

# What is NEAT exercise?



NEAT exercise' can have a huge impact on hitting your goals with very little effort, but it's easy to get confused. Contrary to popular belief, it's nothing to do with putting your dumbbells away tidily at the end of a gym workout and being neat. It's much more to do with getting active every day. From walking the dog to having a little stretch at your desk. NEAT exercise refers to a lot of different things.

## WHAT IS NEAT? AND WHAT IS IT AN ABBREVIATION OF?

NEAT stands for Non-Exercise Activity Thermogenesis and while it sounds complicated, it simply refers to the energy used to carry out any daily activity that isn't formal exercise (e.g., running or resistance training) or sleeping.

## WHY IS NEAT IMPORTANT?

NEAT exercise is very important as it can account for a significant portion of your total energy expenditure – the number of calories you burn in a day.

In addition, if you are sedentary and therefore have lower NEAT levels, you're at a higher risk of obesity and other long term health conditions such as heart disease, diabetes, stroke, and some cancers. Being sedentary is directly associated with poorer long-term health regardless of weight. This means even if you are not considered to be overweight if your NEAT is low, you are still at increased risk.

Your NEAT exercise levels probably took a steep downward turn when you spent a year working at home, but now that your offices have probably reopened, it'll be much easier for you to increase them. Small steps (literally) add up to big wins.

## WHAT ARE EXAMPLES OF NEAT?

NEAT activities can include anything from walking the dog, cooking, carrying the shopping home, doing the gardening, playing with your children at the park, washing the car, or even having a wriggle at your desk.

Examples of NEAT include:

- Washing the car.
- Fidgeting / Stretching.
- Walking upstairs.
- Walking the dog.
- Carrying the shopping.
- Gardening.
- Playing with children or pets.
- Using a standing desk.
- Walking to the gym, shops, office instead of taking public or private transport.

## SOME BENEFITS OF PRACTICING NEAT:

- Helps with muscle recovery.
- Can help to relieve stress and improve mental health.
- Improves cardiovascular health.
- Helps control blood sugar levels.
- Reduces the risk of chronic diseases.
- Lowers the level of inflammation in the body.
- An easier alternative if you're coming back from injury.
- It's a low-impact form of movement.
- Requires no skill.
- Free.
- Good for both beginners and those more familiar with exercise.
- Won't interfere with other training or exercise you might be doing.

There are so many benefits to getting more NEAT exercise into your life – not least that it's a totally skill-free way to up your daily movement. Whether you're a newbie to exercise, getting your non-exercise activity in line can be a great first step. Or, if regular gym workouts are more your thing, upping your NEAT can help increase blood flow to your muscles as they repair.

Walking-based activities, in general, are a great low-impact and low-stress form of exercise that almost anyone can do anywhere, regardless of their current levels of fitness. It requires no degree of skill, is very easy to recover from and will not tax your body or add

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extra stress – compared to other formal exercise modalities like HIIT, for example.

Not to mention, if you have healthy weight loss goals in your life right now, increasing your NEAT can help you have a better chance at hitting and maintaining them.

## HOW DOES NEAT CONTRIBUTE TO WEIGHT AND FAT LOSS GOALS?

One of the keys to losing excess weight and body fat is maintaining a consistent calorie deficit. One of the ways to help get this balance right is by increasing the amount you're moving each day, though NEAT exercise.

NEAT exercise is a great way to control and maintain a healthy weight. Increasing your NEAT increases your metabolic rate as you will burn more calories throughout the day. People with higher NEAT levels are often more successful at achieving and maintaining weight loss.

**Aiming to walk an additional 10,000 steps a day can burn up to 500 calories per day, this equates to about 0.5kg per week of fat loss. Think of the progressive progress if we do this every day, every week.**

## HOW MUCH NEAT SHOULD YOU DO?

As with everything, the amount of NEAT you have time for will be dependent on your very own unique lifestyle. We all spin different plates and keeping them up can often feel like the only thing we're able to do. However, looking at your day and pinpointing places you can get some movement in – perhaps the second half of your lunch break when you'd normally go on social media – can be a beneficial way to see how it could work with you.

**We would advise to start slow and build up.**

There is no specific rule to determine how much NEAT you should be doing. It's dependent on the individual and may vary due to different factors such as age, physical health, occupation, and social circumstances. For example, if you have an active job and are on your feet all day NEAT may not be such a priority for you, compared to someone who is working at a desk all day and drives most of the time.

In general, a sedentary person is someone who does less than 5000 steps a day or less than the equivalent

of walking 30 minutes a day, so these can be good targets to work towards to start with.

## WHY GOING TO THE GYM DOESN'T CONTRIBUTE TO YOUR NEAT?

One thing to note, though, is that sitting down at your desk all day still counts as sedentary – even if you're smashing a gym or home workout on your lunch break. In fact, the time you spend exercising each day has a marginal impact on your TDEE (total daily energy expenditure) whereas NEAT can make up to 50% of it.

We recommend tracking your steps to make sure you're getting up and about enough and seeing where you fall on the daily activity scale below:

- Less than 5000 steps – Sedentary
- 5,000 to 9,999 steps – Lightly Active
- 10,000 to 12,500 steps – Active
- 12,500+ – Highly Active

Walking 12,500+ steps a day is a commitment for anyone, even before you throw home and work responsibilities into the mix – not to mention having a social life. So, see where you fall and then look to improve on it.

## HOW CAN I INCREASE MY NEAT LEVEL? 6 EASY WAYS

If your NEAT levels aren't where you want them to be. We're here to help you spot opportunities to add some movement in – even if that's just taking the stairs up to your desk when you venture into the office.

### 1. GO FOR AN EARLY MORNING WALK

Getting out early for a morning walk is a good way to tick off a NEAT goal before your day has even begun. It'll give you a sense of achievement and gratification that will carry through to the rest of your day. If you leave it until the end of the day, after a busy day of work, when the lure of TV is strong, you are more likely to skip it.

Plus, taking a walk in the early morning sunshine also has the additional benefit of helping maintain normal circadian rhythm and sleep patterns.

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HEALTH  
HUB

## 2. GET OUTSIDE AFTER DINNER

For those of you who prefer the evening to the morning, make some time after your last meal to go for a walk. Not only can it help with digestion, but it can be a good way to switch up the regular sofa-chill routine.

## 3. SET A DAILY GOAL

If you want to make any habit stick, setting small, achievable, and regular NEAT goals is a must.

Try setting yourself the challenge of achieving a specific daily step count goal – it can be a great way to maintain your focus and keep you motivated to be more active every day. Why not add an extra layer of accountability or motivation by getting friends and family on board with a shared step challenge?

## 4. GET FRIENDS AND FAMILY INVOLVED

Remember, exercise can be fun and social. Organizing outdoor activities can be a great way to do something active and fun together that gives you a healthy focus and keeps you fit.

You could recruit a walking partner – someone who shares a similar goal or who can keep you accountable when you don't feel like getting out for a walk.

## 5. LAYER ACTIVITIES TO INCREASE PRODUCTIVITY

Don't think of your NEAT time as lost time in the day. Instead, layer activities together to make the best use of your time.

An early morning walk can be a good time to plan for the day ahead, get on top of your schedule, brainstorming ideas or generally getting ready for the workday.

There's strong research to support the benefits of doing this, too. Various studies found that creativity levels were consistently and significantly higher for those walking compared to those sitting. People walking (whether outdoors or on a treadmill) produced twice as many creative responses compared to someone sitting down, one experiment demonstrated.

## 6. MAKE GOOD USE OF THE "DEAD" TIME IN YOUR DAY

We all have those meetings that should have been emails, right? Well, if you're working from home and don't need to be on camera, why not take a walk as you dial in. Chances are you'll inspire others to do the same thing.