

Ten Ways To Get More From Your Workout

by: Allison Van Dusen



Across the country job cuts and falling home prices have Americans tightening their belts. The cost of a club membership is often the first to go.

For those who still have their jobs, in many cases the hours are longer, the stress load is greater and the time for exercise is practically nonexistent.

But if the looming recession is causing you to cut back on your workouts, experts say, it doesn't necessarily have to be a bad thing. You just have to know how to get the most out of the effort you do put in.

[In Depth: Ten Ways To Get More From Your Workout](#)

Mounting research is backing up the claim. Studies are showing that you can still do a lot for your body and your health through brief vigorous workouts as well as regular, low-intensity ones that take as little as 10 minutes a day. Researchers at the University of Georgia have found that frequent leisurely strolls, for instance, could increase participants' energy levels by 20%. A new study out of [McMaster University](#) published in the *American Journal of Physiology* also shows that six weeks of intense sprint [interval training](#) improves the arteries' structure and function as much as traditional, longer endurance exercises.

"I'm a big believer in high-intensity workouts," says [Jeff Halevy](#), a certified National Sports Medicine trainer and managing director of New York-based Sitaras Fitness. "One of the problems that plagues people in gyms is [unfocused workouts](#). They're on the stationary bike reading a magazine wondering why they don't get results."

That's why it's crucial to set a goal at every workout session, whether it's running a seven-minute mile or [cutting your rest](#) periods between sets. Then, ditch the Bluetooth headset or reading material and get the job done.

Efficient Exercise

Halevy also recommends being smart about the exercises you perform. To maximize what you get out of a short session, stick with [compound movements](#), which work more than one muscle at once. The standing press, for instance, involves shoulder, upper arm and chest muscles, compared with the bicep curl, which only targets that one isolated body part.

When clients need to shrink their workout sessions but don't want to lose out on results, Scott Mendelson, who runs Infinity Fitness, suggests [alternating exercises](#) that work antagonistic or opposing muscles, such as the biceps and triceps or chest and back. The technique can cut down on your fatigue and recovery time since you're allowing one area of your body to rest while you work another.

Mendelson also says that if you're going to lessen the frequency of your workouts or stop working with a trainer, first ask for help creating a [customized program](#). There's no better way to make sure your routine is a good match for your body and your goals. Likewise, you should also consider checking in with a trainer every now and then to tweak your program and make sure your progress doesn't plateau.

How are you cutting back? Weigh in. Post your thoughts in the Reader Comments section below.

"I've talked to people who've been doing the same program for six years," Mendelson says. "That gets stale and there's a risk of injury to that, too."

But perhaps the best advice for maximizing your gym time is to make sure you're doing [something you enjoy](#). Jessica Smith, a Miami-based fitness expert and instructor for a new "10 Minute Solution" DVD, says you'll easily get more out of simply dancing in your living room, if that's what you're into, than miserably trudging along on the treadmill. If you view your workout as a chore, you're missing out.

"Once you get that momentum going you start getting addicted," Smith says. "You might just find time to do more of it."