



Shannon Miller

on Food, Fitness and Family!

By Laura Hampton

Olympic gold medalist and First Coast health advocate Shannon Miller has a lot of irons in the fire. Between television appearances, hosting a weekly call-in radio show, acting as president of her own fitness corporation, founding a nonprofit organization dedicated to fighting childhood obesity, and being a wife and mother, the 5'1" powerhouse knows what "busy" means.

No two days are alike. Some days are spent in the airport waiting for the next flight to a speaking engagement, some days are spent putting out fires and some days are welcomingly serene. "I just put my son down for his nap. Now I can work for a few hours, and then I'll get him up and have a fairly relaxed evening with my family."

Although her schedule can be hectic, Shannon tries to practice what she preaches. She exercises four to five days a week for 45 minutes. "I try to change it up just a little bit, because I tend to get bored easily." Depending on the day, her workout consists of walking, elliptical training, light weights, Pilates or yoga. "I take my son for a lot of walks, just because it's good time with him, but it's

also a good time to get some exercise, get out of the house and get some fresh air."

Walking can be a great way to get the whole family into the habit of exercising. "It helps when you can be a role model for your children. If walking is just a part of what you do every day, then children get used to that."

Passionate about women's fitness, Shannon encourages what she calls the triad of women's health—fitness, nutrition and health screenings. This can be difficult for women, who are so good at taking care of everyone else. "You have to know it's a selfless act to take care of yourself, not a selfish act. If we're not healthy, we can't be there to take care of anyone else."

Unfortunately there's no magic pill to make us eat right and exercise. As far as nutrition is concerned, Shannon says it requires planning ahead. "When you grill out on the weekends, grill extra chicken. You can use that in 100 different ways."

Vegetables can be chopped ahead of time, so cooking dinner isn't an hour-long ordeal when you come home from work each night. Kid's lunches can be packed ahead of time, as well as healthy snacks for when you're out and about.

It's unrealistic to think busy parents will never use a drive-thru. "It's not all bad. There are healthy options at most fast food places." The key is to do some research ahead of time, so you know what the options are, before you're stuck in that situation.

While it's true that eating right requires forethought, fitness is something you just have to start. "It's difficult, but once you've got that first two weeks under your belt, it starts to get easier, and then all of a sudden it's a way of life."

Any number of fitness programs will work. Shannon recommends including aerobic and strength-training exercise in your regular routine, and then throwing in stretching exercises to create a well-rounded workout.

As a business woman and a mother, Shannon knows it's challenging to fit everything into a day. "Whether you go to a nine-to-five job or you're a work-at-home mom, every mother's in business." The most important thing is to take the time for your health along with the health of your family. "Make the most of the time you have with your family, but don't feel bad about needing to take a break every now and then."

Shannon's Get Fit Tips

Mixing different activities is optimal for your health and will keep you motivated to exercise regularly. Try some of these activities to help you get started:

Aerobic—These activities will get your heart rate up and your blood pumping; they will move the large muscles in your legs, arms and hips over and over again. Some good examples include:

- Walking
- Jogging
- Biking
- Swimming
- Tennis

Strength-training—These activities will improve the strength and endurance of your muscles. Examples that involve equipment include:

- Weight machines
- Free weights
- Resistance bands

Guidelines for combining aerobic and strength-training exercises each week:

- 2.5 hours of moderate intensity aerobic exercise (i.e. you should notice an increase in heart rate but still be able to talk comfortably)
- OR 1 hour and 15 minutes of vigorous aerobic exercise (i.e. your heart rate increases a lot, and it is difficult to carry on a conversation)
- OR a combination of moderate and vigorous aerobic exercise AND muscle strengthening activities two or more days a week

Source: shannonmillerlifestyle.com

Quick Questions

Where's your favorite spot on the First Coast?

The Jacksonville Zoo and Gardens. I love the animals and getting outside to walk and enjoy the wonderful Florida weather. It's easy to go for a couple of hours or the whole day.

What book are you currently reading?

Right now, I'm reading a lot of Curious George and Stuart Little—whatever Rocco likes.

If you could go back in time, what would you say to the 15-year-old Shannon Miller of Olympic fame?

Continue to trust in God to direct your path and don't get too antsy about it. Things will come, and they will come in the right time and in the right way. Don't try to push forward too hard.

