

Go outside and play

Take a healthy break from
your exercise routine

It's called "the great outdoors" for a reason

Maybe it's because we spend 90% of our time indoors,¹ but when you finally get outside, it feels great. Not only that, it's also great for your health. Here's why:²

- Going outside can mean more vitamin D to help prevent or manage osteoporosis, some cancers and heart disease.
- It can also boost your mood, improve your breathing and kick-start your healing and concentration powers.
- It's a great way to shake up your exercise routine, which might be your key to staying active and healthy.

Supercharge your gym workouts

The gym is a convenient way to get your daily recommended exercise, but if you're getting bored, going outside is a great way to shake up your routine. When you get out for a hike, you'll appreciate all those hard hours in the gym. Try walking or jogging, step-ups on the curb, stair climbing, jumping rope or hula hooping as outdoor alternatives to your gym exercises. When you know that you'll get to test your fitness in the outdoors, it might inspire you to put a little extra into your gym workout.

As always, safety first

Here's how to do the outdoors right:

- If you're exercising outside, pick a time that works best for you so you'll get more out of it. Try early mornings or later evenings when the sun's rays are less intense.
- Wear sunscreen.
- Find a shady park or spot in your backyard to beat the heat.
- Dress appropriately for the activity. For example, wear sturdy shoes for a hike or a helmet for biking.
- Bring water and drink it throughout your activity.
- Carry identification and bring a cellphone. If you're going to be in a remote area, let someone know where you're going and when you're coming back.
- If you have a health condition, like asthma or allergies, talk with your doctor about what type of activity is best for you.

Not sure where to go?

For tips and suggestions about making the most of the great outdoors, visit the National Wildlife Federation's Green Hour site at greenhour.org.³

Short on ideas? We can help.

We're constantly updating our website with new information on ways for our members to get and stay healthy. Log in at empireblue.com and visit the *Health & Wellness* section for more resources.

Great for your family, too

Exploring the outdoors is a great family activity. You could plan monthly nature events, go hiking, bike riding, canoeing or camping, or visit the awesome natural history of our national parks. It's the family that plays together who stays together, and they may also stay healthier for longer, which means more time to play in the great outdoors.



¹ United States Environmental Protection Agency: *Buildings and their Impact on the Environment: A Statistical Summary* (April 22, 2009): epa.gov/greenbuilding/pubs/gbstats.pdf.

² United States National Library of Medicine National Institutes of Health website: *Vitamin D: Importance in the Prevention of Cancers, Type 1 Diabetes, Heart Disease, and Osteoporosis* (accessed May 2014): ncbi.nlm.nih.gov.

³ National Wildlife Federation website: *Green Hour* (accessed May 2014): nwf.org.

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