



American Heart Association®

Hard Hats with Heart™



Toolbox Talks

Habit Stacking

Fit by Bit

Habit stacking is about building a healthier lifestyle by incrementally adding positive habits to your daily routine. If the COVID-19 pandemic has thrown you out of step, habit stacking might help you regain your rhythm with modest, stress-busting practices.

The goal of habit stacking is to tie (and eventually, stack) tiny but beneficial new habits onto your old ones every day. For example, when you shut your alarm off in the morning, take a moment to stretch your arms, legs, ankles and feet before springing into action.

Here are some other ideas for stacking habits to get you started:

When you ...	Try this ...
Brush your teeth	Add a few squats as you brush. Then work in other exercises, like calf raises or lunges.
Turn on the morning news	Do 10 toe touches as you listen. Add jumping jacks or arm circles.
Sit down to eat or use a computer	Do a set or two of seated exercises before you begin.
Go to work or the store	Look for a safe parking spot farther from the building, so you can log a few more steps. Or if you take public transit, get off a stop early and walk.
Arrive home	Work in time for active play with your kids or pets. Later you can add an active chore, like dusting or sweeping a room.
Turn on the TV in the evening	March in place for five minutes (or more) before you sit down to watch. You can add in some weight lifting while you're seated.
Talk on the phone or listen to a podcast	Stretch any combination of your quadriceps, hamstrings or calves. Add some wall push-ups.
Set the table and cook dinner	Play some of your favorite music and dance (and sing!) as you cook. Set aside time to focus on dancing to one entire song.
Wash up before bed	Finish by practicing a balance exercise.

Frequently Asked Questions:

Does this only work for physical activity?

No! You can habit stack all sorts of things. Try adding in moments of mindfulness when you brush your teeth, or improve nutrition by washing and cutting your fruit while you wait for your morning coffee to brew.

Discussion Questions:

- What is a habit you have struggled to adopt?