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How a Busy DC Doctor Fits in Squash and Yoga While Raising a Family and Running a Private Practice

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All photos courtesy of Dr. Robynne Chutkan.

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*Welcome to **Busy Bodies**, where we ask busy Washingtonians how they balance health and fitness while working crazy hours, raising a family, and meeting the demands of the daily hustle. Know someone who's killing the fitness game while getting it done (maybe it's you)? Email kolsen@washingtonian.com.*

Dr. Robynne Chutkan is one busy lady. The gastroenterologist sees patients at the [Digestive Center for Wellness](#), which she founded in 2004, is on the faculty at Georgetown University, has written three best-selling books, and raises a teenage daughter with her husband. The self-proclaimed “squash geek,” 52, is also a regular at [Squash on Fire](#) in the West End, having grown up in Jamaica with active parents who played the sport (and still do). Chutkan manages to hit the court a few times a week, along with squeezing in yoga and the occasional trail run near her home in Rock Creek Park. Here's how she fits it all in.

I joke that my actual schedule is a well-guarded secret. I am constantly trying to make it to yoga, squash, do a trail run. I feel like these things are really crucial so I don't end up on the other side of the doctor-patient equation.

I start at the hospital at Georgetown at 7:30 AM, so my husband takes my daughter to school half the time, and I take her half the time. I'll do procedures—colonoscopies or upper endoscopies—between 7:45 AM and 1:00 PM. Then I'll head to my office, which is in the Chevy Chase Building. I'll see new and returning patients, and finish at 6 or 6:30 PM. I might be in the office 'til 7 PM. I usually go to bed late, often 11 or 12 PM, unfortunately.

As a physician dealing with gut health, I'm constantly telling patients, I want to give you the tools to understand what your gut is telling you. So often when we get feedback from our body, we don't always listen. Your gut is constantly trying to talk to you.

I grew up with that culture of exercise being something that's vital, like oxygen or food. But also joyful, not like getting on an elliptical in a basement and hashing it out.

I love being on foot in the city. I'll run to yoga. The thing about DC is, there's plenty of places to go without ending up on the Beltway.

The exercise needs to be scheduled if you're busy, otherwise you don't get it in. I play [squash] on Wednesdays and Fridays, and then once on the weekend. I also do other things. At my age, over 50, it's important to cross-train. I try to punctuate squash with yoga twice during the week and once on the weekend.

The other part of being a busy body is leisure. Some days it's too scheduled. Some days I see how I feel. Maybe I don't have a partner for squash, maybe I'll just go for a walk in Rock Creek Park. Or do nothing.

I love the squash community. Growing up in Jamaica and the Bahamas, living in France and Spain, a lot of the people I play with also have an international background. They travel a lot. Squash is how we socialize. Rather than happy hour, it's "I'll meet you for a game of squash, and *then* maybe there'll be happy hour." It's very much our version of the country club.

DC has become such a hub for fitness. If I walk around that little corner of West End, I can go to a SoulCycle class, walk across the street and do squash, and walk a half-mile and be at a yoga studio. I think, *Only in DC*.



This interview has been edited and condensed.

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Kim Olsen joined Washingtonian in 2016 after moving to DC from Pittsburgh, where she earned an MFA in nonfiction writing at the University of Pittsburgh. She lives in Alexandria.



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