Dealing with limited time to work out? Here’s something to help.

You’re headed to the gym for a much needed workout session, but then you suddenly get a call and hear that you have to attend an important meeting. The next day, while on your way to the gym, another event derails your exercise plans. You decide that 20 to 30 minutes in the gym isn’t enough time, so you turn around. It’s important to get your workout in, but your responsibilities always seem to get in the way. What should you do?

A really good way to get the most out of the workout time you have is by working with HIIT, an acronym which stands for High Intensity Interval Training, an efficient way to work out on a busy schedule. Research has shown that you can derive benefits from a 15 to 20 minute workout done three times a week, versus spending hours at the gym on a treadmill. A 2011 study by the American College of Sports Medicine showed that two weeks of HIIT can improve your aerobic capacity as much as six to eight weeks of endurance training.

According to Howard Knutgen, a research associate at Spaulding Rehabilitation Hospital, “Aerobic or cardiovascular training is designed to develop a healthier heart and circulatory system.” HIIT can contribute greatly to good health by giving you a cardiac boost. In a short period of time you are able to enhance your cardiovascular output which would take much longer to achieve with a traditional gym routine.

HIIT involves quick bursts of vigorous exercise, followed by short recovery periods. A HIIT session can be completed in 30 minutes or less. This type of workout keeps your heart rate elevated and really helps to maintain muscle and fat and to increase your metabolism. This can also be accomplished with cardiovascular equipment such as the treadmill, elliptical trainer or stationary bike.

A typical HIIT workout can incorporate 30 seconds, each, of jump rope, push-ups, sit-ups, jumping jacks, and a few other exercises to engage every major muscle group, followed by a short break and more exercises. Even better, this workout can be done without using any machines or weights, as your body is a gym, in itself.

Lastly, always listen to your body. Know when to take breaks (to either lower your heart rate or to hydrate). Anyone can complete a HIIT workout. However, when you first start, go at your own pace. Gradually you will become accustomed to a faster pace and fewer breaks. Your body will adjust and so will your approach to each workout. As you progress with HIIT, time is no longer your enemy.

References:
Waehner, Paige How to Exercise When You Don’t Have Time https://www.verywell.com/how-to-exercise-when-you-dont-have-time-1231132
Clean Slate, Full Plate: Meal Planning in the New Year

A busy work week may mean taking a short cut in the form of fast food or take-out. While quick to prepare, both can be costly in the long run. Preparing meals in advance is a great way to consume quality food, while saving both time and money.

Why is meal prepping important?

1. Saves time:
   - Reduces grocery shopping time by not overbuying or forgetting an item.
   - Reduces time spent cooking by cooking multiple foods at the same time and not cooking every day.
   - Going out for food takes time.

2. Saves money:
   - Meal planning results in lower costs at the grocery store.
   - Easier to stick to a budget.
   - Less food waste and unused/spoiled ingredients.
   - By eating at home, you save money compared to eating out.

3. Helps you reach your goals:

   Research shows that:
   - Meal planning increases intake of fruits and vegetables, improves diet quality, and increases food variety.\(^1\)\(^2\)
   - Meal planning is associated with lower odds of being obese.\(^2\)
   - Meal planning is associated with increased adherence to nutritional recommendations.\(^2\)

How do I plan a meal prepping week?

When will you cook?

- Pick a time to prepare your food; you can start with just one hour!
- Plan to use leftovers as lunches or dinners; double the recipe!
- Use one ingredient in multiple dishes.
- Start with preparing food for those mealtimes which you find the most challenging to eat healthy.

What recipes will you use?

- Pick new recipes to try.
- Choose snacks that can be prepared in bulk ahead of time.
- Use websites/apps/cooking magazines to find new recipes.

How will you store the food?

- Leftovers stay fresh in the fridge for three to four days.
- Cooked food is good in the freezer for up to six months.
- Consider that some foods store better than others, e.g., roasted vegetables, hardboiled eggs, cooked grains.
- Use BPA-free, microwave-safe, dishwasher- and freezer-safe containers.

Preparing Your Meals:

- Combine grain/vegetable/protein source (think ‘MyPlate’).
- Take advantage of seasonings to boost flavor.
- Avoid eating the same thing over and over again.
- If you’re short on time, just wash and chop vegetables.
- Try making healthy versions of your favorite meals.
- Use a crock pot to have dinner ready when you get home from work.
- Cook multiple things at once to save time.

References: