

Jump Start Your Day With

Morning Exercise

By Caroline Sandry

Do you find that you have the best intentions in the world to exercise, but by the time you finish work you have a list of excuses that stretches miles? Too tired, too hungry, too dark outside, too can't be bothered...

Well, spring is on its way, so what better time to spring out of bed and kick start your day with exercise. You won't regret it...

The Benefits

Ok, so I might not have you convinced just yet, after all, who doesn't want a bit of extra duvet time? But, the benefits of morning exercise will soon have you leaping forth bright and early with renewed vigor! Believe me.

Exercising first thing in the morning is a fantastic way to get your metabolism going, and will make you feel bright and alert as you go about your day. The extra breaths you take during exercise will flood your system with oxygen, making you feel more alert and less anxious. The fact that you have started your day well will make you more inclined to make healthy food choices for the rest of the day (instead of feeling low and sluggish and reaching for the coffee and biscuits!) Many people believe that if you exercise before breakfast you will burn more fat as there are fewer carbohydrates readily available after sleeping when the body is fasting. If you exercise at a high intensity, your metabolism will be elevated for the rest of your

day and you will burn more calories. And with an early exercise start you'll get to relax after work, feeling very pleased with yourself because you have already worked out! Are you becoming more convinced?

The logistics – how to get an early start

A great idea is to lay out your exercise kit near the bed the night before so you do not have to engage your brain and figure out what to wear.

If you are somebody who needs to eat before you can even think about moving, then have a quick, light bite such as a crumpet with marmite and tea, or a banana with orange juice or a small bowl of light cereal. Make your food choice small (half your usual portion), light (quick to digest) and carbohydrate to fuel your workout. Whilst you are waiting for your snack to digest, you can prepare your clothes for the day and have your bag packed and ready to go by the door to save valuable time.

The Workouts

- * Go for a run – this is a quick and easy option. There is no travelling time required, no special equipment and it is a great all-round exercise. A fast run or interval session will up your 'EPOC' (the calories you burn post exercise) and significantly improve your fitness and calorie burn. Make sure you warm up well as you will have just got out of bed! Aim for around 45 minutes for your workout, and you can be home, stretched out in the shower within an hour!
- * Cycling is also perfect cardiovascular exercise. Think: would it be possible to cycle to work? If so you can save even more time combining travel and exercise and its kind to the environment too. In order to count as your exercise though it must be challenging enough, so no tootling a mile up the road! If you are a very early riser then a stationery bike is a great choice to avoid dark roads, and you can then benefit from the cumulative effect of exercise; pedal for a quick 20 minutes before work, and a quick 20 minutes after work and it will have as much benefit as doing a single 40 minute session - in fact it may even have more benefit because if you work out hard enough you will benefit from 'EPOC' twice in one day giving you an overall higher calorie burn.
- * Circuits are an awesome way to train your body hard and fast. They challenge your anaerobic (without oxygen) energy system, burn fat whilst improving your fitness levels and give your entire body a workout. Check out whether your local gym offers early morning circuits, or try military fitness sessions in the park. If you have a willing friend or two you could start your own military training session and give each other vocal encouragement! Check out our 'Good Morning Circuit' below.
- * Literally 'Jump' start your day with a rebounder – mini-trampolines don't take up too much space, are inexpensive and pretty quiet to use – perfect for early mornings. The bouncing sensation is also a great wake-up call for the body and is kind to the joints too.
- * If you are not a morning person, and want to ease more gently into the day, then try learning a yoga sun salutation series – it's a fabulous wake-up for the entire body and mind and will set you up nicely for your morning-exercise session, and/or calmly into your day.

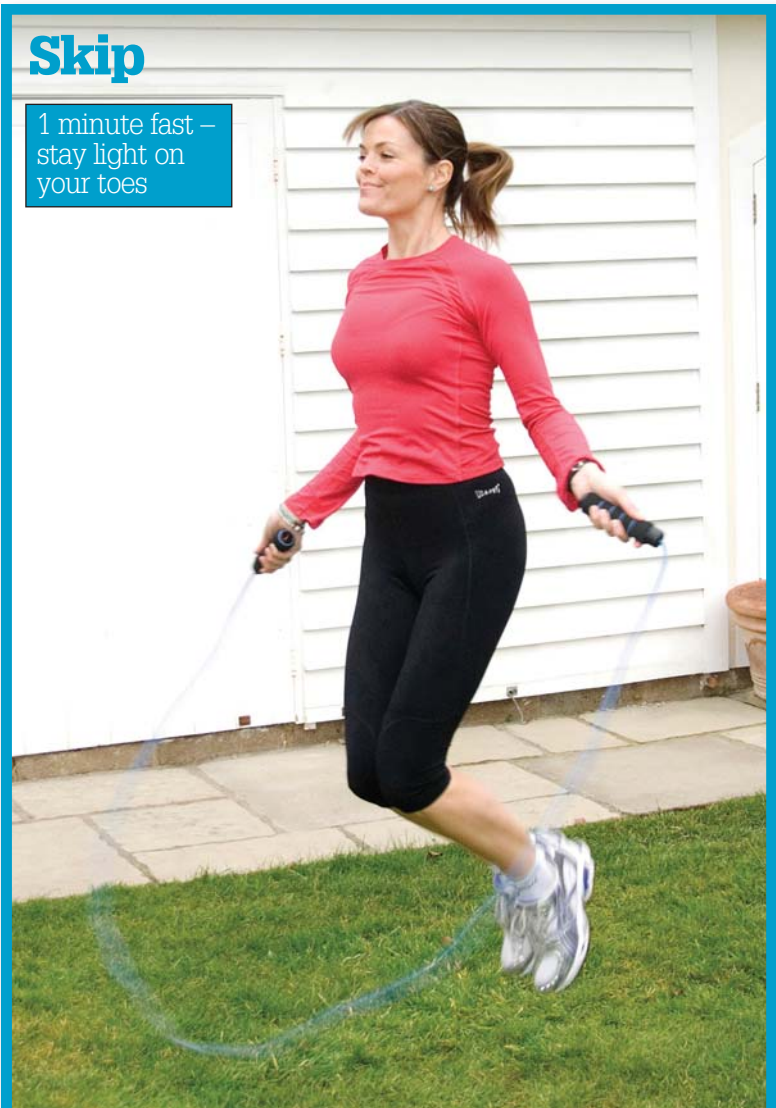
Good Morning Circuit

Warm up

Spend 10 minutes walking or marching on the spot, circling the arms and gently easing the body into exercise. You may also like to have a gentle 'wake-up' stretch at this point.

Skip

1 minute fast – stay light on your toes



Press-ups or half press-ups



As many reps as possible in 1 minute. Keep your back straight and abs drawn in. Use slow controlled movements.



Knee-ups



Lift your knees as high as possible to touch your hands in an exaggerated running style for 1 minute.



Squat thrusts

Alternate knee to chest keeping abs drawn in tight – continuous fast jumping motion for 1 minute.



Star jumps



Jump high and reach arms over-head for 1 minute.

Waist exercise

Criss-cross shoulder towards opposite hip in smooth continuous motion for 1 minute. Keep abs drawn in and control the movement to prevent rocking.



Squat jumps



Power up from a squat to jump in the air, and land back in a squat position (knees over ankles).

Crunch

With legs up in the air, curl your tailbone and your shoulders forward off the floor simultaneously and repeat for 1 minute



Rest for approximately 30 seconds between exercises, and either repeat the circuit as your stamina develops, or extend each exercise to 90 seconds or add a skipping minute after each exercise. **Cool down** and stretch thoroughly after the circuit. I recommend a 10-minute brisk walk if possible to aid this process. **This circuit should not be performed by anyone with 'bad knees or backs'**