

Move Your Body: 7 Steps for Slugs

There's a lazy slug hiding in all of us, and when we are in full slug mode we usually watch enough TV to learn everything there is to know about the benefits of exercise. So why do we continue risking our health with the same old slug behaviors, watching more TV and consuming more potato chips?

"I don't have enough time," the average slug responds.

Oh yes you do. And here are seven no-sweat steps to get you started.

1) Slug Step: Make exercise a priority. To convince yourself to get off the couch, get a piece of paper and draw a line down the center of the page. Write all the benefits of exercise on one side and all the consequences of slug behavior on the other. Post this list where you will see it and read it daily.

2) Slug Step: Make better ATP. ATP (adenosine triphosphate) is energy. All slugs suffer from the lack of it. Not having enough is what keeps us on the couch. The more we sit around, the less we make.

The less we make, the more tired we feel. The only way to break this vicious cycle is exercise.

Our bodies make ATP in two ways: From glucose using anaerobic metabolism, and from fatty acids using aerobic metabolism. Glucose produces a mere four calories of energy per gram, while fats produce nine. This is good news for the slug. Sprinting until you drop is anaerobic (four calories). A comfortable jog is aerobic (nine calories). The wise slug will use the latter way to make his ATP.

3) Slug Step: Make it fun. No sane slug is going to put down the chips and get off the couch to do something that's not fun. Instead of asking yourself what you need to do, ask yourself what you like to do.

Remember the last time you went dancing, or what it felt like to ride your bike as a kid? What was it like to play hopscotch, jump rope or swim? Make a list of things you used to enjoy that involve moving your body and breathing deeply – something that left you feeling relaxed and rejuvenated afterwards. No, that doesn't involve activities that take place on a couch or bed, you slug!

4) Slug Step: Eat, sleep, drink.

- Eat five small, balanced meals a day (200-400 calories depending on your body weight) to maintain an even energy level throughout the day.
- Include fruits, vegetables and whole grains.
- Don't overeat or skip meals, habits that sap energy.
- Avoid sugar and fatty foods; they sap energy too.
- Restrict caffeine and alcohol.
- Drink eight glasses of water each day.
- Get eight hours of sleep at night.

5) Slug Step: Schedule exercise time. Make sure it's convenient so you won't have ready excuses. If it comes down to choosing between watching "Friends" and exercising, park the exercise bike in front of the TV and do both at the same time.

6) Slug Step: Easy does it. Slugs like this rule. Set reasonable expectations for yourself and don't overdo it. Walking as an aerobic exercise will eventually turn into jogging and jogging will eventually progress to running. Be patient.

7) Slug Step: Use positive self-talk ("You can do this!" or "This is fun!") and rewards to stay motivated. Reward yourself only after you've finished the things that are difficult to do (no "Sex in the City" unless you've exercised!). This rule may be tough for most slugs, but it does work – so give it a try! ■