

Get Outdoors

Outdoor Workouts

This time of year, as the days grow longer, you might wish for an outdoor exercise program other than jogging on the same old path or swimming 20 laps at the community pool. Since boredom is a harbinger of doom for any exercise program, it's important to keep things interesting. In fact, for most people, engaging in their favorite sport or activity is their impetus to stay in shape, rather than the other way around.

The Ingredients for Good Exercise

When it come to effective exercise, "the bottom line is whether you'll do it or not," says Richard Cotton, fitness expert. "Many people wouldn't exercise at all if they couldn't get something else out of it. They have to be doing something they enjoy."

With that in mind, he cited gardening as an excellent choice, providing the three necessary components of a good workout. It's aerobic thanks to all the raking, shoveling, and hoeing. It strengthens thanks to lifting, chopping, digging, and the various movements increase flexibility.

Take it Outside

Cotton says the health benefits of being outdoors are numerous, with a spiritual component being one of them.

"Walking 45 minutes on a treadmill in the basement of your office building, surrounded by your co-workers, doesn't compare to the benefits of 45 minutes spent hiking in the mountains. The fresh air, sunlight, and restorative properties of nature, all combine to heighten the benefits of your workout," he says.



Exercise to Suit Yourself

Naturally, where you live affects what you do. For example, Atlantic and Pacific-coasters can surf. Surfing is great for the body, enhances balance and agility, and is highly aerobic. Mountain dwellers can hike, climb and go mountain biking. In any region, if you live near water you can sign up for crew.

If you're looking for something a little tamer, try one of these for at least 30 minutes (to receive the maximum benefits): inline skating, kite flying, canoeing or jumping rope (see [Just Skip It.](#))

Opportunities Abound

Housework goes outside with the following calorie-burners: raking and bagging leaves, mowing the lawn, building fences, refinishing furniture, washing the car (surprise your neighbor and do his too), staining and sanding your porch floor, hauling furniture for a yard sale, laying a brick path, building a pond, planting a tree, or digging up tree stumps.

Remember—exercise happens where you least expect it, especially when you're outside.

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