

Spring Is the Perfect Time to Take Your Workout Outdoors

When the weather thaws, the plants bloom and the days get longer, it's spring—and the best time of the year to take your fitness regimen outside. Listed below are some of the perks of moving your physical activity outdoors.

You work harder

When people exercise outside, they tend to spend more time doing it. Studies have found that older people who were active outdoors did at least 30 minutes more moderate-to-vigorous physical activity per week than those who only did it inside. It also made them feel healthier. Nothing makes you feel more childlike than being outdoors. You're modulating stress hormones, increasing endorphins and increasing the secretion of serotonin, so your mood brightens.



Being in nature lowers blood pressure

Spending time outside is also good for the heart. A recent study estimated that nearly 10% of people with high blood pressure could get their levels under control if they spent at least 30 minutes in a park each week, partly because of the heart-related benefits of getting fresh air and lowering stress.

It spurs cancer-fighting cells

Some research suggests that when people are in nature, they inhale aromatic compounds from plants called phytoncides. These can increase their number of natural killer cells, a type of white blood cell that supports the immune system and is linked with a lower risk of cancer. These cells are also believed to be important in fighting infections and inflammation, a common marker of disease.

It can feel more fun

When people exercise outside, they feel better and enjoy the exercise more. Enjoyment is an important pathway to the mental health impacts of physical activity. Exercising outside is also a great alternative for those who don't want to go to the gym. A review of research found that people who exercised outside reported feeling more revitalized, engaged and energized than those who did it indoors. The researchers also found that people who exercised outside felt less tension, anger and depression.



Your mental health may improve

Nature has a way of making people feel calm, and exercising outside can strengthen that effect. Nature becomes a major distraction from all the stresses of life.

You save money

Exercising outdoors is not only convenient, but it's less expensive than a gym membership. It also cuts costs for the community. "Green exercises"—those done outside, including dog walking, running, horseback riding and mountain biking—estimated that the health benefits of doing physical activity in nature can save around \$2.7 billion a year. All you need is the right pair of shoes, and you can exercise on your own time.

