Fitness For The Holiday Season

The end of the year can often bring upon more than just holiday cheer, as many people experience high levels of stress stemming from anything from financial burdens to exams for college and university students. In order to complete every task on the list, people often cut out physical fitness until the New Year. Maintaining fitness levels over the holidays does not require going to the gym on a regular basis. During this busy period, or any time of year, incorporating small amounts of physical activity into your life through a home workout can help you feel positive, and ultimately increase the holiday cheer.

Working Out From Home

Home workouts are generally cardio-focused and tend to use body weight instead of free weights to accomplish strength training. They often take no longer than an hour to complete and some can be as short as 15-20 minutes. Body weight exercises can be just as effective as a gym workout if done properly. If a more versatile home workout is desired, equipment such as dumbbells, skipping ropes, kettlebells and pull up bars are all affordable, and can help you reach desired goals in a workout. Also, a TRX suspension trainer can be used at home to add intensity to body weight workouts and when purchased, it often comes with workouts and instructional videos.

An example of a home workout is as follows:
- 30 jumping jacks
- 5 pushups
- 25 high knees
- 7 burpees
- 30 jumping jacks
- 1 min wall sit

Repeat this circuit 2-3 times for maximum results.
Tips and Tricks For Staying Active

In addition to home workouts, making small adjustments in everyday life can help maintain fitness over the holidays. These can include incorporating active winter activities that can be done with friends and family and are focused around having a good time rather than working out. Examples of lifestyle changes and fun activities include the following:

- Parking farther away from buildings
- Taking the stairs instead of the elevator
- Go public skating or tobogganing
- After a large holiday meal go for a walk around the neighborhood
- Sit on an exercise ball at an office desk instead of a chair
- Cross country skiing
- Do an exercise during the commercial break of TV shows, such as jumping jacks, squats or the plank
- Snow shoeing

Overall, using home workouts, making small lifestyle changes and utilizing motivational tools will help you to maintain your fitness level during this extremely stressful time of year.

Getting Motivated!

Although the holidays are a busy time of year, people also tend to lose motivation in addition to simply not having time to incorporate physical fitness into their day. There are a couple ways to stay motivated such as: making a schedule, keeping a journal, maintaining the right mindset and switching your workouts to activities you enjoy. Making a schedule is one of the best ways to keep workouts on track, as writing down when you plan to workout makes it more likely that you will be proactive in completing your workouts. Planning your workouts a couple days or a week ahead of time is also beneficial because if you go into the workout knowing what you are going to do, you will get exercises done more efficiently.

A journal is another great motivational tool, as you can write down your physical fitness goals, in addition to why you want to reach these goals. Goal setting gives you something to work towards and provides a great sense of satisfaction once the goals are reached. Staying positive about physical fitness is also extremely important to keeping up fitness levels. The right mindset will allow you to enjoy being physically active and will make workouts seem less like a chore and more like an enjoyable experience. Finally, switching up your routine or adding exciting activities such as tobogganing will also make the workouts seem more worthwhile and enjoyable.

Have a SAFE and HAPPY holiday season from all of us at HPC!
The **Health and Performance Centre** at the University of Guelph can play an integrative role in assisting you with leading a healthy active lifestyle.

**References and Further Reading**

http://www.huffingtonpost.com/zlata-sushchik/how-to-find-motivation-to_b_6124720.html  
http://www.womenshealthmag.com/tags/at-home-workouts  
http://www.canadianliving.com/health/fitness/staying_active_over_the_holiday_season.php  
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http://www.lsguide.com/set-s-m-a-r-t-goals-for-the-holiday-season/  

**Nutrition Counseling Services**

It is very important to eat properly before and after exercise in order to fuel your body prior to physical activity and to replace nutrient stores post-exercise. The Registered Dieticians at the HPC can provide valuable insight into the relationship between nutrition and exercise.

**Physiotherapy Services**

Injuries can unfortunately force people to take a break from their workout routine. If you experience aches or pains during exercise (knee or back pain, ankle sprains, etc.) it is often caused by an underlying issue such as a muscle imbalance. Physiotherapists at the HPC can use their knowledge of anatomy and rehabilitation techniques to prevent and reduce injuries and to get you back to taking part in physical activity as soon as possible.

For more information on services offered by the Health and Performance Centre visit: https://www.uoguelph.ca/hpc/our-services