

Jet Fit While Traveling

By Nan Kappeler

When packing for all her business trips, Jeannie Weitzel, a training manager for Office Depot, neatly folds an exercise mat and slides her walking shoes into a plastic bag. The two objects are essential travel items to carry on frequent trips to corporate headquarters in Del Ray Beach, Florida. "Exercise helps me ease the transition into a new environment," says Weitzel, 46, who manages a Severna Park, Md. store. "I find myself better able to stay alert during long seminars and training sessions."

Normally, Weitzel walks an hour each day after work and attends Jazzercise classes five days a week. She says a regular fitness program helps to relieve office stress and relax at the end of the day. But when her position changed to include more traveling, she found herself missing her daily workout. "The exercise is essential to my physical and mental health. I can't skip it, even when traveling," she says. When away from home, she takes an early morning power walk to help wake up. Before bed, she performs stretching and abdominal exercises on her mat for relaxation.

For many business travelers, their regular exercise program often takes a backseat to a long day with a tough agenda. A "typical" day that normally begins with a workout at the gym is replaced with a planning breakfast. An awards dinner takes the place of an afternoon spin class. But according to fitness experts, being on the road is no excuse to skip the exercise.

Tight schedules, time zone changes, unfamiliar surroundings and the lack of healthy food choices also can disrupt a consistent fitness program. Recent advances in lightweight exercise bands and improvements in hotel fitness facilities have made it increasingly easier for travelers to exercise. For today's business traveler, your fitness level doesn't have to be compromised while away from home, for any amount of time.

So how can you get onto a "Jet Fit" traveling program? Try incorporating one type of exercise into your schedule each day.

Boost Energy Levels with Walking

There's no better way to start the day than by taking a brisk 30-40 minute walk.

Begin with a 5-minute "warm-up" pace and increase to a rapid speed for the next 15-minutes. End with a five-minute cool down. Ask the concierge for suggestions about where to walk or for directions to a local park. Choose an out-and-back course to avoid misdirection. If walking in an unfamiliar area is uncomfortable, opt for the treadmill.

Travel Benefit: Increased heart rate and blood flow to all parts of the body stimulates endorphins, resulting in an improved level of mental alertness and physical energy throughout the day.

Improved Posture with Exercise Bands

Strengthening muscles can be easily done with one exercise band. Weighing in at just a fraction of an ounce, bands and cords are easy to pack. Check out online stores for multi-colored stretch bands that offer varying resistances. There are also cords with handles designed to hook onto a door. Both these products offer an array of upper and lower body strengthening exercises that can be done in a hotel room.

Attach the band or cord to a doorknob and perform 50 repetitions of standing rows (think of standing and rowing a boat), followed by 50 repetitions of punches then 20 standing squats with a pillow placed between your knees. Lift both arms as you bend your knees. Repeat each set three times.

Travel Benefit: Improved sitting and standing posture. Relieves stress and tension in neck and back.

Stress Reduction and Swimming

Check before leaving home to see if your hotel has a pool or Jacuzzi. Swimming, which is a non-impact bearing activity, is an ideal way to improve circulation and decrease anxiety and stress. Non-swimmers can receive the same benefits by walking or running across the width of the pool maintaining a rapid pace.

In the pool at the side, perform standing toe raises, side leg lifts, and marching in place. These can also be done in the Jacuzzi, but be careful not to overheat.

Travel Benefit: Stress reduction and muscles relaxation can aid in improved sleep and upper body tension and anxiety.

Travel time doesn't have to be down time. Plan to exercise and book hotels that have exercise facilities and recreation centers.