



*spring*  
to it

Shake off the cold and unlock your slimmest, healthiest body – just in time for summer. All it takes is this simple outdoor exercise plan.



**Fact** Keep your levels of vitamin D topped up by exercising outdoors during springtime and, according to Japanese researchers, you're 58 per cent less likely to catch a cold.

**S**pring is all about new beginnings – be it turning over a brand new leaf or injecting life into tired old routines – which makes this season the perfect time to start shaping up and slimming down. “It’s very common for people to feel more motivated to exercise once the spring season hits,” explains Tasmanian-based exercise physiologist, Erin Hobson. “I think it’s a combination of the warmer weather being much more appealing to exercise in, and the fact that a lot of us tend to put on a few unwanted kilograms in the colder months. Once spring arrives, people are keen to do what they can to take off the extra weight.” Exercise physiologist Jessica Northcott from the South Australian practice Rehabit agrees, adding that spring naturally encourages people to increase levels of physical activity. “We tend to find ourselves outdoors more often during spring, whether it’s walking instead of driving somewhere, or kicking a soccer ball around in the backyard with the kids.” Kickstart your journey to better fitness now with these expert tips.

### **Look at the bigger slim-down picture**

It’s official: rolling out of bed and into a pair of running shoes is a lot easier in spring than it is in winter. While thinking of the bikini season can be a good motivator to trim down, Northcott suggests taking the natural inclination you feel towards exercising in spring in order to look at the bigger fitness picture, and find lasting motivation to get healthy. “The best motivators for

exercising and continuing to exercise are those that really hit home for you, that mean something to you personally,” she reveals. “For example, the desire to be able to achieve something positive, such as wanting to be fitter so that you can keep up more easily with your children when you’re kicking that soccer ball around.” The bottom line? If you’re working towards a long-term goal – as opposed to a short-term desire to slim down for just one season – it’s far more likely that you will be able to sustain it.

### **The outdoor workout**

Once you start thinking about spring as an opportunity to get active, the exercise options are endless – particularly when you make it a priority to try something new, or shake up your normal workout by changing the backdrop. Here are a few suggestions to help get you started:

#### **1 Tighten and tone up**

Walking along any shape or form of sand is an extremely effective way to exercise, but do it on the beach or up some stairs and you’ll push things up another notch. “Sand provides good resistance, which makes walking just that little bit more challenging,” says Northcott. “The other great thing is that by getting outside into the fresh air for your walk, your state of mind and vitamin D levels will benefit, too.”

#### **2 Get fit with friends**

Looking to try a team sport? In spring, options include traditional choices, such as tennis and cricket, but also water-based sports including

rowing and even dragon boat racing. “The great thing about team sports is that they usually cater for a range of different levels, with teams available to suit your fitness and experience,” explains Hobson. “They can also be incredibly motivating because, if you miss a game, you not only let yourself down, but the rest of your team as well. That knowledge means you’re more likely to stay committed.” Head online to [www.allsportsaustralia.com.au](http://www.allsportsaustralia.com.au) to find a local club that works for you.

### 3 Try a water workout

“This is a low-impact exercise option, which is important if you’re carrying an injury,” says Northcott. “Swimming gives a full-body workout. It isn’t weight bearing, but provides a fantastic cardiovascular and resistance exercise rolled into one.” And if fitness levels won’t allow more than a few minutes of swimming at a time, don’t worry. “Walk through the water as fast as you can instead – the resistance of the water means this is still an effective way to exercise,” suggests Northcott. Looking for a pool nearby? Find it at [www.swimaustralia.org](http://www.swimaustralia.org).

### 4 Dance yourself slim

Whether it’s salsa, jive or ballroom, getting into the groove at a dance class once a week will blitz the kilos and help get your blood pumping. “Even though it’s unlikely to provide enough

exercise for the average person on its own, across a week everything adds up,” Northcott explains. “Apart from being a physical and social activity (which can increase your motivation to attend), dancing also has a range of other body benefits, such as improving your coordination, balance and muscle tone.” Go to [www.dancefinder.com.au](http://www.dancefinder.com.au) to locate a class in your neighbourhood.

### 5 Walk off the weight

Like the idea of fresh air and a free workout? “Bushwalking is the ideal choice for maintaining and improving cardiovascular fitness, along with really strengthening the lower body,” explains Hobson. “As you become more experienced and can take part in more challenging walks, incorporate steeper hills and even rockier inclines and declines.” To find a local club, head to [www.bushwalkingaustralia.org](http://www.bushwalkingaustralia.org).

### 6 Boost your bike IQ

Bike riding can be a great way to increase fitness gradually, as you progress from slow, easy cycling to more explosive interval sprints. It’s also a perfect way to tone your thighs and calves. Just remember to wear a helmet whenever you’re on the bike, and, if you plan to ride on the road, read up on road rules and riding etiquette. To learn more about road rules or to find a club in your area, go to [www.cyclingpromotion.com.au](http://www.cyclingpromotion.com.au). [WWW](#)

## SEVEN DAYS TO FITNESS

Be inspired by Weight Watchers fitness editor Martha Lourey-Bird’s guide to a better spring workout.

### MONDAY: Stretch and de-stress

Whether it’s tai chi or a group class such as yoga, stretching is a great way to start the week. Do a session outdoors to breathe in fresh, spring air for at least one hour each week.

### TUESDAY: Play a team sport

Join a team so you have a weekly exercise commitment to stick with.

### WEDNESDAY: Do a circuit session

You can set up a gym circuit almost anywhere indoors or outside using items like a bench for push-ups, stairs for step-ups or a chair for dips. Do each exercise for up to one minute and repeat the circuit for 15 to 30 minutes without stopping.

### THURSDAY: Tackle a dance class

Mingle with others and take a heart-pumping dance class. Try salsa, belly or pole dancing and discover muscles you didn’t know existed.

### FRIDAY: Relax and re-charge

Give yourself a well-earned day of rest and avoid strenuous exercise. Instead, take a gentle walk to the local park or along the beachfront.

### SATURDAY: Exercise outdoors

Head somewhere scenic for an intense outdoor activity like bike riding, beach walking, hiking or jogging. Aim for 30 to 60 minutes of continuous activity – even trying some bursts of speed throughout.

### SUNDAY: Boost the fun factor

Get outside and choose from a variety of spring-friendly exercise options, such as swimming, horse riding, surfing and rock climbing.

## THE MORE THE MERRIER

*Need more incentive to add new activities to your spring exercise routine? Researchers in Florida have found that people who do a variety of exercises are 45 per cent more likely to enjoy their workout sessions – and 63 per cent more likely to exercise regularly.*