

## Beat the Heat: Safe Exercise Tips for the Summer

By Expert Contributor, Kristen Wilson, PT, DPT, GCS



Staying cool while exercising is critical in the summer

With the increasing temperatures and humidity of the summer months, it is no surprise that the human body starts to feel more lethargic and aged. While staying cool by resting in the air conditioning seems enticing, often times, inactivity can result in negative effects on the body. Avoiding regular physical activity can be detrimental. In fact, even just a few weeks of inactivity can result in significant muscle weakness, joint stiffness, and loss of endurance. Maintaining a regular exercise program, even in the hotter months, keeps the body energized and limber.

The key to success is understanding how to exercise and stay cool at the same time. Follow these tips to achieve success:

1. **Exercise in the early morning or evening.** Temperatures both outside and within the body tend to be lower resulting in a more comfortable workout. Or consider exercising in an indoor environment like a gym or walking at the mall.
2. **Drink plenty of water** before, during, and after exercise. Proper fluid intake will combat dehydration from sweating. For most activities, approximately 1 liter per hour is recommended if exercising in the heat at a moderate intensity.
3. **Wear light fabric and a hat.** Since the body loses its ability to sweat with increased age, it is important to keep as cool as possible by having a light barrier between the skin and the elements. A hat helps to keep the sun off of the face.
4. **Spread exercise over multiple sessions,** rather than one long session. The benefits of exercise are the same whether completed in a long duration or multiple shorter durations. Shorter workouts will allow the body to stay cooler.
5. **Exercise with a companion.** Teaming up for exercise is safer and more enjoyable. In the event of a reaction, someone is available to go for help.

There are many forms of exercise that are suitable for summer months. A light walk around a shaded park offers a chance to get outside without the direct effects of the sun. A swim in the local pool or ocean allows your body to dissipate heat into the water. A bike ride in the woods combines a great workout with sightseeing and a cool breeze. The options are numerous and choosing one depends on your interests and the weather. In the end, the most important decision is to get out and get moving! Your body will thank you.

Before beginning an exercise program, it is always best to have your physician's approval. If injury or pain limits you from participating in an exercise program, see a local physical therapist to address the problem and get started on your active lifestyle.



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