



# Basic Health Info

## Bit Fills: 50 Ways to Build a Better Body in Little Bits of Time

By Chet Zelasko, PhD

Here's the idea: when you have at least 30 seconds of waiting time—waiting for the microwave to ding, waiting for your computer to reboot, waiting while you're on hold—don't just sit or stand there, do something. Many of these also can be done while you're doing other things—you can tighten your abs or rotate your hips while you chop vegetables or floss your teeth. Every little bit of exercise adds up during the day, and you can become stronger and more flexible more quickly, as well as burning more calories. Bit Fills won't take the place of a regular exercise program, but they'll get your body where you want it to be just that much sooner.

### Here are the ground rules:

- You don't have any orthopedic issues. Your back is sound or as sound as it can be given your age and injuries.
- You're dressed appropriately. If you have on a dress and can't touch your toes because someone could see a little more than you'd like, do something else.
- If it's not explicitly stated, keep repeating the exercise until your bit of time is over.
- If you get even a little bit dizzy, please stop and try something else.



### When you're standing:

1. Walk or pace while you talk on the phone.
2. Waiting for an elevator, stand tall, belly in, and chest out. Take a 4-second breath in and a 4-second breath out.
3. Take the elevator to 1 floor short of your destination and walk up the last flight.
4. I-don't-knows; slowly try to touch your shoulders to your ears.
5. Park farther away from where you're going and walk—provided it's a safe area.
6. Walk in place without lifting your feet completely off the floor. Go up on the ball of your right foot while the left foot stays flat, then reverse. It takes a few times to get the rhythm correct, but you can do it by just lifting your knees without moving the rest of your body.
7. Lock your hips. Rotate your upper body as far as you can to the right, then all the way around to your left.

8. If you have to walk down a hallway, lunge-walk the entire way. Step forward with your right foot a little further than normal and try to get your thigh parallel with the floor. Push off with your left foot and extend it like you did the right and again, try to get your leg parallel to the ground as if you're almost going to kneel on one knee. If you can't make it parallel—I can't—that's fine. Think of it as Groucho walking and if you don't know who Groucho Marx was, look him up. YouTube has a video called "Groucho Marx—Duck Walk" that will show you how to do it—the demonstration is about a minute 45 seconds in.
9. When you know you're alone in a long hallway, spontaneously break into skipping or galloping.
10. Stand with your feet about a shoulder's width apart. While keeping your shoulders stationary, try to make a circle with your pelvis first to the right five times, then to the left five times, like you're drawing circles with your tailbone.
11. Raise up on your toes and back down to the floor—great for strengthening your feet while building your calf muscles.
12. When there's a railing for you to steady yourself, stand sideways to a wall holding the rail with your right hand. Flex your left knee and then raise up on the toes of your right foot and back down. This is a more advanced version of Number 11—calf raises.
13. Indoor snow angels—bring your arms up to the side in a big circle, from your thighs to above your head, while taking a deep breath, and then exhale as your bring them back down.
14. Put on your headphones, play your favorite songs, and groove to the music. You can do this all the time at home—there's no reason to simply stand or walk when you can dance. If you want privacy at work, use a stall in the bathroom, but please don't sing—someone may call Security.
15. If you have a briefcase, computer case, purse, or man-bag, hold the handle with both hands and move the case upward from your knees to chest level with your arms straight. Then let it swing back to your knees, but keep it under control. This is called a front raise.
16. If you have a brief case, etc., hold it with both hands. Bring your hands to your chin while keeping the case close to your body. Return to starting position.
17. With feet a shoulder's width apart, step to the right with your right foot while leaving your left foot in place. This is a side lunge. Move back to starting position. Repeat by side-lunging to the left.
18. Slowly and gracefully, move your arms as though you're a bird in flight—not taking off, but slowly and gracefully. Breathe in when your arms move up and out when your arms move down.
19. In a doorjamb—but not the elevator doors—stand in the doorway, put your hands on the jamb at shoulder level and push outward for the bit.
20. In a doorjamb, put your feet against the door jamb and put your hands on the jamb above your head with arms extended. Once you're secure, move everything but your head. Twist your hips, thrust forward and back. Move every muscle you can without moving your head, hands, or feet.
21. Do the John Travolta "Saturday Night Fever" move—stretch your left arm up to the left as far as you can while stretching your right leg as far right as you can, then reverse. Humming "Staying Alive" is optional.
22. Wall push-ups. Start an arm's length away from the wall, and please stop before your face meets the wall. Keep moving your feet farther away as it gets easier.

23. Bend your knees and then bend over to touch your toes. Try to straighten your legs. If you can already touch your toes with knees locked, try putting your palms on the floor and do the same thing.

24. While standing in place, lift your right knee as high as it will go. Repeat with your left knee.

25. Extend your arms sideways until they're parallel to the floor. Bend your elbows until your forearms are perpendicular to the floor—hands up, buddy! Walk into a door jamb so that your arms are against each jamb. Walk forward gently to stretch the chest for five seconds, then back up to relax the chest muscles.

### **When you're sitting in a chair—and it's a given that you're sitting erect with both feet on the floor:**

26. Breathe in and expand your chest as much as you can; exhale and try to have your belly button touch your spine.

27. Take your left arm, place it over your head so that your hand can touch your right ear, then do a side bend to the right. Repeat 5 times. Reverse hands and bend to the left 5 times.

28. Do the “pump up the volume” movement 10 times with each arm.

29. Every time you finish writing an email, stand up and sit down 5 times.

30. Try to touch your elbows together behind your back. Hold for 3 seconds and return to starting position.

31. Hug yourself as hard as you can, hold it for 3 seconds, and return to starting position. This stretches the muscles used in Number 30.

32. Sit-march in place by bringing your right knee up as high as you can, lower it, then bring the left knee up as high as you can.

33. If your chair swivels, keep your feet flat on the floor, and rotate your chair as far as you can to the right, then to the left.

34. In a swivel chair, lift your legs off the floor, twist your upper body to the right while you twist your lower body to the left. Back and forth to really work those abs.

35. In a chair with arms, grab the arms securely and lift your butt off the seat using your legs to keep yourself steady and to prevent the chair from rolling. Use your legs to help as much as you need to, but the idea is to let your arms do the work.

36. Raise your chair as high as it will go. Extend your right leg. As you return it, extend the left leg—especially satisfying when you're wearing new shoes.

37. Tighten your abs and hold for 5 seconds. Relax.

38. Squeeze your butt muscles together as hard as you can for 5 seconds. Then relax. Warning: if you do this during a staff meeting, you may find people avoid you afterward.

39. Let your arms hang at your side. Curl your arms forward until your hands reach your shoulders. You can do this one arm at a time also; put a stapler or other weighted object in your hand to increase the resistance.

40. Place your right ankle on your left knee. Slightly bend forward and hold for 5 seconds. Back to starting position. Repeat with the other foot. This is a great stretch for sciatica. If you can't place your ankle on your knee, try placing your ankle on your other ankle to begin, and then move your ankle up your leg as you increase your flexibility.
41. Feet flat on the floor, lift your heels and roll through your feet until you're up on your toes. Roll them back down until your heels touch the floor, then holding your heels flat, lift your toes off the floor.
42. Punch forward and back as fast as you can. Best done before meeting with the boss, not during the meeting.
43. Stretch your neck by touching your right ear to your right shoulder. Then stretch your left ear to your left shoulder. Then really surprise yourself by touching your right ear to your left shoulder. Just kidding...
44. Hold onto the chair, contract your abs, extend your legs straight in front of you, and kick your feet up and down like you're swimming—about 6 inches up and down.
45. Extend your arms straight in front of you with your hands limp and hanging. Shake your hands vigorously side to side.
46. Extend 1 leg out and as you hold it parallel to the floor, move it sideways away from the midline of your body and back toward it 10 times. Repeat with the other leg.
47. Put your hands behind your head and interlock your fingers. Flap your arms forward and back.
48. Extend your arms sideways until they're parallel to the floor. Bend your elbows until they are perpendicular to the floor—sort of like making the muscle man pose. Now let your upper arms rotate forward so your hands are pointing down while keeping your arms parallel to the floor. Back to starting position. Up and down.
49. Place your legs over a shoulder width apart, put your head between your legs as far as you comfortably can. Return to starting position.
50. Let your arms hang at your side. Bring your right arm forward, keeping it straight, until it's above your head. As you lower it, raise the left arm above your head—like the zombie walk, but sitting.

So there are 50 ways to fill those bits of time with activity. I'm sure you wouldn't want to do most of them in public, but you know something? Maybe you'll start a trend. People may emulate you—as soon as they get to a place where no one will see them.

**Dr. Chet Zelasko** is dedicated to helping men and women get healthy and fit. As a health and fitness consultant with a PhD in Exercise Physiology and Health Education from Michigan State University, he provides health information based on the most recent research and delivers it in a way that's easy to understand. Whether in person during seminars, in audio recordings, or in the written word, he makes sense out of the health news people hear so they can make better health choices and achieve optimal health. He's conducted research and been published in peer-reviewed journals. He is certified by the American College of Sports Medicine as a Health and Fitness Specialist and has taught in ACSM certification workshops throughout the United States; he also belongs to the American Society of Nutrition. Although Grand Rapids, Michigan, is home, he has presented seminars on health to groups all over North America, Mexico, and the Caribbean and has written extensively on the health benefits of a good diet, regular exercise, and targeted supplementation.

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