

6 Ways to Fight the Summer Exercise Slump

By LISA REED

During the hot summer months it's easy to let yourself spend your days lounging on the couch enjoying the air-conditioning -- but don't do it! Fight the summer slump and go outside and get moving. Here are six tips to help you stay fit and fabulous this summer:

1. Rise and Shine

Get some fresh air first thing in the morning to keep you energized all day long. Take a quick walk and do your stretches outside as soon as you wake up; try it at sunrise for a beautiful way to start your day. You'll be surprised by how cheery and upbeat you'll feel.



2. Keep Cool and Be Sun-Savvy

Learn how to stay cool and hydrated on hot, humid days. The summer heat makes you more susceptible to dehydration, so follow these ground rules:

- It only takes 15 minutes for a heat stroke to occur. When the humidity is high, sweat won't evaporate quickly and will prevent the body from releasing heat. Signs of heat stroke include: fatigue, illness, inattention, confusion, dizziness, dryness, headache, nausea and red, hot, dry skin that exceeds 103 degrees Fahrenheit.

- Don't exercise outside when the heat index reaches 90 degrees Fahrenheit or higher. Exposure to high heat and humidity can result in heat cramps or exhaustion. The best time to exercise is early in the morning or late in the afternoon.

- Drink more water than you think you need. You should be drinking water regularly, not just when you feel thirsty. Don't forget to keep drinking water even while you're indoors. This will help you stay hydrated when you do go out in the heat.

- Don't drink liquids that contain alcohol or large amounts of sugar. These can cause you to lose more fluid.

- Be prepared to beat the heat. Bring a small cooler wherever you go, with water, sport drinks and snacks. Add an ice pack to help you cool off after a workout.

- Understand your risk. Children ages 0 to 4 should go inside to air-conditioning every hour. Their body temperature increases three to five times faster than adults. People over the age of 65 should be very cautious not to overexert themselves, especially those with a chronic health condition like diabetes or high blood pressure. These diseases make you more susceptible to overheating.

- Wear loose, light-colored clothing and a wide-brimmed hat.

- Use sunscreen, and reapply as you sweat.

3. Eat Lighter Meals

Light foods pair well with warmer weather, so take a fresh approach to mealtime. Visit your local farmers market to pick up fresh, seasonal fruits and vegetables, and get creative in the kitchen. Incorporate water-based fruits like watermelon, cantaloupe and pineapple into meals. For dessert, make your own popsicles with greens and fruits.

This applies to vacation and travel as well: If you're heading out for the day, pack a cooler with ice, bottled water, snap peas, nuts, apples (or any other fruit), sandwiches on whole-grain breads, pita chips, hummus and Greek yogurt.

4. Try a Water Workout

Working out in a pool will sculpt your legs, core, shoulders and arms as well as improve your cardiovascular health and flexibility. Water workouts are also less stressful for your joints because the water reduces your weight and makes you buoyant. This is why many athletes perform water workouts as they recover from an injury.

But remember, water increases UVA rays by 25 percent, so apply sunscreen often and don't forget to drink water.

5. Pick a New Outdoor Activity

So many outdoor activities are natural calorie-burners -- go ride a bike, take your dog for a run or join a team sport. Hit the beach and try some body-weight exercises on your towel or take a jog in the sand.

6. Don't Lose Momentum

Last but not least: Consistency is key. Make sure to keep up with your workout regimen so your progress doesn't slide.