

Incidental and functional fitness



Exercise does not necessarily mean sweating over a machine at the gym. Exercise is anything that gets your heart rate up, increases your internal temperature, or works a muscle. Getting a blend of both structured and informal movement can help ensure optimum fitness.

Incidental exercise can include:

- Playing with the kids.
- Splashing around in the sea.
- Washing your car.
- Gardening.
- Walking from your car to your destination.
- Running up the stairs.
- Lifting a heavy container down from a high shelf.
- Pulling a bundle of wet laundry out of the washing machine.
- Balancing on one leg while stretching to reach something.
- Mowing the lawn.

Essentially, all incidental exercise refers to the physical activity that you get by accident during everyday activities in your life.

You only need 150 minutes of moderate aerobic activity, or 75 minutes of vigorous aerobic activity a week, combined with strength training twice a week, to feel the benefits of exercise, according to the World Health Organisation. This is why incidental exercise should be an extremely important part of your day.

What about functional fitness?

For best results, we need to blend incidental with more structured exercise into our everyday lives, particularly when it comes to keeping our bodies strong. The term 'functional fitness' refers to structured exercise that helps you to perform your everyday tasks with greater ease. Think about:

In addition to all the benefits of exercise in general, functional fitness training allows you to perform your daily tasks with greater ease and with less chance of injuring yourself. Functional fitness can then be described as training that enables you to handle real-life situations and activities in real-life positions.

For instance, while bicep curls isolate the bicep, making it bigger and stronger, they do not train the muscle to work in tandem with the tricep muscle to make lifting something heavy easier. So functional training focusses on integrating multiple muscle groups and training them to work together.

This is why it's so important to get as much exercise as you can – structured, functional, and incidental fitness – as they can help keep you fit and your body healthier for longer.