

Here are some good ideas for everybody who complains about not enough time to be physically active! There are more ideas on their website <http://www.squeezeitin.com/>

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Too Busy to Squeeze In a Workout? You Don't Know Hot Squats.

By Vicky Hallett



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Last September, Brigette Polmar and Jenny Hein were doing the coffee and girl talk thing on Hein's porch in Ashburn when the duo had an incredible revelation: They both regularly did squats while styling their hair.

No one had ever told them that tush-strengthening and blow-drying belong together, but for the busy moms looking to make every minute count, the partnership was perfectly natural. "I'd been trying to squeeze it in," explains Polmar, 38, who lives in McLean. Realizing that there were countless other ways

to make exercise part of life's daily chores and that there might be an online business opportunity for such advice, they rushed to see if the domain name Squeezeitin.com was available. It was.

Hein, 36, has a background as a certified fitness instructor, which has come in handy for demonstrating moves, while Polmar's former career in TV means the production values are higher than you'd expect from a couple of self-described "crazy moms from the 'burbs."

The free site is just over a month old, but there are already enough exercises to keep you sweating in any room of the house -- hair-styling "hot squats" in the bathroom, "bag some biceps" curls with groceries in the kitchen, "get a leg up" lifts while lying on the living room rug playing with your kid. Their cardio solution? Running up and down your stairs. If you can manage 10 minutes at a time, three times a day, that's equivalent to setting aside a straight half-hour.

They recognize, of course, that this concept isn't entirely novel. Loads of folks engage in unexpected exercise outside the gym, whether it's dancing around to their favorite song as they get dressed or balancing on one leg while waiting to cross the street.

My version is the Metro platform pace. Instead of standing still until my train arrives, I race the clock to see how many times I can traverse the platform before the lights start blinking. One length of the Farragut West stop takes about 250 steps; that's about an eighth of a mile. With the way the Orange line runs (or doesn't), I can easily add at least an extra half-mile to my commute.

That's nothing compared with the kind of ground Rep. Tim Johnson manages to cover over on Capitol Hill. Politico just dubbed the Illinois Republican "the walking congressman" for his habit of handling absolutely everything on the move: cell phone calls, briefings about bills, staff meetings. "You can use that time to sit, or do what people would be advised to do more: move," he told me. The fitness buff schedules gym visits, too, but his workday strolls are what he calls his "incidental exercise." And it turns out to be not so incidental. He estimates it at two extra hours of movement a day.

But would you believe that Hein and Polmar can pack in even more than that? I spent a recent afternoon with the ladies so we could squeeze it in together, and they launched into exercise ideas immediately after hello.

First up: the five anywhere moves. "I do the butt squeeze in the grocery store all the time," Hein raves. "No one can tell what I'm doing. And by the time I'm done shopping, I can feel it." Same goes for isometric abs (pulling your belly button in and holding), shoulder raises, calf raises and the ultimate stealth strengthener, kegels (those pelvic contractions that ward off incontinence and boost sexual function).

If you're trying to kill a minute near a countertop -- say, while waiting for the microwave to buzz -- Hein suggests gripping the edge and pounding out two sets of 12 elevated push-ups. Or maybe pick up a can of soup in each hand and extend your arms out to the side while engaging your core. No, they're not that heavy, but the move will be effective if you focus on form. "It has to be slow and controlled, because you're not using a lot of weight," says Hein, who notes that it's helpful to hold positions for three seconds (or the time it takes to say, "Squeeze. It. In.").

We put away Hein's dishes while rising onto our toes and we cleaned up her kids' toys by lunging to the ground and tossing them into a trunk. I let Hein handle her own dirty laundry, but she showed off how she squats to retrieve each item from the hamper. When we headed over to her living room sofa, we didn't take a seat; we stuck our butts out as if we were going to and lingered a few inches above the cushion.

"If you feel like it, pulse," suggested Hein, while adding a slight bounce to her squat. She apparently often feels like it: She also recommends pulsing in a lunge position while sweeping the floor with your broom.

It may sound a tad silly, but that's what makes it appealing to kids, too -- or at least Hein's 7-year-old son Conor. He adorably reported to me that he's such a fan of squeezing it in that he's come up with his own moves, including one he does while kneeling at church. And of course, seeing Mommy (or Daddy) exercise throughout the day should help a child recognize how important it is to stay healthy.

The women hope everyone will learn the lesson that muscles are always eager for some attention. "A lot of people think if you don't go to the gym, you fail. But every movement is a success," Polmar says.

And although the site is still in its infancy, Polmar and Hein have plans to pump it up with ideas for squeezing it in on the playground, at the office, in the car and more. It seems they're even coming up with ways for me to add exercise to my reporting. As I grabbed my notebook off a table on my way out of Hein's house, she said, "You know, you could squat while you're doing that."

Comments: misfits@washpost.com.