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## Make the time: Exercise for busy single parents

Time is a precious commodity for people who are busy with work and kids, this is especially true for single parents. Many busy people consider regular exercise a lofty but unattainable goal that's in direct conflict with work deadlines, making sure the kids get their homework done, and household chores. And studies have shown that a [lack of time](#) is the number one excuse for not exercising.

But is it really a valid claim? Healthcare and fitness experts point out that just 30 minutes of physical activity a day can make a noticeable difference in one's health and appearance. That's a few less minutes of TV time or Internet surfing, or time spent catching up on social media. Failing to make time for exercise makes us our own worst enemies, given the many negative [consequences](#) of a sedentary lifestyle. It's important to remember that taking care of your children means you have to take good care of yourself.

### ***Finding time***

As a single parent, it may seem there's never enough time for yourself. But you might be surprised at how much time you can free up by rethinking your daily routine and identifying time that could be spent in healthy pursuits. Start with a small block of five to 10 minutes, maybe time you'd normally spend looking at the newspaper or chatting on the phone. Try substituting some [physical activity](#), such as running in place, calisthenics, walking up and down a flight of stairs, or a quick jog around the block. The key is to try do it every day. As time goes on, you may find

that a few minutes each day turns into a half-hour or more as you start feeling better and more energetic.

### ***Share the workload***

Single parents don't have the luxury of a partner to help with home maintenance and regular chores. But it's not conducive to your schedule or helpful for your children if you're the one doing all the housework. Try sharing the workload, even if it's just a couple of chores a week. It can help you find enough time to work in a little exercise and instill a healthy sense of responsibility in your children. [Kids are capable](#) of handling quite a few chores, from keeping the place picked up to running the dishwasher, little things that can add up quickly and free up a little "you time." Another way to make time is to cut back on household tasks that don't need to be done quite as often.

### ***Get the right gear***

Having your clothes [ready to go](#) and a pair of shoes right by the door can eliminate scrambling for something to wear and then giving up altogether when you can't locate a sock. Set your clothes out the night before or first thing in the morning so you're more motivated. If you don't have the right gear, get some! Look for deals on athletic wear at stores like Target or Walmart so you're not spending a fortune. And don't let circumstances keep you from tending to your health needs. If you're a nursing mom, get a sports [nursing bra](#) so you can still nurse your baby if you both are out for a run. If you've got to take the kids to after-school activities, take the time to go for a walk while your kid attends their program.

### ***Windows of opportunity***

Keep your eyes open for windows of opportunity each day. Instead of hopping in your car, try walking or jogging to the store. Or turn an everyday household chore into a stretching exercise. You can always do a few squats or leg lifts while you're working on dinner in the kitchen. If you'd like to try some home exercise equipment but don't have the money, consider including [kettlebells](#) or free weights on your holiday wish list. It also helps to [make an appointment](#) with yourself. Schedule your exercise on your calendar so that it's built into your week.

### ***Turn off distractions***

Your computer, television and cell phone can all [distract you](#) from getting the exercise you need. They're convenient and entertaining devices, but they're also intrusive and time-consuming. How often have you intended to get up and do something but ended up watching the entire last season of your favorite show instead? You can't be distracted if everything's turned off (you might also try setting a time limit for TV or Facebook).

Single parents may have to get a little creative when it comes to finding the time and energy to stay in shape. Take inventory of your life and your daily routine and you'll probably find it's possible to squeeze in at least a few minutes every day to get the exercise you need.