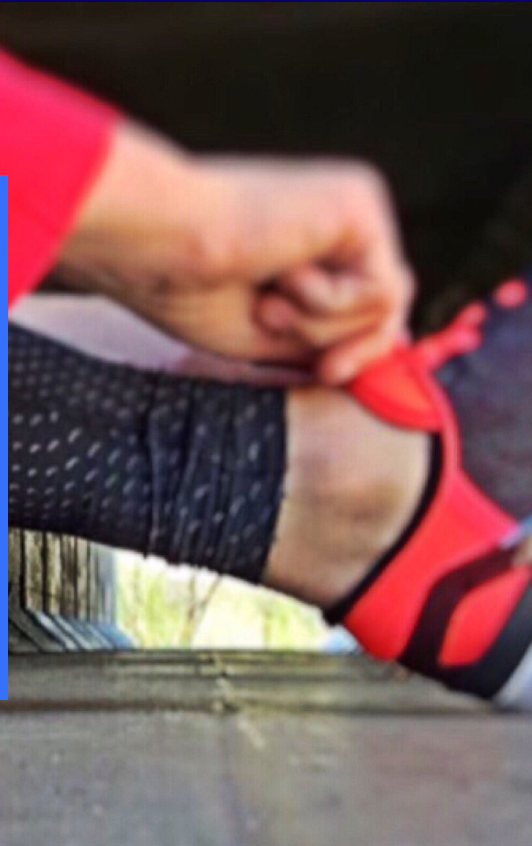


# EXERCISE & STRESS

**DECOMPRESS.  
ENERGIZE.  
REBOOT.**

**YOU'RE 30  
MINUTES AWAY  
FROM A LESS-  
STRESSED YOU**



## What's the best exercise for reducing stress?

There's no one *best* exercise to help reduce stress. To help you get started, think about these questions:

- Do you prefer to exercise alone, with a friend, or in a group?
- Does the gym appeal to you, or would you rather be outside?
- Would it help you to be accountable to someone else?
- Will you get bored if the exercise is too easy or give up if it is too hard?
- Do you prefer variety or a set routine?

## What's the best time of day to exercise?

Figure out what time of day is best and most **practical** for you (if you struggle to wake up, scheduling an early morning run may be setting yourself up to fail!)

**Any time of day** you can fit working out into your schedule is the best time. People who exercise at any time of day report better exercise than those who did not.

**Schedule** your workout – if you wait until you "feel like it," you might be waiting a long time!

## How can exercise help you work through stress?

- Exercise boosts mood by decreasing cortisol (the stress hormone) and increasing endorphins (feel-good chemicals).
- **Breathing** and **repetitive movement**, can contribute to feelings of tranquility.
- Exercise provides an outlet to work out frustration and anxiety. If cortisol is already in your system, work up a healthy sweat to remove stress-induced toxins in your body and feel better faster!
- Exercise can take your mind off your stressors and give you a sense of control, confidence, and groundedness in the present moment.
- Exercise can strengthen your immune system to better fight colds and other minor illnesses that can affect your stress levels in the future.
- Exercise lowers blood pressure.
- Both cardio and slower forms of exercise help to improve self-esteem, relaxation, resilience, sleep quality, and overall mental health.

# EXERCISE & STRESS

## How much exercise do I need to be healthy?

Before making a decision about how much exercise you need and how often you need it, have an idea of your goals. Are you exercising for:

- fitness?
- weight control?
- stress management?
- all of the above?

For general health and well-being, aim for:

- 20 minutes of vigorous exercise at least 3x/week (sweating, breathing heavily) (75 minutes is optimal, according to the CDC)

OR

- Strength training at least 2x/week
- 30 minutes of moderate exercise at least 5x/week (increased heart rate, still able to carry on a conversation) (150 min/week)

If you struggle to fit working out into your schedule, even moderate exercise in 10-minute chunks can lead to health benefits.

**Need more ideas? Check out the CDC's physical activity recommendations online:**

[www.cdc.gov/physicalactivity](http://www.cdc.gov/physicalactivity)



Habif Health and  
Wellness Center

STUDENT AFFAIRS AT WASHINGTON UNIVERSITY

## Campus Resources

Unsure about the best way to start exercising? Sign up for one of the many **free** BearFit classes located in the Summers Rec Center or look into a **free** fitness consultation with a BearFit trainer who will help you find what you're looking for in your exercise, answers questions, discuss nutrition, and set you up for success.

For more information, contact:

Meghann Feely, Assistant Director of Fitness and Wellness at the Summers Recreation Center ([meghannfeely@wustl.edu](mailto:meghannfeely@wustl.edu)).

## Habif Health and Wellness Center

Medical Services: 314-935-6666

Mental Health Services: 314-935-6695

Health Promotion Services: 314-935-7139

## Visiting Us

Habif is on the lower level of Dardick House on the South 40 on Shepley Drive.

The Zenker Wellness Suite is in the Summers Recreation Center (room 303).

[habif.wustl.edu](http://habif.wustl.edu) [rec.wustl.edu](http://rec.wustl.edu)



Recreation

STUDENT AFFAIRS AT WASHINGTON UNIVERSITY