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# FIT LIFE

Fit Life / The N.E.A.T. Way to Exercise

## The N.E.A.T. Way to Exercise

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Most people think that the only way to burn calories is through scheduled exercise sessions. Although exercise is the most ideal way to expend a lot of calories, there are additional ways to burn them throughout the day that are not programmed sessions. Both weight loss and weight maintenance can be made easier with a clear understanding of non-exercise activity thermogenesis, or N.E.A.T.

Non-exercise activity thermogenesis includes the calories expended outside of exercise, eating and sleeping. There are many N.E.A.T. activities that we already do, but may not realize its caloric output effect. Simple tasks such as raking leaves, physical labor, climbing stairs and even fidgeting help us expend additional calories. In essence, N.E.A.T. increases metabolic rate and results in a substantial energy cost overtime.

Recent movement findings were discussed in the ACE webinar, "[Consequences of Sitting and How to Become a Movement Warrior](#)." Research suggests that individuals who move throughout the day are more likely to reach or maintain weight-loss goals versus those who are sedentary throughout the day and vigorously move through one exercise session. Therefore, a greater caloric output occurs throughout the day rather than during one vigorous exercise session. Researcher James Levine, M.D., who has published several journal articles on the positive effects of N.E.A.T., found that adopting N.E.A.T. behaviors can increase daily caloric expenditure by as much as 350 calories per day, and is particularly beneficial for obese individuals.

Most people spend the majority of their day at work. One way to increase caloric burn is to implement non-exercise movement throughout the workday. Agriculture, construction and housekeeping trades are good examples of high N.E.A.T. jobs because they require a high demand

for movement. On the other hand, desk jobs are primarily sedentary and do not expend much energy cost. So how can you increase your N.E.A.T. during the workday? Here are some creative ideas to integrate movement:

**Change your mode of transportation.** Walk, bike or bus to work instead of driving. This starts and ends the day on a good note, along with a breath of fresh air.

**Implement walking meetings.** Head outdoors and boost your team's creativity with a walking meeting. Walking is an effective way to burn calories, stimulate the brain and bond the team.

**Throw out your garbage can.** Give your eyes and body a break from the computer screen by removing your garbage can from under your desk. This gives you a reason to get up and walk to the workroom or break room to throw out your trash or recycling materials.

**Create wellness challenges.** Talk to your HR or Wellness department about creating walking challenges. If HR cannot help, form walking teams within your department. One challenge may include walking 10,000 steps per day for 10 days. Individuals who meet or exceed the goal's challenge can win a prize or an incentive reward. Pedometers and Fitbit devices are beneficial tools to track these steps.

**Take the stairs.** This old adage still rings true. Skip the elevator and take the stairs to keep the body moving throughout the day.

**Stand instead of sit.** Adjustable and treadmill desks are becoming increasingly popular in the workplace. However, if these desks are not available, raise your work to a podium or counter so you can stand throughout the day. This is advantageous for those who need to read or work from a laptop or mobile device. Resting heart rate is higher while standing than sitting, thus increasing caloric output.

Accumulated physical activity can significantly increase the number of calories burned throughout the day or week. Therefore, if you're tied behind the desk remember there are plenty of ways to incorporate movement when you cannot formally exercise. Other N.E.A.T. examples include:

- Playing with your kids
- Completing yard work
- Grocery shopping
- Walking the dog
- Cleaning the house

If your day lacks N.E.A.T., think of one or two ideas that you can start with to integrate movement into your day or week. For those who track calories, use [www.myfitnesspal.com](http://www.myfitnesspal.com) to find an estimated calorie burn based on the activity, length of time and current weight. This site, along with other websites, does not consider gender, which does affect the caloric output. However, it is an effective guide for calculating caloric burn, especially for activities such as chores or yard work. Myfitnesspal.com is free and easy to use for those who do not have a current calorie tracker device or website.

So the next time you're looking to rev up your calorie burn, choose the N.E.A.T. way to stay active. N.E.A.T. is a beneficial addition to your exercise routine that does not take time away from home or family—perfect for those who find time is their worst enemy.



## **By Elizabeth Kovar**

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