



These boots are made for walkin': Jane discovers there's nothing like a brisk walk between Tube zones, or giving the cleaner a week off, to boost up the week's exercise tally

The H-plan

Or how Hoovering could make you a new person

Is there a way of meeting the Government's guidelines for exercise without spending a fortune on – and half your time in – a health club? Gym-hater **JANE YETTRAM** (pictured) puts on her walking shoes and gives her cleaner a holiday to spend a week in search of the answer

The chief medical officer Sir Liam Donaldson has given it to us straight – this nation is a sack-load of couch potatoes.

And if we want to reduce our risk of obesity, diabetes, heart disease and cancer, then we have to get off our butts: specifically, to spend 30 minutes, five times a week, doing moderate-intensity exercise. It's enough to make me reach for the Pringles in despair.

But Sir Liam says more: 'It is not about spending hours and hours in the gym but finding ways to build activities into our daily lives.' Phew!

That means fitting exercise into my busy schedule of work, child-care and play. If I'm going to find a way of hitting the Government target, I'll need some professional advice.

Walk, walk, walk

Alison Salmond, of YMCA Fitness Industry Training, is an expert who trains the trainers and she's passionate about exercise. 'I used to live a couple of miles from the station,' she says. 'So instead of driving there and parking, I walked. That way I got fitter and saved £6 on parking.'

You don't have to do your 30 minutes all at once but can break it into ten-minute sections. 'On average, people walk six miles less per day than before the car was invented,' says Alison. 'So why not walk part of the way to work instead of catching the bus or train?'

The problem is I'll get sweaty and smelly and there's no shower at work. Alison has the answer. 'Take public transport in and walk home sometimes,' she says. 'Then you

can shower in your own bathroom.'

OK, no excuses. It's time to put Alison's advice into practice. I've walked – fast – to the Tube (Zone 2 instead of Zone 3). Plus, I've charged up the escalators at Piccadilly Circus. Feeling very smug.

Walking one stop five times a week: 50 minutes

Park life

Alison's suggestion for lunch is not to spend it stuffing my face while reading with my feet on the desk. So I ditch the Zoe Heller and walk to the park. I persuade a colleague to come too ('Take a friend, it'll stop the boredom,' says Alison).

After a picnic in the park, plus brisk walks there and back, we're back at our desks with extra energy.

Walking to the park and back, twice a week: 40 minutes

Coffee mate

In fact, Alison's advice is simple but effective. 'Keep as active as possible. If you need to talk to someone in another department, don't call or e-mail – walk there.' So I volunteer for all out-of-office expeditions – using the stairs, not the lift. The coffee shop is only a couple of minutes away, so doesn't count towards my ten-minute chunks – but we still get cappuccinos all round and a green tea for goody-two-shoes me.

Get the Hoover out

The weekend comes and it's time to shop. 'You cover quite a distance,' says Alison, 'especially if you walk



Clean sweep: Jane rolls up her sleeves and gets stuck into the chores

there and back carrying the bags.' At Alison's suggestion I've also given the cleaner a week off (aargh!).

'Energetic housework such as vacuuming, cleaning windows or mowing the lawn is excellent exercise,' says Alison. 'It uses different muscles, increases flexibility and strength, and burns calories.' (Moaning over the ironing board while watching EastEnders, or five minutes spent flicking a duster over the mantelpiece don't count.)

Walking to the shops and back: 30 minutes

Vacuuming: 20 minutes

Washing the car: 20 minutes

And the total is:

Add it all up and I'm amazed to see I've spent 160 minutes – the equivalent of five 30-minute sessions plus an extra ten minutes – doing moderate exercise and I hardly noticed. So, am I any fitter after my virtuous week? Yes. A pound lighter,

more energetic and a little richer, as I've put aside the money saved on fares, petrol and parking. 'Keep it for a treat,' Alison said.

So I slip on my trainers and hoof it to the shops – for some yummy strawberries, not a pain au chocolat.

PS: What's moderate?

Moderate exercise should raise your heart rate to 50 to 60 per cent of your maximum heart rate measured in beats per minute.

To calculate your MHR take your age away from 220. So a 24-year-old's MHR is 196, and moderate exercise will raise their heart rate to between 98 and 117bpm.

■ If you catch the exercise bug, make sure that, like Alison, your trainer is fully qualified and registered with the Register of Exercise Professionals. Tel: 020 8686 6464, www.exerciseregister.org

To contact YMCA Fitness Industry Training. Tel: 020 7343 1850.

BURNING BY NUMBERS

Regular exercise will not only help keep you healthy but can help you lose weight. So how many calories could you burn if you*:

Cycle from Peckham to Piccadilly (30 minutes at 10mph)? **180**

Run up and down five flights of stairs five times a day to get coffees? **110**

Get off the bus three stops early (walking for 15 minutes at 3mph)? **60**

Dance like a lunatic for an hour at the office party? **270**

Jog on the spot while watching half of Footballers' Wives? **240**

Mow the lawn for ten minutes (don't panic – we're talking city-size lawn here)? **55**

Paint the front door for 90 minutes? **270**

*Calorie expenditure based on a 60kg adult.

MHZ ALERT... EXERCISE REGULARLY AND YOU ARE 30 PER CENT LESS LIKELY TO DIE YOUNG...