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Healthy traveling

- Story Highlights
- Lack of exercise when traveling can exacerbate stress and prevent sleep
- Short bursts of exercise can be just as effective as a long workout
- Hotels now offer 24-hour gyms and in-room exercise programs

by Emma Clarke

LONDON, England (CNN) -- Feel like life's a treadmill, but you never see a real one? Running between meetings, but never around the park? Do you stretch out meetings, but never your legs? Exercise and healthy eating are often the first things to fall off the agenda when on the road. But, as experts point out, an unhealthy lifestyle can affect productivity, concentration, happiness and stress levels.

"It's important for everyone to stay fit and active to build long-term good health. However, for business travelers it's absolutely crucial," says Amelia Watts, founder of Benefit Personal Training.

"Falling into the habit of not taking any exercise and eating on the go can affect every aspect of your health and well-being: from exacerbating stress, to throwing your sleeping pattern out of sync, and playing havoc with your posture." And given business travelers lead a more sedentary lifestyle sitting on planes and waiting in lounges, they are even more prone to weight gain.

"Regular exercise can help to de-stress you, as it focuses your mind on the physical rather than the emotional, fills you with energy, and releases stress-busting hormones - endorphins," says Watts.

It is likely that long workouts in the gym will be the last thing on a busy traveler's mind. But that doesn't matter, says Watts, because ten minutes is better than nothing. "Cardio exercise works on an accumulative basis - ten minutes here, twenty minutes there is just as effective as a great long workout."

If the hotel gym or pool is too much, she suggests following a mini circuit-training routine in the hotel room. "Jog on the spot for a couple of minutes to warm up, then do 15-20 repetitions of squats, press ups, and tricep dips using a chair. Work your abs with planks, which you should hold for 30-60 seconds. You could also try the reverse hip hike: lie on the floor with your feet up on the bed. Lift your hips so that there's a straight line running from your feet to your shoulders. Squeeze your buttocks together and lower yourself so that you near the floor without touching it. Repeat 15-20 times."

A brisk walk for 20 minutes or so every day in the fresh air also helps fitness and well-being and can reduce psychological complaints such as stress and depression, says Watts. "Every time you take a break at a service station, walk around for a few minutes to stretch your legs and kick start your circulation."

Personal trainer, Matt Roberts suggests a swim as soon as travelers get to the hotel after a long flight. Swimming is ideal, he says, because it works the upper and lower body. This moderate cardiovascular exercise

will not only get the blood moving (crucial after being in a pressurized air cabin), but will also help fight jet lag.

"Exercise increases oxygenation of blood and therefore fuels the brain," says Roberts. "By exercising and burning energy you can also sleep better, helping you recover from jet lag."

With business guests now eager for exercise routines that fit around their schedules, hotels have started to rethink their fitness services.

Marriott hotels in the U.S. now offer an in-room exercise program. Three kits are on offer: a foam exercise wedge with a full-body workout program printed on it; a muscle-toning, energy-building program; and a hand-held device for a strength-training workout that takes just 15 minutes.

Hyatt Hotels provides 24-hour gyms in its properties across North America and the Caribbean. Matt Adams, Grand Hyatt New York vice president and managing director says the gym in New York is busy round the clock. "I have seen it more crowded at 4 a.m. than at 4 p.m.," he says. "Sometimes guests need to workout before an early morning presentation and other times their bodies are on a time zone thousands of miles away. With almost 20 percent of our guests coming from international destinations, it is imperative to cater to their fitness routines away from home."


And instead of getting a chocolate on their pillow, Hyatt customers can now pick up a card with yoga breathing instructions.

Charles Moore knows first-hand the impact stress can have on busy professionals. He gave up his 18-year career as an investment banker to found The 4th R - Relaxation Training in order to train people to de-stress. "It's crucial to organize your time to fit relaxation in a traveling schedule," says Moore. "Arrive at the airport early to relax in the lounge and as soon as you step on the plane, set your watch to the local time at your destination. If it is night where you are going, get some sleep," he says. Moore has recently invested in high quality, custom-made earplugs that he says have "completely revolutionized travel" by cutting out noise whilst sleeping.

And when travelers hear that dreaded announcement about delays, or when they are dashing through security, try not to panic. It may be good to have adrenalin pumping round your body if you are facing a tiger, but it's not necessary when you are standing in an airport, he says.

Rachel Whiteside from Bodyflow in Zurich, that offers clients massages and cranio-sacral therapy, says that being in a constant state of alert puts pressure on people's adrenal glands and immune system. "The result is that a person is likely to feel panicky and anxious through periods of stress, rather than stimulated and awake," she says.

Stress causes blood to flow faster through the muscles. The muscles and the blood vessels then constrict allowing the blood to become flooded with hormones from the pituitary gland and adrenal glands resulting in an increased heart rate and acceleration in oxygen. The production of digestive juices is reduced and blood sugar levels rise as the liver releases glucose into the blood stream. "This can become a harmful process if our bodies end up in a perpetual state of stress with only few relaxation periods and full release of tension," she says.

One way to relieve tension could be by finding time for a ten-minute stretch from the hotel in the morning.  [Watch the video »](#)

And in between all the exercise and relaxation, don't forget to grab some sunlight (for Vitamin D), eat healthy food (fruits and vegetables, wholegrain cereals and bread, oily fish, extra virgin olive oil and pulses), drink plenty of water (two liters a day should do it), cut down the alcohol and finally ... get a good night's sleep.


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