

[IMAGE]

Are You Swimsuit Ready?

By Dr. Perry Nickelston

The dreaded swimsuit season is upon us. It's time to see just how much our bodies have changed over the course of a long winter, which can be an eye-opening experience. The fitness industry knows how traumatic this can be for you; that's why every year there are countless new books, diets, videos, and magazines dispensing advice on how to get in shape for summer. Unfortunately, most of these "great" ideas involve quick-fix starvation diets and equipment-intensive workouts that are often difficult to follow. Inevitably, the weight comes back (with a few extra pounds added) because these quick-fix programs lower your metabolic set point, making your body more prone to storing body fat. And that's the last thing you want to do! So, what's the answer? Well, it's really quite simple and boils down to one simple word: MOVEMENT!

Maximize Your Metabolism

Swimsuit ready - Copyright â Stock Photo / Register Mark The more you move, the more muscles you use, the more calories you burn and the more fat you lose. It's called the *metabolic afterburn effect*. This is when your metabolic set point remains increased for up to 24 hours post-exercise. That means you actually continue burning more calories long after your exercise is over. The more muscles you use during an exercise movement, the faster you can get into shape. But not all movements are created equal. For example, walking on the treadmill, bike riding, or doing yoga are all forms of exercise, but one requires more muscle movements than the others, thus stimulating a greater "afterburn effect."

Can you guess which one? Yoga. Yes, it's yoga. You get more "bang for your buck," so to speak. Why? Well, think about it in terms of movement. The secret to effective exercise is more muscle movement in less time. How could you not like that scenario? "Hold on a second," you say. "Bike riding also uses a lot of muscle movement." Yes, it does. However, the movements are usually isolated to only one direction; what we call uni-directional. We want *multi-directional* movement for optimum results. To understand this concept, let's take a closer look at movement.

Move in All Directions

Athletic movement is first and foremost about human movement. Human movement is based on planes of motion. There is a sagittal plane (forward and backward), a frontal plane (side to side) and a transverse plane (horizontal). The short and simple way to move more is to go through all three planes of motion during exercise. In order to build fitness performance and skill, it's essential to establish a good foundation of movement. Let's go back to the yoga example. Think about how much bending, twisting, rotating and holding you do during an average yoga session. That's a lot of movement and a lot of muscle toning. Combine this with proper nutrition and aerobic activity, and you have a recipe for success.

Burn Calories and Fat

What better way to commune with nature and the great outdoors, than by doing high-intensity training involving body-weight exercises and "animal" movements? (By animal movements, I mean movements that mimic movements animals make, as illustrated in the sample workout below.) This type of exercise is the most efficient at working all the muscles of your body in minimal time while burning lots of calories. This shape-up program is based on optimizing movement to increase your metabolic set point. We do this by utilizing the Tabata Method. Named after Izumi Tabata, PhD, a former researcher at Japan's National Institute of Fitness and Sports in Kanoya, this protocol alternates between 30 seconds of intense exercise and 20 seconds of rest. Studies show that you burn just as much fat as moderate aerobic workouts done for 45 minutes and keep your metabolism elevated for hours after you're finished.. One round of Tabata takes 12 to 14 minutes, including the warm-up and cooldown. (Don't be discouraged if you have a difficult time doing this workout at first; it gets easier with time.)

A Sample Program to Get You Started

- 3-5 minutes of brisk walking
- 30 seconds of bear walks, 20 seconds of push-ups (repeat)
- 30 seconds of spiderman walks, 20 seconds of squats (repeat)
- 30 seconds of crab walks, 20 seconds of crunches (repeat) 30 seconds of duck walks, 20 seconds of push-ups (repeat)
- 3-5 minutes of slow walking

Push-Ups: Perform a standard push-up. If too difficult to perform, put your knees on the ground or change your angle by leaning against a wall.

Abdominal Crunches: Lie on your back and raise your legs off the ground. Grasp hands behind the head to cradle the neck, but do not pull the neck. Curl up, bringing the knees toward the chest and contracting your stomach.

Squats: Stand shoulder-width apart with arms extended in front of the body. Bend your knees, going parallel to the ground like you are sitting in a chair. Hold position for one second and return to starting position, being careful not to lock out your knees.

Animal Movements: Each animal walk below works different muscles and helps with balance, circulation, cardiovascular health, flexibility, and body toning. Make sure you breathe normally during this and all animal walks.

Spiderman walks: These are great for the hips, legs, back and arms. Start in a crouch position with your feet and your hands on the ground. Bring your right hand forward. Lift up your right leg and bring it up to meet your right hand. Make sure you keep your buttocks down; don't lift them up too much. Now bring your left hand forward. Lift up your left leg and bring it up to meet your right hand. Repeat sequence.

Crab walks. These will work your arms, back, and lower body. Begin by sitting on the ground. Put your arms on the ground behind you and lift up your hips. Walk forward on your hands and heels, trying to keep your hips as high as possible. Repeat.

Duck walks. These will work your lower body like you have never felt. Get into a squatting position with your hands at your sides. Step forward with your left foot, then with your right foot. Keep walking like this until you can't go any farther. Breathe naturally.

Swimsuit ready man and woman 2 - Copyright © Stock Photo / Register Mark *Bear walks.* Bear walks will work your arms, back, chest and lower body. These will also get you out of breath really quickly! Find a large area to do this exercise. Put all your weight on your hands and feet. Bring your right hand and left foot forward. Then your left hand and right foot. Keep going.

This is a fun, effective workout that will enhance your physique and get you swimsuit ready. With additional movement comes greater flexibility, a leaner physique and more muscle tone. Summer shape-up can finally be an enjoyable time for physical fitness. (*Note:* It is highly recommended that you get full medical clearance for intense physical activity from your doctor prior to beginning any exercise program.)

Move smarter. Move better. Look better. Sounds like the perfect combination to me. So get out there and start moving! I'll see you at the beach.

Don't Burn Out (or Up)

Two Important Considerations When Exercising Outdoors This Summer

1. Proper Hydration: To burn fat, your cells need to be well-hydrated. When full of water, they're able to help burn fat. And because thirst can be mistaken as hunger, being well-hydrated can make it easier for you to follow a healthy nutrition plan.

Hydration - Copyright © Stock Photo / Register Mark How can you tell if you're dehydrated? One way is by thirst. You may also get more headaches and feel tired more than usual. You might become more susceptible to colds, allergies, and joint pain, since your immune system will weaken. The advice to drink eight 8-ounce glasses of water a day is antiquated. Instead, multiply your weight in pounds by 0.5 and 0.7. The numbers generated are the range, in ounces, of water you should drink each day. There is no need to start slamming down water today. Instead, gradually increase your intake over a four-week period.

Also remember to make sure you always carry water with you during an outside workout or have it readily available. You do not want to risk heat stroke.

2. Skin Protection: The most effective way to decrease your exposure to the sun is by limiting time outside between 10:00 a.m. and 2:00 p.m., when the sun is generally the strongest.

Skin protection - Copyright © Stock Photo / Register Mark Anytime you are spending a lot of time outside, make sure to wear sunscreen with an SPF of 30 or more. SPF, an abbreviation for sun protection factor, indicates the degree of sunburn protection provided by the sunscreen.

SPF is related to the total amount of sun exposure rather than simply the length of sun exposure. It is a common mistake to assume that the duration of effectiveness of a sunscreen can be determined simply by multiplying the SPF by the length of time it takes to suffer a burn without sunscreen, because the amount of sun exposure a person receives is dependent upon more than just the length of time spent in the sun.

The amount of sun exposure depends upon a number of factors including the length of exposure, time of day, geographic location, and weather conditions. A common mistake is applying too little sunscreen, which

can drastically reduce the effective SPF of the product. About 1 ounce (5-6 teaspoons) of sunscreen is recommended to cover the entire body. Further, sunscreen must be reapplied every two hours when staying outdoors for a prolonged period of time. Sunscreen should also be applied at least 30 minutes before going outdoors. Remember to use sunscreen that holds up under intensive sweating. You are exercising and do not want it running into your eyes or wearing off.

Three Steps to a Successful Summer Workout

Warm up for 3 to 5 minutes. Start at a low intensity, gradually increasing pace during the course of the warm-up. Warm up can be a brisk walk or anything you choose to gradually increase your heart rate for 3-5 minutes.

Work for 3 to 5 minutes. For 30 seconds, go full speed (as fast as you can) with good form, doing one animal movement (crab walk, bear walk, etc.), followed by 20 seconds of a body-weight exercise (see sample exercise routine on page xx for details). Continue this back-and-forth sequence for four minutes (eight total intervals).

Recover for 3 to 5 minutes. After you perform the eight intervals, cool down slowly for three to five minutes with a walk.

Perform this routine three days per week in conjunction with any other form of fitness-related activities you enjoy on the off days.

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