

Resourceful Mini-Workouts for Time Pressed Stay at Home Dads

Description

As stay-at-home dads, many of us strive to squeeze in time to get our heart rates up with our favorite workouts. While during certain weeks, our schedules may, in fact, permit time to fit in our ideal workout, this is only sometimes the case. As our days get squeezed by the demands of our kiddos and never-ending [domestic responsibilities](#), it is tough to consistently find the time to enjoy our optimum workout regime, whether a two-hour ride, swim, or gym session.

The schedule and intentions we set for ourselves at the start of the week need to consider the often erratic nature of looking after youngsters, whose demands can significantly fluctuate at a moment's notice. If we don't take into account the unpredictability of caring for our youngsters, we set ourselves up for frustration when our coveted "me time" gets taken away. And if our "me time" is our exercise, our frustration can escalate into irritable behavior, negatively impacting the vibes in our household. In my case, missing just one or two days of intense physical activity can significantly impact my mood. Therefore, I do what I can to be resourceful. When I can't find the time to go for an hour or two-hour gym session or bike ride, I become innovative and find [shorter time increments to exercise](#) while looking after the kids.

What is important for us to recognize is that our exercise regimes don't always need to be perfect or that lengthy. When time is tight, and we are faced with a full day with the kids, we need not despair. Instead, we can choose to adopt a resourceful mindset by looking for fun and efficient ways to fit in our exercise while keeping the kids engaged. Hey, who said that guys can't multi-task anyway?

While I'm sure many of you are already well aware of the health benefits of shorter, more intense exercise increments, I thought I would reiterate the significant health impacts these "quick hit" sessions offer. An increasing number of health studies have demonstrated that even twenty minutes of medium to high-intensity exercise can help improve cardiovascular health, strength, and overall well-being. According to Stephen J. Carter, a cardiovascular physiologist at the Indiana University Bloomington School of Public Health, shorter, more intense workouts can be more advantageous for our health than longer, less intense physical activity. Carter states that, among other health benefits, these "quick hit" workouts help reduce the risk of cardiovascular disease and lower mortality rates. So, with increasing studies backing their effectiveness, why wouldn't we incorporate these time efficient high impact exercise sessions into our weekly routines, especially when our little ones demand so much of our time?

So, the next step is strategizing how we can implement these mini-workouts amidst our never-ending childcare responsibilities. Following are some examples of resourceful mini-exercise sessions I have been able to implement with my kids on several occasions that I'm sure most of you can fit in as well. Keep in mind that the ideas presented below will need to be adapted based on the developmental stage of your kiddos.

At the Playground:

Between pushing them on the swing or chasing them around the playground, do some natural bodyweight exercises like chin-ups, dips, push-ups, and lunges. Feel free to give them a good push on the swing or help them onto the slide and then fit in a quick set. You can even jog to and from the kiddos when needed in between sets. As an alternative to box jumps, try some park bench jumps. They are awesome for leg strengthening and jacking up the heart rate. Spinning them on the merry-go-round can be a tremendous oblique strengthening exercise. Don't worry what the other parents think! They will likely be impressed and perhaps even inspired to do the same at some point.

Jogging while they Bike or Stride:

If they love to bike, jog with them. Understand that the jog may not be at a steady pace, but even if you have to stop now and then to pick them up off the pavement after they crash, it will still get your blood flowing and boost your endorphins.

At the Park:

Play some games of tag or do some fun races (running, hopping, bear crawling, or otherwise). Grab a soccer ball, baseball, or frisbee and sprint between kicking and throwing. Give them a head start while you sprint with them to get the ball.

In the Snow or on the Ice:

If you live in a snowy winter climate or have access to an ice rink, put a leash or rope around your waist and do running intervals by pulling them on a sled or skating rink. My kids love this, and it is a fantastic way to ensure an intense workout while they experience some good fun.

In and Around the House:

If your kids love to be taken on daddy horsey rides and you've got the strength for it, get them to sit on your back while crawling around the house and doing push-ups. For the legs, get them to hop on your back while doing squats or lunges. Body weight squat holds are fantastic for quad strength and mental fortitude. Have them count reps and seconds while you feel the burn! Airplane rides can also work the quads as well as stabilizers. Have fun with it!

For those with equipment at home, do circuit training with your kids. They will enjoy the creativity of coming up with their own fun exercises.

On the Trampoline:

If you have access to a trampoline, get on it and bounce with them. Kids love being double-bounced, but be careful not to launch them into your neighbor's yard. You will be surprised at how much of a workout some good old-fashioned bouncing can provide. The quads and abs will be feeling it for sure.

Of course, you must ensure that these ideas are implemented safely and consider your children's developmental stage. However, most of them can be adapted to best suit a range of ages. Each of these will also provide a legitimate increase in heart rate, in turn providing the health benefits our bodies need.

So, when you encounter a domestic turn of events and realize that your optimum workout may not happen, feel free to incorporate some of these mini-exercise regimens with your kiddos. Not only will you be gaining valuable health benefits yourself, but you will also model the importance of physical activity for your kids. Just remember to engage your resourceful mindset and have some fun!

I would also love to hear some of your creative mini-workout ideas, so please share them in the comments below.

Resources:

<https://journals.lww.com/acsm-msse/pages/articleviewer.aspx?year=2021&issue=03000&article=00012&type=Fulltext>

<https://www.nytimes.com/2022/11/08/well/move/full-body-workout-20-minutes.html>

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