



## FITNESS TIME:

# Exercise Does the Total Body Good

**S**taying active is crucial, especially as we age. Physical activity has tremendous health benefits including but not limited to: retaining strength, managing weight, conditioning the heart, and releasing endorphins and other feel-good hormones beneficial for mental health! Exercising outdoors provides the added advantage of fresh air, contributing to overall well-being and calmness. Below are a few benefits of fresh air fitness:

### WEIGHT MANAGEMENT

Carrying extra weight can strain your body, particularly in the knees, as excess weight increases stress and pressure. Every pound you carry adds four pounds of pressure to them. Being overweight or obese puts extra stress on these joints, potentially leading to or worsening conditions like arthritis. However, with regular outdoor activities like walking, biking or hiking, you can help control your weight and strengthen your knees, while enjoying fresh air and beautiful surroundings.

### MENTAL HEALTH IMPROVEMENT

Getting outdoors is great for your mental health. Studies show that in addition to the physical health benefits, exercising outdoors also provides many mental health benefits:

- Lowers anxiety
- Enhances mood
- Increases energy
- Decreases hostility and feelings of anger

Outside activity helps the body create vitamin D. Numerous studies show that vitamin D may decrease feelings of anxiety or depression.

### REDUCES CHRONIC ILLNESS SYMPTOMS

Type 2 diabetes, high blood pressure, and heart disease represent a few of the many chronic illnesses that impact millions of Americans. However, following an exercise regime prescribed by your healthcare provider can reduce symptoms and even cause these diseases to enter remission.



### FOLLOW THE MOUSE:

We've hyperlinked resources you may want to access. Just hover and click!

**Continued on next page**



### Quick & Easy Pre-Workout Snacks

The right snack can fuel your workout without making you feel sluggish. Try these suggestions from the [American Heart Association](#) into your daily diet:




1. Whole wheat toast
2. Low-fat yogurt
3. Brown rice
4. Fruits & veggies

The key takeaway here is that regular exercise lowers blood pressure, helps manage type 2 diabetes and can even prevent heart disease. People with type 2 diabetes need extra help managing their blood sugar levels, which regular exercise helps control. It also helps prevent heart disease by promoting a healthy cardiovascular system.

## GETTING FIT OUTSIDE!

Looking for a fitness routine that works for you? It can be difficult knowing what will work best. Many people have trouble maintaining a fitness routine. Not everyone enjoys the gym or can afford a costly membership. Thankfully, there are many ways to get fit and manage your weight while having a fun time. Hopefully, one of the following suggestions will speak to your level of interest!

**Walking.** Walking is a great way to squeeze in a quick workout during the day, and can be a relaxing way to decompress via a long evening stroll. According to Mayo Clinic, walking improves endurance, strength, energy, mood, and a host of other excellent benefits. So, tie up those laces and explore the great outdoors! The  [Forest Preserves of Cook County](#) offer a wide range of walking paths and scenic backdrops to motivate you while getting your steps in.

**Tip:** Try taking a walk during your lunch break, around your neighborhood, or walk to the grocery store instead of driving!

**Playing at the park.** Everyone has 24 hours in their day, but we don't all use them the same way. If you have children, it can be difficult to fit in a workout between your professional responsibilities at work and at home as a parent. You might find it easier to multitask to squeeze in a workout. Playing with your children at the park is a great way to get your heart pumping, especially if you're running around playing tag or kicking around a soccer ball.

**Tip:** Make your next trip to the park memorable by packing a picnic basket with healthy, delicious snacks!

**Joining a sports club.** Joining a sports club is a fun way to enjoy competitive sportsmanship with other adults. There are adult clubs for soccer, basketball, softball, and many other sports in your community, whether you're a beginner or a seasoned athlete.


**Tip:** Team sports aren't your only option. You can also join sports clubs for dance, tennis, golf, and more!

**Joining an outdoor fitness class.** Some of us need a bit of encouragement to maintain a consistent fitness routine. Enrolling in an outdoor fitness class is a great way to get your body moving, with some added encouragement from an instructor. There are all sorts of outdoor classes for people of all skill levels, including boxing, Pilates, Zumba, and more!

**Tip:** Your local Department of Recreation offers lots of low-cost fitness classes, as well as other recreational activities!

Moving your body is a privilege and should be regarded as a joyful experience. Lean into activities you love to develop and maintain a fitness routine that suits you best! Engaging in physical activity offers numerous benefits, especially when you take it outside!

**Tip:** When outdoors remember to wear sunscreen and reapply as directed. Sunscreen is essential for everyone, regardless of age, skin type, or ethnicity.

Consult with your Primary Care Physician (PCP) when starting a new fitness routine or making drastic changes to your existing routine. If you don't have a PCP, you can call the Health Advocate number on your BCBSIL member ID card or  [log on to Blue Access for Members<sup>SM</sup> \(BAM<sup>SM</sup>\) \[bcbsil.com\]\(#\)](#) and use the Provider Finder. This fast, easy-to-use tool improves members' experience when searching for in-network health care providers.

