



Fall Fitness After Travel and Vacations

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Eighty and ninety-degree days, increased humidity, the wonderful smell of a neighborhood cookout, sunscreen and bug spray applications at the beach. The humid, drought-filled summer we have had in Massachusetts sure made exercising outdoors difficult. We are all undoubtedly cherishing every glorious fall day that doesn't include a re-check of the forecast to see how humid conditions will be. If you're like most municipal employees in this area, you take the majority of your vacation time in the summer. While traveling and vacation are wonderful times, it can sometimes be challenging to stay active. The heat and humidity definitely impacted workouts for many this summer.

Many of us don't make the time to exercise because we perceive that it is more difficult to fit into our days than it really is! This month, take some time to re-establish an exercise program that will help improve energy and get you back on track. The first "tool" you need is FREE- your body! An ultra-basic workout of simple exercises such as push-ups, squats, hip extensions, and isometric (holding a position steady) planks all help improve muscular strength and endurance. They don't require anything except a few minutes of your time and can be performed by individuals of all levels.



A fundamental bodyweight workout could look like this (all exercises performed for 1-3 sets of 8-12 repetitions; ideally, focusing on an every other day approach with a day of rest in between would work best):

- **Hip Extensions ('Hip Lifts')** – laying on your back with knees bent; push off heels and drive hips upward while engaging the muscles in the back of the legs (Glutes and Hamstrings).
- **Push-ups** – traditional or modified; engage mid-section and Glutes while trying not to let your elbows excessively flare out to the side.
- **Squats** – drive hips back as you descend in the squat; push off heels to ascend while limiting the forward bend in your torso.
- **Planks** – lie face down and prop yourself up onto your elbows with only your forearms and toes in contact with the ground; maintain tension not only in the abdominals, but throughout your whole body (hold for 10-30 seconds without holding your breath, and gradually build up your time under tension).

In addition to the above bodyweight strength training routine, try and maintain your other physical activity habits such as walking or taking a class at a gym. What better time to kick start your exercise routines than now- when more comfortable climate conditions are in place? Engaging a workout buddy with you will ensure that you not only stay active, but you will have fun too! Shoot for a daily total of 30-60 minutes. And you still reap health benefits by breaking that time up into shorter bouts throughout the day. Even just 20-30 minutes of movement a day can help to ward off weight gain.

Two key factors to keep in mind while attempting to stay active during your fall workouts are to keep it simple and keep it fun. Going for a long walk with your family and friends is a great way to boost Dopamine and Serotonin (the 'feel-good hormones) levels. In addition, it's a great way to facilitate Vitamin D absorption (we need sunlight to help absorb Vitamin D) as adequate Vitamin D levels have been linked to improving mental health, bone, and heart health. Engaging in a few strength-training exercises like those previously mentioned is a great way to burn body fat and build lean muscle. Set up a little schedule/itinerary on your mobile phone or post in a key location. Remember, the greater the variety the better. Have fun and involve your family and friends!



Paul Connolly is certified through the National Strength and Conditioning Association as a personal trainer and possesses a degree in Exercise Science from UMASS-Boston, where he graduated Magna Cum Laude.