

# Carpe Diem – Seize the Day Blog

*Editor's Note: Content presented in the Carpe Diem – Seize the Day Blog is for awareness and informational purposes only, and it is not meant to be a diagnostic tool. Before starting any exercise regimen, it is advisable to consult your medical professional*

We have just come off of two years of COVID 19 restrictions. Self-care for those who care for children who have epilepsy is a year-round priority. Self-care includes mental, spiritual, and physical well-being. In this week's blog we look at ways to improve your physical self-care and fitness. Let's look at workouts that help your physical self-care without hitting the gym.

As pandemic restrictions ease up, gyms have reopened around the country, but some exercise aficionados are still feeling cautious about hitting their health club or gym. If you are one of them, do not worry. You can still make some serious fitness gains without all that fancy equipment because studies suggest that your own body weight is all you need to get in shape—along with some grit and determination, of course.

Still uncomfortable going to the gym? Health experts say you can get in good shape without any equipment. For example, a study recently published in the International Journal of Exercise Science found that eighteen sessions of bodyweight training over just 6 weeks resulted in notable improvements in cardiorespiratory fitness. In fact, according to Edward R. Laskowski, MD, of the Mayo Clinic, bodyweight training—using just your body weight for resistance—can be “as effective as training with free weights or weight machines.”

The US Department of Health and Human Services advises that we all get 150-300 minutes of moderate-intensity or 75-150 minutes of vigorous-intensity exercise a week. So, to help you hit that target, here are five workouts that require no equipment, along with details on how they benefit your health.

## **Push-ups**

Push-ups are the archetypical bodyweight workout. You are literally lifting your body in a movement that will help you build strength and improve muscle growth in your arms, shoulders, chest, and core. Here is the best way to do push-ups, according to Harvard Health.

You should begin in a “full plank” position, with palms flat on the floor just below shoulder level, arms fully extended, and feet no more than twelve inches apart. Keep your back and legs straight and aim to have your weight evenly distributed.

To complete one rep, lower your body until your elbows are at 90-degree angles, and then push yourself back up until your arms are straight again. You should keep your gaze focused directly down at the floor throughout the movement and aim to complete the rep slowly.

If the movement is too challenging, you can modify it by beginning in the same position, but with your knees on the floor instead of your feet.

## **Squats**

Squats work your upper legs, glutes, and core muscles, and there are several ways to do them, notes Harvard Health. Benefits include improved stamina and helping to prevent falls.

The first way involves sitting on a chair with your feet hip-width apart. Tighten your glutes and abdomen and push against your feet to bring yourself to a stand position, while exhaling. Then inhale and sit back down. Your hands can be by your side, on your thighs, or out in front of you during the movement.

The second way to do a squat, according to a strength-training article in the New York Times, begins in a standing position, with your feet shoulder-width apart, and your hands on the back of your head. You lower your body until your thighs are parallel to the floor, pause, and then return to a standing position.

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To protect your knees, you should keep your posterior pushed out as though you are about to sit on a chair and use your hips and thighs to bring yourself back to standing position. If you are doing it correctly, your knees will only move during the first half of the movement, and only your hips will move during the second. Once again, do not rush the rep. The more time you spend under tension, the more effective the rep will be.

### **Step-ups and step-downs**

Step training (step-ups and step-downs) strengthens almost all the muscles in your legs, without the need for a leg-press machine. You can use a block, the bottom step of a staircase, or any other kind of sturdy elevation available, notes Harvard Health.

Begin by standing with your feet parallel, roughly hip-width apart, and your arms relaxed by your side. Slowly place your right foot onto the step, while maintaining an upright position with your torso. Then straighten that leg to bring your whole body onto the step. Pause for a brief moment, then bring your left leg backward and (while maintaining an upright torso) lower yourself back down to the ground. Once you have completed a set of reps, you should aim to switch your starting leg, in order to work both legs evenly.

While you can speed up your reps to increase the intensity of this workout, the key here is to maintain a good posture.

### **Mountain climbing**

This workout approximates the movements that climbers make as they traverse steep inclines—but you can do it from the safety of your own home. It is a total body workout, which means it will help you build muscles in your core, back, arms, and legs, plus there is a cardio benefit. Here is how to do it, according to the Times article.

Start in a full plank position, with palms flat on the floor about shoulder-width apart, and balls of feet on the floor about hip-width apart. Bring one of your legs forward so the knee bends into your abdomen. Then, in a smooth motion, straighten the bent leg and place it back on the ground, while simultaneously bringing the other leg forward and bending the knee into your abdomen.

### **Planks**

Planking helps build muscles in the core, arms, shoulders, and legs (and it helps tone your abs). Notably, it helps strengthen your lower back muscles, which can be beneficial for people with lower back pain or who spend much of the day in sedentary positions.

Start by placing your forearms (or palms) and the balls of your feet flat on the ground. Then tighten your abdominals and glutes, while maintaining your body in a straight position, from head to heels. Then, simply hold as long as you can. If planks are too intense to begin with, you can modify the movement by putting your knees on the floor.

### **Build up to a full workout**

One of the tricks to sticking to your workout routine is starting small and building up slowly. Start with an achievable number of reps and sets, and then add more as the weeks go on. And do

not forget to include a couple of sessions of running, swimming, or cycling, to fill out your balanced exercise regime.

*Editor's Note: The Carpe Diem – Seize the Day Blog will be distributed and posted weekly.*  
Always remember – **CARPE DIEM – SEIZE THE DAY!**

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