

Moving Your ADHD Brain

Exercise boosts the same neurotransmitters as ADHD medication. The trick isn't finding the perfect workout. It's getting started. Here's the shortest version of what works.

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The five-minute rule

Commit to just five minutes. That's it. Once you're moving, you'll usually keep going. And if you stop at five? Still counts. Still a win.

THE EFFECTIVE DOSE

Minutes	20–30
Intensity	50–80% max HR
Frequency	3–5 x week
Best time	Morning for focus

From meta-analysis of 59 studies. Even 10 minutes produces measurable cognitive benefits for up to 24 hours.

WHY IT WORKS

Exercise raises dopamine and norepinephrine (the same systems stimulant medication targets) and quiets the default mode network. Harvard's John Ratey calls it "a little bit of Prozac and a little bit of Ritalin."

ADHD brains with worse baseline inhibition show the biggest gains. This is the cheapest performance tool you have.

YOUR FITNESS MENU

ADHD brains hate repetition. Pick four to six things you'd actually do. Rotate between them. Variety keeps the novelty reward active.

- 1 _____ e.g., walk the dog
- 2 _____ e.g., yoga video
- 3 _____ e.g., bike ride
- 4 _____ e.g., swim
- 5 _____ e.g., dance party
- 6 _____ e.g., bodyweight circuit

MOVEMENT SNACKS

For knowledge workers and parents who can't carve out 30 minutes. Pick one. Do it now. Stack them between tasks.

- 01 10 squats between tasks
- 02 Walk the perimeter of your house
- 03 2 min of stretching at your desk
- 04 Dance to one song
- 05 Push-ups against the wall
- 06 Walk up and down one flight of stairs
- 07 Shake out your arms and legs for 30 seconds
- 08 Walk to the letterbox and back
- 09 1 min of jumping jacks
- 10 Stand and march in place during a call

REDUCE ACTIVATION ENERGY

Every barrier between you and movement is a decision point where ADHD executive function can fail. Eliminate as many as possible.

- Workout clothes next to your bed
- Shoes by the door
- Yoga mat within reach of your desk
- Walk route already chosen

What's the smallest amount of movement that would feel like a win this week?

When do I naturally want to move? (time of day, situation)

What reliably stops me? What's the tiniest change that would remove it?
