

# Get your exercise regimen on track as a resident physician

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Gyms are open again and with all but those 4 or younger eligible for safe and highly effective vaccines, 2022 should bring with it new optimism about the health of the nation. Still, after a pandemic that has lasted nearly two years, working out has often been an afterthought for many Americans. The tight schedules of medical residents and fellows putting in 80-hour workweeks make working out even more difficult.

How can you, as a resident or fellow, try to get your workout on track in 2022? Here are a few tips.

## Understand your availability

The biggest impediment for residents and fellows is simply finding the time, as found in a Nov. 24, 2020, study, “Fitness habits and barriers to exercise during residency training,” published in *Orthopedic Reviews*. Of the residents surveyed who exercised, three-quarters listed time as a barrier to exercise. But for the residents who found the bandwidth to exercise, there were benefits.

“Residents who did regularly exercise were more likely to subjectively report that they ‘lived a healthy lifestyle’ compared to those who did not exercise regularly,” says the study. “Exercise has been reported to have positive health benefits, and given the importance of physical activity to overall health, physicians should not only counsel their patients on fitness habits but also be encouraged to participate in regular exercise themselves.”

Avani Patel, MD, a second-year psychiatry resident at the University of Mississippi Medical Center in Jackson, Mississippi, found that tailoring your workout plan to your hospital’s location can be helpful.

“Putting it as an event on your schedule is the easiest way to find time to exercise,” said Dr. Patel, an AMA member. “In addition, make it make sense for you. For example, get membership to a gym that’s on the way home or on the way to work.”

## Make a plan that fits your life

Finding time is never easy for resident physicians, but one option to save time might be to take the gym factor out the equation.

Working out from home can be accomplished with less equipment than ever. The pandemic also increased the frequency with which people were working out in their living space. A study conducted by GymPass found that the number of people trying online workouts increased 18% during the pandemic. Of those surveyed, most used YouTube to facilitate their workout.

With convenience being a primary barrier to exercise for medical residents, a combination of at-home and in-gym workouts might be appealing to many. Some prefer the old-fashioned outdoors.

“I use online videos on YouTube all the time when it's too dark outside or the weather conditions aren't ideal,” Dr. Patel said. “I love being outdoors, so I try to be active by running, swimming or biking when I can.”

Learn what helps and hurts well-being during residency.