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- » Body Fat Calculator
- » Body Mass Calculator
- » Caloric Needs Calculator
- » Calories Burned Calculator

### INDEX OF RESOURCES

- » Aerobic Exercise
- » Bicycling
- » Fat Burning
- » Fitness
- » Flexibility
- » Health
- » Heart Rate Training
- » Kid's Fitness
- » Motivation

## Outdoor Fitness Workouts Fighting To Get Fit? Take It Outdoors

From eDiets - The premier online diet, fitness, and healthy living resource

With all the high-tech advances in treadmills, climbing and biking machines, it's easy to forget that the real thing lies right outside your front door!

Summer weather is upon us, so there's no good reason to confine your workouts to the gym. And longer days mean outdoor activities can be extended into the evenings.

Why step out for your summer workouts? For starters, outdoor training puts you in an ever-changing environment that challenges your brain as much as your muscles. Having to adjust swiftly to different terrains, inclines and obstacles improves your mind-body connection and sharpens physical skills such as balance, agility and coordination. This means more muscles are working to do a similar indoor workout and you will actually be burning more calories.

The biggest payoff is the way you'll feel. The outdoors can help invigorate your spirit and revitalize your emotional power. So, tune in to nature and try some of these alternative workouts:

#### 1. Exchange Circuit Training For Boot Camp

Any neighborhood can provide an area for outdoor fitness where the landscape creates a natural obstacle course for your own boot camp routine. Parks, playgrounds, hills, hiking trails, tracks, stadium stairs and beaches are just a few of the options from which you can choose. Your own body weight provides the resistance for a tough upper body workout and picnic tables, park benches or fallen trees are ideal for step-ups, dips, and push-ups. Climbing up the steps at your local sports stadium is also a great high-intensity cardiovascular workout. Make the most out of the steps by using them for exercises such as lunges.

#### Tips to get started:

- Look before you leap, so you're prepared for any terrain changes.
- Be sure the props you use for weight bearing exercises are sturdy and can handle your body weight.
- Protect yourself from the elements with a hat, glasses and sunscreen.

#### 2. Trade The Treadmill For The Trail

If the treadmill is your favorite cardio machine, you're not alone. According to research published in the *Journal of the American Medical Association*, it's the most commonly used piece of equipment -- one reason may be that it burns more calories than any other.

However, you can get the same benefits and more from walking or running outside. Going "off road" adds the elements of balance, agility, and coordination to your session. The uneven ground will strengthen your joints as well as sharpen your foot-eye coordination. Softer ground means you'll require more energy to lift your foot for the next stride and the less rigid surface will be easier on your joints. You'll be working more muscles because your body is constantly stabilizing itself on the uneven terrain and your core balance and stabilization muscles will work harder. Overall, you will be burning more calories than your treadmill session. Try the websites [www.trailrunner.com](http://www.trailrunner.com) and [www.walkingchannel.com](http://www.walkingchannel.com) for more information on local trails and groups.

#### Tips to get started:

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- When it comes to power walking, lengthen your stride so it is larger than your walking stride (but not uncomfortable). Swing your arms for a good upper body workout.
- Don't take along hand or ankle weight; these increase the risk of straining joints and muscles.
- Wear shoes that fit well and are designed for outdoor running.

#### 3. Swap The Stepper For Skates

Inline skating is the perfect alternative to stair climbers because it works the same muscles and more, targeting the outer thigh and ankles as well as hips, shins and butt. Inline skaters burn more calories, since they have to deal with different terrains, inclines and turns, and the muscles work for a longer period of time during an inline skating stride. They also tend to work out for longer periods of time, thanks in part to changing scenery!

The upper body muscles, arms and shoulders also have a more challenging workout, since they can be swung vigorously while skating. Although it is a more stop-start activity (you have to respond to dogs, children, etc.), this helps to improve muscle-eye coordination and balance, which can improve your core stability as well. Log on to <http://www.iisa.org/events/clubs.htm> (International Inline Skating Association) to find a club and activities near you.

#### Tips to get started:

- Try renting a pair of skates before you buy.
- Have a good helmet as well as wrist, knee and elbow protection.
- Skate in areas that are compatible with your ability.
- Watch out for sewer grates, potholes, dogs and children.

#### 4. Switch Cycles

Both stationary and mountain biking are great forms of low-impact exercise that place less stress on your joints. The lower body muscle-building benefits of mountain biking are also comparable to those gained on an exercise bike. However, as a calorie-burning workout, mountain biking burns more calories because it challenges the upper body, especially the shoulders, arms and upper back, as you pull on the handle bars to get up any hill. In addition, the abdominal muscles get a solid workout since they're needed for core stabilization to keep you balanced. It's also a great choice to have the whole family included.

#### Tips to get started:

- Wear a helmet and gloves.
- Avoid steep, rocky inclines.
- Develop a feel for braking and changing gears.
- When going downhill, remember to shift your weight forward.

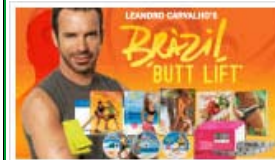
#### 5. Join The Team

Outdoor team sports are a fun way to try a new workout routine while maintaining the social atmosphere you get from classes. Games, such as volleyball and softball, involve catching and throwing movements in all directions, angles and speeds, as well as hand-eye-ball coordination. Any movement your body isn't used to will work the muscles in a different way and allow for greater muscle development, calorie expenditure and overall enjoyment, as you are playing a sport as well as getting a good workout. Even if you miss or drop a ball you can still burn calories since you'll have to retrieve and pick up the ball!

#### Tips to get started:

- Beware the dangers of contact sports.
- Hang in there -- the more you play, the easier catching and throwing will become.

[back to top](#)



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