

Staying fit when your workout takes a holiday.

Experts recommend finding other ways to maintain your fitness routine while on vacation, including taking in the sights on foot and enjoying local food in moderation.

By Dorene Internicola, Reuters **Mon, Aug 08 2011 at 5:03 AM EST**



STAYING FIT ON THE GO: Checking into a hotel with a gym, like the one above in the [Hotel Casa Velas in Puerto Vallarta, Mexico](#), is one way to keep up your exercise routine while in vacation. (Photo: [hotelcasavelas2/Flickr](#))

NEW YORK - There's nothing like a week in paradise to derail a fitness regimen.

Plucked from routine and surrounded by temptation, even the most health-conscious vacationers can find themselves torn between exercise and excess.

A recent poll of over 1,000 American travelers by the travel website **TripAdvisor** showed that 52 percent exercise on their vacations. But 81 percent confess they are more likely to overindulge on food while away.

The good news is that a week away from the treadmill will not turn you into a formless blob. The bad news is if you don't plan to do something, guilt could ruin your good time.

When his exercise-addicted clients express their fear of taking a break to Mark Hendricks, the group fitness manager at an Equinox fitness center in New York, he often tells them their anxiety is more mindset than matter.

"A week's vacation, which is generally what most people take, will make no difference in your cardio vascular fitness," Hendricks said. "I don't think it's necessarily such a bad thing to take a week off and let your body recover from all the workouts."

Even gaining excess pounds is unlikely within a week, he said, "And if you do gain a few, they will come off just as quickly when you get back on your routine," he added.

Hendricks added that for many Type A personalities the greater challenge is to stop themselves from thinking that something awful will happen if they're not able to work out for a few days.

"But for those individuals, the guilt is not worth it, so I tell them: splurge a little here and there but don't fall off the wagon because it will make your vacation miserable. If not now, when you get back and for weeks after," he said.

Hendricks speaks from experience. He used a recent trip to the Caribbean to control his own addiction to the gym.

"I told myself 'not every day.' I decided I couldn't be ruled by that because my mind was going there."

Instead he got his exercise by climbing cliffs, swimming and exploring the island.

"I stayed active every day and I didn't feel I had to be at the gym," he said. "A vacation can be an ideal time to get out of that routine and get a workout out of the vacation."

Jessica Matthews, a spokesperson for the American Council on Exercise, tells her vacation-bound clients to plan their fitness ahead.

"Find out if your hotel has a gym," she said. "If you're a morning exerciser, try to adhere to that routine."

For those less structured, Matthews recommends looking for little ways to be more active on your trip.

"Start at the airport. Wear comfortable sneakers so you can briskly walk from one terminal to the next," she said. "On a long flight, take a lap around the aisle every 30 minutes, or do some isometrics in your seat. "

She also suggests enjoying the local cuisine in moderation.

"Eat well 80 percent of the time, and leave 20 percent for wiggle room."

Many a good intention, she believes, is undone by an all-or-nothing mentality.

"It's human nature to be very strict," she said. "But that kind of thinking doesn't lead to results, maintenance or weight loss."