

Step up to Spring

Time to get your Spring game on! Days are lengthening, flowers are beginning to bloom and we can all look forward to spending more time in nature and the great outdoors.

If you've had a sedentary winter, you may need to ease into a more active routine. Pro athletes step up their game with a training regime that starts about 6-weeks before the season. To maximize seasonal outdoor fun, start now. Pull your sports gear out of the garage, tune up that bike and get moving. Here are some ideas for healthy Spring activities.

Recharge your fitness batteries. The American Heart Association recommends a minimum 150 minutes per week of moderate exercise for adults, or half that for vigorous activities. Adding muscle-strengthening activities on 2 or more days a week boosts the benefits. Some ideas for moderate impact activities that will get you outdoors include gardening, brisk walking, tennis doubles, canoeing, easy biking, softball and mowing the lawn. High impact activities include hiking, vigorous biking, swimming laps, jogging, running, wheelchair sprinting, soccer, volleyball and basketball.

Get plenty of light. Research shows that exposure to light early in the day can help regulate our internal body clocks. Some scientists say that 20 to 30 minutes of morning light can benefit overall health, weight and mood. Try outdoor morning yoga or early morning walks to jump-start your day.

Add more fresh foods to your diet. In the winter, we often increase our intake of carbohydrate-heavy foods, but Spring is a time to lighten up. Cut down on heavy and processed foods and replace them with more fresh fruits and veggies, especially locally grown produce.



Watch for spring events. National Park Week runs from April 21 through 29, and all parks have free admission on April 21, the kickoff day. May is National Physical Fitness and Sports Month. It's also National Bike month. Participate in Bike to Work Day on May 19, or if you are more ambitious, try Bike to Work Week from May 14-18. June is National Great Outdoors Month. You can learn more about any of these activities with a simple Google search.

Double the benefits. Run, walk or bike for a cause. Whatever charity or cause is closest to your heart, there is probably a participatory fundraiser this Spring or Summer that could use your help. Participating will offer benefits for your physical and mental health!

Stay safe. There are precautions in every season to ensure your outdoor health and safety. In warmer weather, limit sun exposure and apply sunscreen. Hydrate frequently, particularly as days get warmer. Check air quality before vigorous exercise. Use repellants to avoid ticks and other biting creatures. Wear reflective clothing when jogging or biking.

For more wellness ideas, log in to www.EducatorsEAP.com. You'll find a wide array of fitness and nutrition resources, tools and tips.