower back. To perform a proper push-up, place your hands on the floor, shoulder-width apart, and balance the weight of your body on your toes and palms. For a less intense version, balance your weight on your knees instead of your toes. With your torso straight and your abdominals tight, bend your elbows to lower your chest to the floor, until you are an inch or two from the ground. Push your body up to the starting position without locking your elbows. Aim for two to three sets of eight to 15 push-ups, three days a week with rest days intermixed.

For the lower body, lunges work your glutes, quadriceps and hamstrings. Stand with feet hip-width apart. Take a big step forward with your right foot. Allow the right knee to bend and your left knee to approach the ground. Your right heel should be about two and a half feet in front of your left leg. Push off the ball of your left foot, and straighten your right knee as you lift your left knee level with hip height. Continue stepping forward with your left leg and down into a lunge. This completes one repetition.

During the exercise, your toes should point forward with your torso upright and centered. When you are in the lunge position, keep your forward knee behind your toes and vertically aligned with your ankle. Perform two to three sets of eight to 15 repetitions on the days between your push-up routine.

And for your midsection, do crunches. Sit-ups from gym class are no longer as popular for the abdominals. The crunch is now considered a safer exercise and it has many versions. To work your upper and lower abdominals, lay on your back with your feet up and knees bent directly over your hips at a 90-degree angle. Place your hands behind your head and lift your shoulders off the ground, while you lift your hips off the floor. Squeeze your abdominal muscles as you lower yourself to your starting position. Perform 25 to 50 of these exercises every day.

Keep your workouts motivating and fun. Music or a workout partner can help you stay on task. The best time to workout is up to you, however, I have found my clients who work out for 10 to 20 minutes in the morning are more likely to complete their daily exercises. If you experience soreness or fatigue, make sure you are properly hydrated and are eating well. It is OK to take a break for a few days, and resume your exercise program when you feel recovered.

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Editor's note: Always, consult your physician before beginning or changing your exercise routine.

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