



# Easy As One, Two...Eight

## Get in shape with 8 steps

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The lesson of today is we can improve upon yesterday while getting ready for the days to come. The New Year is an excellent time to reflect and motivate ourselves to make small yet significant changes to our health.



We need to understand that squeezing fitness or exercise into our day need not be an arduous task. Here are a few simple steps that, when properly planned, can make a world of difference to our health, well-being, and overall outlook.

### Stop Thinking and Start Doing

We think ourselves into oblivion and often fail to take the first step toward action. To better yourself in 2008, stop thinking about exercising and start doing it—right now! Go for a walk and challenge yourself. You'll feel uplifted from the movement; the decisions and planning will then come more easily.

### Get Going—Online

If you are not sure what to do or where to start, jump onto the World Wide Web to get some help. Online you will find many websites that provide information, articles, and tips on how to improve your health and fitness. Understanding why you need to exercise and how many variations there are to accomplish this will empower you to move. Many research studies have shown that using a Web-based approach to health and fitness information or programming helps participants lose weight and to subsequently maintain their weight loss.

### Count Your Steps

A pedometer is a small electronic device that hangs from a belt or the waistband of your pants, and is used to measure the number of steps taken per day. Studies show that accumulating approximately 10,000 steps per day promotes many health benefits.

### Play Ball!

When you think medicine, think medicine ball. Imagine a basketball that weighs anywhere from 4 to 12 lb (1.8 to 5.4 kg). Medicine balls are great for performing exercises that work the entire body and elevate your heart rate, giving you an exhilarating feeling. You can purchase a medicine ball at any sporting goods store. Start small and work your way up.

## **Take a Commercial Break**

Science says that the more time you spend watching TV, the more likely you are to gain weight. While substituting TV with other activities can be difficult, exercising during commercials is a viable alternative. Choose three or four exercises and, using the medicine ball we discussed in tip 4, perform an exercise for the duration of a commercial. Not only will you improve your health, you will skip a trip to the refrigerator!

## **Move Whenever You Can**

Your body does not know the difference between working out at the gym, following an exercise program at home, walking briskly to the train, or running up a flight of stairs to get to work. If your schedule forces you to miss your structured workout in the morning you can still get a workout throughout the day. Unstructured exercise such as climbing stairs, walking briskly, performing push-ups against the wall, or tightening your abs while you are sitting at your desk is still exercise. Try to move as much as you can.

## **Play Together**

Choose one day per week as family fitness day. My family and I head out for a long walk in the neighbourhood or for a challenging walk through a very steep and hilly park every Sunday morning. We usually end the walk with some squats, push-ups, and crunches. The boys follow our lead and, since our daughter is too young to participate in calisthenics, you know where the added weight for our exercises comes from!

## **Book Time with a Friend**

And I don't mean to do lunch. What you need is a friend to exercise with who is more motivated than you. You want a friend who won't be persuaded to skip the workout for a cappuccino or chai, but who will firmly say, "No, we made an appointment to go to the gym; let's do it."