

The York University Staff Association Health & Wellness News & Views

It's that time of year again, you know, the one where the buds are blooming, and the grass is finally green. The Winter snow melts away, the sun begins to show its face, and the weather turns to positive digits. YES! That's right, Spring has officially sprung. Spring is a time for shedding layers, sporting bright colours, and of course spring cleaning. That can apply to reorganizing your pantry, but also to tossing some unhealthy Winter habits you may have fallen into. Yep, Winter's over and just maybe you had your share of dessert and the occasional extra helping of your favourite dish. No finger pointing needed. Spring is a time for rebirth, it's a transitional time to elevate yourself and see what you can improve on before summer arrives. It's time to recognize how harsh Winter has been on your spirit. It is a great opportunity to cleanse your body and soul and jump back into a healthy lifestyle. With increasingly open schedules due to the COVID 19 pandemic, there may be more opportunities than ever to get outside and kick up your routine this Spring. Here are a few helpful hints to put that Spring back in your step!



With all the uncertainty swirling around and the various orders to stay at home, practice social distancing wash your hands, wear a mask... there's a lot of pent-up energy to get outside and do something. And while there's a multitude of fitness apps and workouts streaming online, getting outside for a walk (not to mention a literal breath of fresh air) should be at the top of your to-do list. Spring weather means it's warming up, but it's also just cool enough to enjoy the sounds of nature before the sweltering heat sets in for the summer. Walking is the most basic physical activity one can engage in. Not only does it let us get on with the day's activities, but it can also have a significant impact on physical and mental

health. Walking has it all. Simple and natural, it doesn't require any instruction or special skill. It can be a very modest form of exercise or it can demand enough skill and intensity to be an Olympic sport. You can walk alone for solitude or with friends for companionship. (socially distanced, of course) You can get all the benefits of moderate exercise with a very low risk of injury. And to boot, walking is inexpensive. Easily accessible to those that are able-bodied, walking is something you can do whether you live in the city or in the country. Tie your shoes and hop out the door. Springtime weather also means the walker can experience the flowers and trees blossoming into those bright beautiful colours that make us fall in love with this special time of year.

Why not Jump into Spring? What piece of exercise equipment sells for under \$20, fits into a pocket, can be used by the whole family, and improves cardiovascular fitness while toning muscle all at the same time. The favourite pastime of elementary school playgrounds, skipping is another cost-effective way to get some cardio in the sun. It not only boosts your heart health, like many other high-intensity workouts, it has also been shown to improve balance. So, why not relive your youth and grab a jump rope? Jump like no one's watching. You're not getting those years back, so you might as well replicate them as best as you can. Heading outside and doing this favorite childhood "workout" can burn about 208 calories in just 20 minutes. Add other outdoor cardio exercises like walking lunges, short sprints, and jumping jacks, and you've got yourself a circuit program you can do right in your backyard.

It's time to brave the sunny days and open roads. Blue skies and warm weather are the perfect combo for bicycle riding. Cycling can be an intense workout that helps to tone your legs, abs, and glute muscles. Moreover, it helps to burn fat all over your body. You can use a bicycle for transportation instead of a car or a bus. You will save money, enjoy the outdoors, and get fit at the same time. Spring makes us feel feeling like a kid yet again as the fresh air whizzes through the vents in your helmet. It's about taking the scenic route to enjoy the weather and mustering up the willpower to dig deep as you pedal uphill against a headwind. It's the meditative state

you fall into as you count the repetition of your pedal strokes. Whether you're out to win the race or a leisurely ride, "It's poetry in motion".

It's time to get reacquainted with your outdoor space. Stepping back into the garden after a long, harsh winter can be overwhelming, but it is also a time of relief. Gardening invites you to get outside (after months of quarantine), interact with your fellow neighbourhood gardeners, and take charge of your own need for exercise, healthy food, and beautiful surroundings. No matter what your digging, hauling, and planting, your physical strength, heart health, weight, sleep, and immune systems all benefit. And those are just the physiological outcomes. Gardening is considered moderate-intensity exercise. You can burn about 330 calories doing one hour of light gardening and yard work, more than walking at a moderate pace for the same amount of time, gardening can also cultivate feelings of empowerment, connection, creative and calm. Whether your patch is large or small, a raised bed, your planting flowers or vegetables, a community garden, or a window box, getting outside, dirty and eating clean are good for you.



Spring is here – just listen... Everyone has their own spring bird barometer. The song of one special bird that tells them spring has arrived. If you're looking for something that can do both; stay in compliance with current government COVID 19 restrictions and get outside and enjoy what Spring has to offer, start listening and let your ears do the work. You will notice the variety of sounds coming from your backyard on any given morning. You'll begin to recognize each bird's individual song. Whether you live in the city or the country, if you start making a list

of the different calls you hear, you may be surprised at the number of bird species you have in your neighborhood. If you have a smartphone, there are several apps that go well beyond "angrybirds" that can assist in helping any beginner birder. Click the link below for tips on how to go beyond the binoculars.

<https://www.allaboutbirds.org/news/binoculars-and-beyond-nine-tips-for-beginning-bird-watchers/>

Spring in definition means, to leap, to jump, or to arise from. Take the term to heart and commit to getting outside and enjoy what this beautiful season has to offer.

"When life throws you spring showers – get outside and play in the puddles". -- Pooh Bear.

April 2021

Why is Walking the Most Popular Form of Exercise?

<https://www.heart.org/en/healthy-living/fitness/walking/why-is-walking-the-most-popular-form-of-exercise>

Gardening Can Help with Stress and Anxiety - Here's Why, According to a Horticultural Therapist

<https://www.goodhousekeeping.com/health/wellness/a22109/health-benefits-gardening/>

What are the Physical and Mental Benefits of Gardening?

https://www.canr.msu.edu/news/what_are_the_physical_and_mental_benefits_of_gardening