



find your ideal workout time

Want to create a fitness routine you can stick to for life? The answer could be as simple as listening to your exercise body clock. **Fitness editor Martha Lourey-Bird** explains what's best to do when.

There are 24 hours in a day and the key to making them work for you exercise-wise is finding the time and activity that suits you best. Listen to your body, choose something that fits you – and your lifestyle – like a glove, then get ready to start reaping the rewards.

Morning

Morning exercise is a positive way to start the day and can set the physical and mental tone for the rest of it. Gentle exercise is probably the best way to coax the body from rest – even if you habitually wake with a start.

Try a yoga or tai chi session to wake the body slowly and focus on bringing the mind and body together. Activities like this are beneficial because they increase both mobility and flexibility while strengthening all the muscles you're using.

As you get into the habit of regular morning workout sessions, or if you're already there, consider a stretch-and-tone class, a brisk morning walk or jog and swimming laps of a pool or in the ocean for maximum exercise variety.

Afternoon

Lunchtime or afternoon workouts can relieve a sedentary work life or simply break up your day by energising you for the rest of it. Making wise use of your lunch hour can also free up time at the beginning and end of the day for other things.

Go for high energy activities such as a 30 minute express circuit, swimming laps, a team game of touch football or join a regular walking/running group. This kind of cardio exercise works a range of muscles, makes the most of a short time and allows for a quick shower and bite to eat afterwards. If you have the luxury of more time, exercise at a pace that feels right for you. Along with a physical lift, lunchtime exercise sessions also provide the chance to socialise and meet new people.

Evening

After a long day at work or managing your household, getting outdoors is the perfect way to ease stress and clear your mind.

Carrying sneakers in your bag and walking all or part of the way home is a great option. With longer days at this time of year, you can safely walk, run or cycle in parks or in your relatively traffic-reduced neighbourhood. Group fitness classes or personal training sessions in local parks are also increasingly popular and can save on gym fees over summer. These are all great cardio options that burn kilojoules and reduce tension. [www](#)

BOOST YOUR CHANCES OF SUCCESS

Don't set yourself up for failure by over-committing too early. Instead, plan a weekly routine that you know you'll be able to manage and stick to regularly. When that becomes comfortable, slowly increase the duration and intensity of your exercise.

WHAT TO EAT WHEN

The power of protein

Set yourself up for the day ahead by ensuring your body is getting enough of the right fuel. After your workout, try a carbohydrate and protein-rich breakfast like 2 eggs scrambled with a handful of baby spinach leaves on 1 slice of multigrain toast. **4 POINTS** values.

In-between boosts

If you feel hungry mid-morning or late afternoon, keep your energy levels up by having a snack such as 2 multigrain crispbreads topped with 2 tbs cottage cheese. **1½ POINTS** values. Alternatively, try a tub of low-fat fruit yogurt or one small banana and 10 raw almonds. **2 POINTS** values.

Midday nutrients

Make sure you're getting all the nutrients your body needs for optimum performance. Enjoy a wholesome, balanced lunch such as a chicken and salad sandwich made with 2 slices of multigrain bread, 1 tbs mashed avocado, 100g skinless barbecued chicken breast and mixed salad vegetables. **6 POINTS** values.

The evening standard

Reward your body with fresh, healthy food at dinner time. A good meal, such as a 140g-grilled salmon fillet, ½ cup of cooked brown rice, and 1 cup of mixed steamed vegetables will hit the spot. **6 POINTS** values.

Drinks, all day long

Make sure you keep your fluid intake up during and post-workout and throughout the day. Water is best.

