

TEN EXERCISE EXCUSES

and how you can overcome them

1 'I'm Too Busy.'

Everyone has said at one time or another that they're too busy to exercise. But it's just a matter of setting priorities, says K.C. Wilder, PhD, a sports psychologist, cyclist, author, and mother of two. If you want to exercise, it's just a matter of making the time, whether that means getting up an hour earlier in the morning to go for a brisk walk or taking an hour for lunch and walking with co-workers rather than chatting away in the cafeteria. Need more fitness motivation? A large study in *Stroke*, a journal of the American Heart Association, found that women who walk for exercise reduce their stroke risk over those who are sedentary.

2 'Exercise Is Boring.'

Sure, walking on a treadmill every morning for 30 to 60 minutes can be a bit of a snore. But exercise doesn't have to be boring at all, Wilder says. The key is to find an exercise that you like — and with choices as varied as swimming, tennis, yoga, personal training, and more, finding a fitness method that works for you should just be a matter of trial and error. Another way to combat boredom is to change your exercise routine every six to eight weeks. Changing your routine will keep it challenging, and can also get you over weight loss plateaus on the scale.

3 'I'm in Too Much Pain.'

Granted, you won't feel like working out if your muscles are sore or you suffer from joint pain or arthritis. But when done right, exercise can help you manage your pain better. In one recent study, yoga was found to improve symptoms of back pain more than traditional treatment methods, plus, exercise will strengthen the muscles that support your joints, and keep your bones strong and healthy.

4 'Joining the Gym Costs Too Much.'

Gym memberships can get pricey, and any amount is too much if you don't use your membership. But cost shouldn't be an excuse for not working out. One of the best free things you can do is start a walking routine, says Bob Sallis, MD, a family physician and sports medicine expert. You can walk anywhere, he says, and the only cost is a comfortable pair of shoes. Studies show that walking can help with weight loss, which can help ward off diabetes. If walking doesn't excite you, you can do many other free exercises, like biking, dancing, or even gardening.

5 'I'm Too Fat to Exercise.'

If you dread going to the gym because you're afraid other people will stare, choose a different place to exercise, at least until you've had some weight loss success. And when you combine exercise with a healthy, low-calorie diet, you will see some success. Weight loss is a matter of fewer calories in (eaten) than calories out (burned), and exercise is an important part of the equation, Sallis says. Also, get over worrying about what you look like in gym clothes. You will feel so much better about yourself after you exercise for a few weeks that you will look forward to getting ready for the gym and heading there.

6 'I'm Not Coordinated Enough.'

You don't have to be a superathlete to exercise. Maybe tennis isn't for you if you're afraid of the balls coming at your head, and you might be too short to dunk a basketball, no matter how hard you try. The key is finding an exercise you enjoy and that matches your skill level. At first, resist the urge to compare yourself to others, and focus just on the improvements you can see and feel yourself making. Once you start to exercise regularly, you'll be amazed at what you're capable of.

7 'It's Too Hot' or 'It's Too Cold.'

Extremes in the weather are common excuses for not working out, but Wilder says they shouldn't be. "If it's too hot or too cold outside, you always have indoor options," she says. "Go to the gym, where it's air-conditioned or heated, or for a walk around the mall, where it's climate-controlled." If it's hot when you exercise, be sure to drink enough water to stay hydrated — dehydration can be dangerous. If it's cold outside, dress in layers to trap your body's heat. One benefit of exercising in the cold weather is that it can cure winter blues. Need more fitness motivation? Exercise also increases your energy levels, which can be lower in gloomy weather.

8 'I'll Mess My Hair.'

Many women (and some men) who spend a lot of time and money to perfectly coif their hair can be a bit hesitant to mess up their 'do with a sweaty workout. So much so that the current U.S. Surgeon General Regina Benjamin told listeners at a trade show that they should stop letting their hair get in the way of their health. Wilder says if you're worried about your hair, apply a little extra hair spray before you head out for a run or wear a headband to soak up sweat from your forehead. Another option is to keep dry shampoo and a blow-dryer in your gym bag so you can touch up your hair after working out.

9 'I Partied Too Much Last Night.'

When you're hung over, it's tempting to stay in bed all day drinking water, but a simple hang over is not a good excuse for failing to exercise, Sallis says. In fact, he says, a little exercise can be just thing to help you feel better: working out will get blood flowing to your muscles and oxygen to your brain. Just be sure to drink extra fluids, he adds. Alcohol is a diuretic and can cause you to urinate more, so drink water to avoid becoming dehydrated.

10 'I'm Too Tired.'

Once you drag yourself to the gym after a long day, you'll be surprised that you'll feel better and more energized — not more exhausted. Working out improves muscle strength and boosts endurance, Wilder says. It gets your blood flowing and your cardiovascular system working more efficiently. And the more efficient your heart and lungs, the better your blood is able to deliver oxygen and nutrients to your tissues. When your tissues have the oxygen and nutrients they need, you have more energy. Also, when you exercise regularly, you sleep better, and when you sleep better, you have more energy to meet the day.