

Rider Fitness: Do it Now!

By Patrice D. Bucciarelli

Your riding gets a boost from performing a regular exercise regimen at least twice per week, but you can also do little things in between to enhance your fitness. Walk instead: Snagging that parking space nearest to the door at the mall or the office really isn't hitting the jackpot when it comes to fitness. Instead, park your car away from the entrance and take a brisk walk to the door. Miss the elevator: Walking up even a single flight of stairs puts equestrians' thighs and calves to work. Walk the stairs briskly and get a mini-aerobic workout, too. Balancing act: Balance is critical for success in equestrian sports. Develop balance every day by standing on one leg, then the other for 10 to 15 seconds whenever you're in line at the grocery store, or whenever else the opportunity presents itself. Lightly grip a countertop, grocery cart or other support if necessary. Don't slouch: Good posture is critical for balance in the saddle, and for getting the long, lean look that catches judges' eyes. But don't just sit up straight in the saddle; do it at your desk and the dinner table, and walk with good posture, too. "When it comes to posture and balance, your muscles have memory," says Emily J. Harrington, certified personal trainer and creator of the Barn Buff equestrian fitness program. "Whatever you do off the horse, your muscles will remember when you're on the horse."

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