

Exercising options: How to keep working out when traveling

December 5 2012, by Darrah Tinkler

(Medical Xpress)—It may be tempting to ditch the exercise routine when traveling over the upcoming holidays, but Kansas State University kinesiology professionals have some tips on how to keep moving.

Enduring long car rides or plane trips can lead to cramped legs and tired eyes, said Katie Heinrich, assistant professor of kinesiology.

"To keep the aches and pains away, make sure to stretch the muscles along the way," Heinrich said. "If traveling by car, bring along simple equipment like dumbbells or resistance bands. Also during the ride, make sure to make slight but frequent adjustments to seating position. If the spine is kept in one position for long periods of time, it can cause pain."

While on planes, simple stretches like shoulder rolls, ankle circles, knee lifts and overhead stretches are great ways to keep a body limber, she said.

Once at a relative's house, Heinrich said there are plenty of body weight exercises people can do while staying in a small place. Pushups, squats, burpees, jumping jacks and mountain climbers are a few examples. Just pick a reasonable rep scheme and version of exercises that work for your current level of fitness and then time yourself to see how fast you—and your relatives—can complete a round.

"Bringing along a [jump rope](#) and some tennis shoes can give a person

endless options," Heinrich said. "Also, bundling up and going for a brisk walk or run can be a great way for people to stay active."

Many people wonder if playing motion-sensor video games are a good way to get exercise. Brandon Irwin, assistant professor of [kinesiology](#), says they can be with some extra effort. He suggests finding ways to increase the challenge for a good workout, such as strapping light weights to ankles and wrists and stringing together a series of games/exercises that take up to 30 minutes to complete.

"Video games tend to be a fun way to exercise, especially when you play with other people," Irwin said. "Holidays are an especially good time to play video games because they are something that the family can do together."

It is easy to consume more calories than a person realizes when eating rich holiday foods. To help keep a steady body weight, Heinrich recommends using smaller plate or glass. Smaller portion sizes keep overeating at bay, she said.

But Heinrich says ditch that nap after eating.

"Taking a walk with friends or doing some stretching will help settle the food in a more productive way," she said.

When the gym is not an option, Heinrich has tips on other ways to fit in some quick exercise.

"Utilize equipment available at the park. This is free and can be fun to do," she said. "Also, use the local indoor shopping mall to get a walking workout. Many malls open early to accommodate walkers."

Another tip is to take advantage of the social support system around you.

"Family members and friends can help hold each other accountable for both exercise and caloric intake," Heinrich said. "The buddy system can help a person keep on track over the holidays and not let the pounds pile on."

Provided by Kansas State University

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