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The Single Parent’s Guide to Fitness

Getting fit seems to be on everyone’s to-do list, but as a single parent, it probably feels like you are always missing two key ingredients – time and energy. Between taking care of your kids, work, household chores, and adult duties in general, it is easy to let your fitness goals fall by the wayside. We can’t necessarily give you the gift of time and energy, but these tips can certainly help you get a little more of it.

**Bring the Gym Home**

It can be hard to find time to go to the gym, and once you wrangle the kids and get everyone out the door, it can feel as though you’ve already run a marathon. If you’re often crunched for time, why not create your [own gym](https://www.shape.com/fitness/workouts/how-build-perfect-home-gym) in the comfort of your home? All you need is an empty space where you can work out. Bring in some basic exercise equipment, such as dumbbells/kettlebells, resistance bands, a jump rope, and a yoga mat. If you’re looking to spruce up your gym a bit, it’ll cost extra to add a ceiling fan, extra outlet, and pull-up bar. A handyman in Los Angeles will typically charge [$163 - $594](https://www.homeadvisor.com/tloc/Los-Angeles-CA/Handyman-for-Multiple-Small-Projects/) for this kind of work.

If you’re not sure where to start, there are plenty of [at-home workouts](https://www.fitnessblender.com/articles/10-beginner-workouts-that-you-can-do-at-home-for-free) online, so you can tailor your routine to your needs, preferences, and time. For many people, putting their workout on their calendar [as an appointment](https://plexusworldwide.com/sunnyshare/health-hacks/8-ways-fit-workout-already-busy-schedule) is also a surefire way to make it happen. If you already have it in your schedule, it’s easier to get moving.

**Include the Kids**

Kids can be needy – as bad as it sounds, some days your name might seem like the only word they know. If you need to get in a workout and the kids need something to do, use this time as an opportunity to engage in some fun family exercise. By exercising together, you can keep the kids occupied, sweat a little, and set a [healthy example](https://www.healthychildren.org/English/healthy-living/fitness/Pages/Encouraging-Your-Child-to-be-Physically-Active.aspx). Working out [as a family](https://www.parents.com/fun/sports/exercise/10-ways-to-exercise-as-a-family/) doesn’t mean sticking to the status quo with jumping jacks and crunches, and let’s be honest, that won’t hold your child’s attention for long. Make working out fun by having a dance party, going for a walk after dinner, turning chores into a race, or simply playing together. Any form of movement that gets your heart pumping is good movement.

**Remove Obstacles**

Some of the hurdles we face in trying to work in time for ourselves can be easily removed with a little creative thinking. If your still nursing and worried about having to stop walking to feed your baby, invest in a few sports nursing bras (available on Amazon [for $20](https://www.amazon.com/Gratlin-Wireless-Racerback-Maternity-Charcoal/dp/B01LXHAXUB/ref%3Dsr_1_3?crid=DVMTTMTFTEPY&keywords=sports+nursing+bra&qid=1556824418&s=gateway&sprefix=sports+nur%2Caps%2C158&sr=8-3)) so you’re always prepared. If your kids after-school program is running long, take the time to walk or run while your child is otherwise occupied. If you’ve got to be home with the kids, [sneak in squats](https://www.ironwildfitness.com/sneak-exercise-in/) when carrying the laundry or lunges when you’re tidying around the house. When you go to the grocery store, park in the far away to get in extra steps. It might sound silly, but it all adds up.

**Gather Support**

Finding time for exercise might mean that you have to turn it into a team effort. Find gyms and fitness centers that [offer childcare](https://www.chimebank.com/2017/05/01/how-to-turn-a-gym-membership-into-affordable-childcare/) so you don’t have to fork over extra cash for a sitter. You can also [find support](https://www.workingmother.com/single-moms-you-need-support-system-heres-how-to-create-it) from the people around you. Perhaps you know a few single parents who would be game for starting a walking group or holding each other accountable each week for a class or two at the gym. Play dates are another option to employ so you can work out while the kids play. If you share custody of your child with a partner, use your days off to exercise, and ask friends or family members to volunteer to watch the kids when it’s your day to have them.

Being a single parent and finding the time and energy for fitness is a workout in itself, but it can be done. It won’t be easy, and some days it might not happen, but it is possible to be a healthy parent. With the tips above, you can create no-excuse opportunities to get fit.