

Stepping it up at the Airport

By Dennis Parks

It's the crack of dawn on Monday morning and you've got a cross country flight with a layover in Chicago. Upon arrival at your hotel, you have a dinner with a key client. Though you haven't missed acquiring your daily 10,000 steps for the last six months, you don't see anyway you'll reach that goal short of running around your hotel room until midnight. What are you going to do? For you road warriors, airports are actually a great place achieve your step goal for the day. Airport terminals have no hills, long straight corridors, and are well lit and safe. Most important: You often have more free time there than you realize.

Think about it. When was the last time you arrived at the airport, cleared security, and had extra time on your hands prior to your departure? It's likely that has been every flight since 9/11, because you're now required to pad your travel plans with extra time and an early arrival.

So, after negotiating the TSA gauntlet, vow to get moving. Instead of grabbing a seat with a cup of Starbucks and a bagel, take your roller bag and walk the airport. Every second is valuable in reaching your daily goal, even if you just walk for 15 or 30 minutes. About 2,000 steps make a mile for the average stepper. If your pace is 3 miles per hour (which is typical), you can get in 1,500 steps in 15 minutes, and 3,000 steps in 30 minutes, and so on. Add that to the 2,000 steps you probably logged while walking from the car to the check-in counter and then through security etc., and you're at least half way to your goal before you even get on the airplane.

Your layover and/or plane change is another great opportunity to get in more steps, especially when the gap between flights can be hours instead of minutes. The same principles apply. When you get to the departure gate for your next flight, resist the closest seat, grab your bag and walk the airport. For some extra resistance, use a cart to push your luggage.

You can judge the distance and the number of steps taken in several ways. The time conversion I mentioned above is one way. Another is to count off 500 or a 1,000 steps along a corridor and then just remember the identifying landmarks (trashcan, newspaper stand etc.) and repeat that loop so you do not need to keep counting. One loop is a 1,000 steps, 2 loops is 2,000 etc. You can also use a monitor like the WalkStyles DashTrak™ or a simple pedometer to count your steps for you. Before you know it, 60 minutes and 6,000 steps later you are over your goal and back in the air on your way to your destination!

If you have a short connection, or no connection at all, don't panic. You can still get your steps in on the way to baggage claim and/or the taxi line. Typically your bags take more time to arrive at the carousel than you do. So again, do laps around the carousel instead of staring at the baggage belt hoping for it to start moving.

Airline travel is no excuse to put aside your daily step goal. If you use the airport and your time wisely, you can always get in your 10,000 steps or get close to it and feel better for making the effort.