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Summer Safety: 8 Outdoor Fitness Training Tips To Help You Keep Cool

Use these outdoor fitness training tips to stay cool on hot summer days.

BY [LIZETTE BORRELI](#) | JUN 18, 2013 01:18 PM EDT

The start of the hot summer weather invites exercise fanatics to take their fitness training to the great outdoors. The [American Fitness Professionals & Associates](#) (AFPA) says that outdoor exercise is essential in an individual's exercise routine because it can help improve fitness through a reconnection with nature, body, and mind. Outdoor activities like trekking, mountain biking, or even canoeing can lower the risk of poor mental health, says a [study](#) conducted at Glasgow University in Scotland.



- A total of 2,000 physically active people were polled in the Scottish Health Survey (SHeS) as part of the study, in order to examine the effect of physical activity in a natural environment on mental health. The results of the study showed that outdoor fitness training had a 50 percent more positive effect on a person's mental health compared to going to

the gym. Mild depression, insomnia, high stress, or lack of coping were the mental health issues that were aided by outdoor fitness in the study. **With the numerous health benefits of outdoor exercising, it's hard to resist the physical activity in the summer sun. Certified nutritionist, personal trainer, and exercise physiologist Franci Cohen told Medical Daily, "The excitement and happiness that come along with beautiful weather, can often drive us to push real hard real fast."**

- "In an uncontrolled environment with high heat and humidity, this can be a deadly combination," she warned. "The shift from working out in the gym versus the outdoors must be gradual during the summer months."
- Discovery Fit & Health says the average person can take anywhere from one to two weeks to adapt to warmer, more humid temperatures. The human body is warmer than the environment but when the body experiences a

change, the muscles in the body start to sweat and allow the body to cool itself. However, when the body is profusely sweating and you feel dehydrated, you are losing fluid as the body loses its heat balance, says the State of California Department of Industrial Relations.

- To ensure you stay cool and fit during the summer months, follow these outdoor fitness training safety tips to avoid heat-related injuries.
- **Monitor Your Intake Of Medication And Supplements**
- If you are taking medications or supplements, it is important to review these pills with your doctor or pharmacist. If you are taking a diuretic — a substance that promotes the production of urine or "water pill" to burn fat — you can experience dehydration. The excretion of water from the body with a diuretic can put you at risk for a heavy loss of water and fluids while you exercise outdoors. In a study published in the *Medicine & Science in Sports & Exercise (MSSE)* journal, the influence of a diuretic-induced dehydration on competitive running performance was examined among eight men who competed in randomized races of 1,500, 5,000, and 10,000 meters. While the results of the study showed that diuretic-induced dehydration was not harmful to sprint and power performance, mild dehydration impaired performance during aerobic activity.
- **Load Up On Good Carbs The Night Before A Workout**
- If you know in advance when your next workout is, increase your "good carb" intake the night before. In a study published in the *International Journal of Sport Nutrition and Exercise Metabolism*, researchers from the University of Minnesota examined the effects of dietary factors on endurance-running performance for three days before, the morning of, and during a 26.2-mile marathon in 46 students. Researchers found that both men and women who had eaten the most carbs on the day before the race finished more quickly compared to their counterparts who ate less carbs that day. Complex carbs take longer than any other type of food to break down; as a result, the body and digestive system break down these foods, while they continue to provide energy for the body.
- **Wear A Sunscreen**
- Apply a sunscreen 30 minutes before you step outside to do your exercise. The Food And Drug Administration (FDA) recommends to limit sun exposure between 10 a.m. and 2 p.m. when the sun's rays are the strongest. A sunscreen that is water-resistant for 80 minutes could be effective if your physical activity will require a tremendous amount of sweating. Wearing a sunscreen can reduce your risk of sunburn, helping body's ability to cool itself.
- **Dress Accordingly**
- Wear light-colored and lightweight clothing that is made from moisture-wicking fabric; this keeps moisture away from the skin and dries quickly,

said Cohen to Medical Daily. Black clothing like shiny metallic leggings will attract heat and can even raise the body temperature, assures Cohen. Despite popular belief, cotton t-shirts and shorts should be avoided because they have a tendency to get sweaty, stay wet, and make you feel hotter.

- Know Your Temperature
- Prior to going outdoors to begin your fitness regimen, pay attention to the weather forecast and heat alerts. Take extra precaution and check how the weather is going to be when you plan to do your outdoor activity. Exercising in the morning or evening is advised because that is when outside temperature is expected to be coolest, says the National Aeronautics and Space Administration. Seeking shade or participating in aquatic exercises is a safe alternative to keeping cool while exercising outdoors.
- Acclimate To Hot Weather
- The average person can take one to two weeks to acclimate to warmer, more humid weather, says Discovery Fit and Health. To ease into your outdoor fitness training, start with light workouts either at the beginning or toward the end of the day. As your body adapts to the new weather changes, gradually increase the duration and intensity of your exercise routine. Heat can easily bring exhaustion among those working out, so it is important to know how much fitness your body can handle under these conditions. If you experience tiredness or a headache or feel dizzy, drink water and reduce your workout. Remember, exercising under hot weather one day and mild weather the next can make you prone to suffering heat-related problems, says the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC).
- Drink Plenty of Fluids
- Outdoor fitness training during the summer months will require you to keep your body extra hydrated. Dehydration is a risk factor for heat illness, says Mayo Clinic. Even if you are not thirsty, drink plenty of water, carbs, and electrolytes, as well as sports drinks to keep your body healthy and hydrated. For extra precaution, drink a glass of water before going outside to workout; this will ensure your body is hydrated during the first 45 minutes of your physical activity.
- Avoid Air Pollution
- The integration of air pollution and outdoor exercise can be detrimental for your health. For those who have asthma, diabetes, heart or lung conditions, or respiratory disease, it is essential to take extra precautions outdoors. Mayo Clinic's physical medicine and rehabilitation specialist Edward R. Laskowski says, "...with the combination of air pollution and exercise, the potential health problems are increased." The reason for this is when you engage in aerobic activity, you inhale more air and therefore breathe it more deeply into the lungs. Furthermore, urban environments and smoking areas

are known to have higher pollution levels so it is best to avoid them altogether while you exercise outdoors.

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