

KEEPING FIT AND HEALTHY ON TOUR

Twenty steps to a more balanced working routine

When you are on tour as a live musician (or indeed any other kind of performer), there are times when you don't have the chance to go to the gym or keep up with good exercise routines. Here are some of the things you can do when you are on the road and in the air.

Fitness is our 'physical work capacity' – or the amount of work we can actually do. **Health** relates to being free from, and resistant to physical and mental illness.

1. If you drive to work, use the car park furthest from the venue or rehearsal room. If you catch the bus, get off one stop earlier and walk the rest of the way.
2. Use the stairs rather than the lift, and walk up and down escalators rather than standing still.
3. If you're a musician with heavy instruments or equipment, carrying them will be a form of exercise. Make sure you're doing it properly though! Bend at the knees when lifting, and wear straps to distribute the weight properly. Help your drummer or bassist with their gear, so you get the exercise and they get a break!
4. If you need some thinking time, take a walk around the block – it clears your head and gets you some exercise.
5. If you're in an unfamiliar venue, take some time to check out what's there and what's not. There should be drinking water, at the very least. Consider organising a healthier rider (a list of dietary/drink requirements).
6. Opt for fruit and nuts rather than biscuits, crisps or pastries for backstage snacks. Try to drink more water and less coffee or tea and cut down on the sugary drinks.
7. Try to get the management to sort out decent meals, either at the hotel or venue – or use your *per diems* wisely to make sure you're eating a balanced diet. (See BAPAM Factsheet 4 on eating sensibly)
8. Do quick stretching throughout the day – it helps relieve stress and exercises your muscles. (See our Factsheet no 1 on warm-ups.)

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www.bhf.org.uk

9. Persuade a fellow band member to be your activity buddy and arrange to exercise together; neither of you will want to let the other down. Go for runs together whilst on tour, and take your PE kit and swimming cozzies, in case your hotel has a gym or pool.
10. Even if you're not wanting to be super fit, you still need to keep healthy, so you can do various exercises in your hotel room and even a brisk 10-15 minute walk in the fresh air can help.
11. Give yourself reasons to take regular breaks, say if you and/or your band members are just not getting that middle eight or fast refrain.
12. Start wearing a pedometer. You'll be surprised how motivated you can become to increase your daily step total. Aim for 10,000 steps – you'll probably tot those up simply by jumping around on stage!
13. If the venue doesn't provide adequate seating for your gig, consider taking blow-up wedge seats and lumbar supports. There should be enough room on the tour bus. Your back will thank you!
14. Issue a fitness challenge to another band such as the number of steps walked in a week. It's a great way to break down barriers and develop team spirit.
15. Remember that you're away from home and it will be a major disruption to your routine. Try to prepare yourself for this and get someone to check out the facilities. If you're in town for a few days, go on a recce to work out where the laundry is, and where to get groceries and decent food.
16. Make sure someone in the band (usually the manager) has health and safety responsibilities and makes sure that there is an adequately stocked first aid kit on the tour bus.
17. Be sure to keep sufficiently hydrated when in an air-conditioned space – like a plane. This is especially important for singers, as the dehydrating effect of air-conditioning can make singing very difficult. Wrapping your throat up can also help prevent drying of the throat.
18. Whilst we're talking about planes, take care not to force your voice against the noise of the engine, on-board equipment, etc. And don't forget to keep your legs moving periodically, so you don't develop blood clots which are potentially life-threatening. Some performers have been known to do exercises in the aisles! This can help with re-setting your body clock too.
19. Time-zone changes can put considerable stresses on the body and fatigue can be a common problem. Try to get as much rest and rehydration as you can when travelling and re-adjust your body clock as quickly as you can. Flying a couple of days earlier for a gig at a distant venue would help counteract this problem. If you can't fly in sooner and you're just in for the gig and straight out again try to stay on 'home-time' by eating and sleeping at the times you would normally at home, if possible. You and your tour manager should plan

your tour schedule in terms of sleep/body clock issues, in order to make it easier on yourself and the rest of the band. Further information about this can be found on the British Airways website at www.britishairways.com in the 'Health & wellbeing' section.

20. When travelling abroad, make sure you get adequate vaccination and medical cover. Again, the British Airways website provides information, or ask your doctor for more advice.

Finally ...

Whether you like it or not, touring is an inevitable part of being a performing artist. Though it can be exciting to visit new places, meet new people and play in front of new audiences, it does take its toll on your sleep patterns, eating habits and health and fitness routines in general.

To counteract the impact of touring, plan ahead as thoroughly as you can. Make sure the tour manager, or whoever is in charge of your welfare, is informed in advance of any requirements you may have. That way you won't get cut short and you will be best prepared to stay healthy whilst on the road.

Try and stay in charge of your own creature comforts and, above all, play it safe!

SEE ALSO ...

BAPAM Factsheet 1
Don't cramp your style!

BAPAM Factsheet 4
Sensible eating for performers

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