

All work
and a fitness
regime makes
Jill an agile
and alert lady,
advises
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Singhania

just. exercise!

It's hard prioritising. It's tough making time to fit everything into a day. Women have so many roles to juggle – being a working woman, a parent, a spouse, a daughter, a housewife...the list is endless!

No wonder then, that even if you want to exercise, you skip the workout saying, "I have no time." After a long day at the office, you need to catch up on your reading, run errands, surf the Internet, help your children with their homework, cook, shop, meet up with a friend, or even just relax – so, where's the time to exercise?

The answer? You have to make the time by managing your time better! You could exercise during your lunch hour, while watching television, while your kid is at school, or you could stop off at a class on your way home from work. Where there's a will, there's always a way!

The benefits of exercise are infinite. They include fat loss, muscle toning, a dramatic improvement in physical appearance and health, increased self-

confidence, increased bone density, improved cardio-vascular fitness and much more. Exercise could also indirectly improve your social life, personal life, sex life and career. Do you really need more reasons to make exercise a part of your regular life?

Here are some simple and highly effective exercises you can do even while sitting at your desk in the office.

Quick Desk Fixes For the upper body (arms, chest and back)

1) While sitting at your desk, get your palms to meet at chest level. With your elbows bent and close by your side, squeeze your palms together while exhaling and release them slightly while inhaling, as demonstrated in Fig. 1.

2) Holding your hands at waist level, pull apart while exhaling and release them slightly while inhaling.

For the legs

1) While sitting at your desk, lift one foot up about six inches off the floor. In this position, pulse up and down a quarter to half an inch.

Breathe normally and don't let the upper body rock while doing this. Keep it steady. This is demonstrated in Fig. 2.

2) In the above position, move the leg three-four inches from side to side, instead of up and down. This involves the inner and outer thigh muscles.

3) While standing, using your desk or chair for support, rise up onto your toes and then lower yourself, but keep both heels slightly off the floor. Exhale while lifting up and inhale while lowering. Here, the calf muscles are being targeted.

For the abs

1) While sitting on the edge of your chair, keep both legs bent and apart from one another. Lean back all the way, just short of touching the chair. Make sure the spine is rounded over and your chin is lowered close to the chest at all times. Remain frozen in this reclined position for a slow count of 10, before sitting upright to relax for a few moments. Make sure you don't hold your breath at any time during this exercise. Breathe normally right through. Leaving the arms extended



Fig 1.: Toning the upper body.

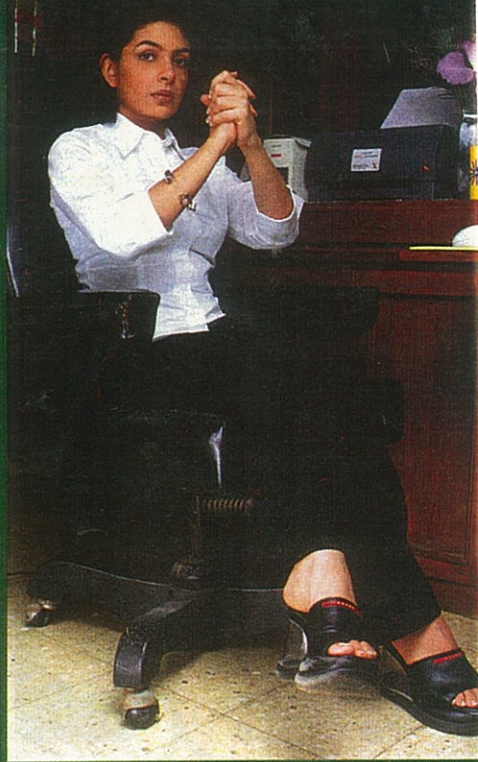


Fig. 2: Working on the legs; exercise them!

out by your side and parallel to the floor is the easiest option. As you get stronger and can take on more, bring the fists to your forehead, elbows bent and close together in front of you. To make the exercise even tougher, extend both arms straight up overhead.

This works the main abdominal muscle, the *rectus abdominus*, which is also nicknamed the 'six pack', as well-trained abs resemble a six-pack of beer. Sounds appealing, hmm?

2) To include the 'below belly' abdominal group, get into the previously described position and then get your right ankle up upon your left knee. Hold this position for a slow count of 10.

You can switch legs at a later stage. This targets both the main abdominal muscle (*rectus abdominus*) and the transverse *abdominus*, which sits in the pelvic cavity.

The abdominal exercises are not appropriate for those with high blood pressure.

Do the above exercises three-four times a week and you'll see the results in about three weeks' time. You'll realize soon enough that you

It's technique!

- Begin by doing 8-10 counts of all the above exercises, in sets of two or three each. As you get stronger and more capable, you can increase the counts or reps, and even the sets. Keep the principle of overload in mind. Once your body gets

used to or adapts to a particular exercise and it begins to get easier, it is important to load up in order to continue seeing results.

- Remember that correct breathing patterns are crucial. Always exhale during the contraction, or the most difficult stage of the exercise, and inhale during the relaxation phase, or the easiest part of the exercise.

- Don't go rushing into a demanding schedule; if you

are unable to cope with it you will want to possibly abandon the whole programme altogether.

- Focus on correct technique and form throughout. It doesn't matter how much you can or can't do, but how you do it. Concentrate on each exercise and visualize the body part that you are working. It's often more a mind-thing than a body-thing.



You have to make the time to exercise. Manage your time better!

Find moderation and consistency in combining a sensible diet with exercise. Compulsive exercising is as unhealthy as compulsive eating.

don't have to spend hours sweating it out in the gym, jogging in the park or participating in fitness classes. You can have it all without even leaving your office and by spending as little as six-eight minutes each day! ■

(Nawaz Modi Singhania runs *Body Art* – a fitness centre with a variety of classes, gym facilities and training; tel: 380 5929/2602 – and is also a well-known fitness writer.)