

# Take a Hike! (Literally. It's Really Good for You.)

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Hiking is more than just a way to hit your daily step goal. It's actually a killer workout with both physical and mental benefits. "It's the best exercise—it increases your endorphins quickly when you start at a good, steady pace," says Michelle Lovitt, C.S.C.S, a Los Angeles-based trainer who often goes hiking with clients. "Plus it awakens the senses, too!"

If you're considering trading your regular neighborhood stroll for a trek along trails, here are some of the benefits of hiking you can expect to experience.

## 5 Awesome Benefits of Hiking

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### **You'll increase your calorie burn.**

Even if you stick to your regular walking speed, you're likely to burn more calories hiking. According to the Mayo Clinic, a 160-pound person torches 438 calories hiking versus 204 walking—that's more than double the burn! "The inclines and declines, as well as the uneven terrain require more muscles to be activated, increasing your heart rate, and therefore increasing the calorie burn," says Lovitt.

### **You'll stoke an afterburn effect.**

Even if you're not sprinting up hills, there's a chance you can reach EPOC, or excess post-exercise oxygen consumption (a.k.a. the afterburn effect), explains Lovitt. If the trail you pick heads up a mountain and you're not used to working out at elevation, your heart rate may stay elevated (for the majority of your hike. When you're finished, your body will burn extra calories for up to 48 hours afterwards to rebuild its oxygen stores.

### **You'll get an energy boost.**

Instead of going for an afternoon coffee on the weekend, hit the trails. University of Rochester researchers found that fresh air can wake you up just as well as your usual cup of joe.

### **You'll improve your mood.**

You read that right—according to research, hiking in any type of green space for even just five minutes has been shown to help mood and boost self-esteem. And if you're really ambitious, that same study finds that a full-day hiking and camping trip could result in stronger improvements.

### **You'll get a full-body workout—brain included.**

As Lovitt mentioned, the difficult and uncertain terrain causes you to engage many different muscles in your body. "You may need to jump over or off a boulder, crawl up a path, or balance on a downed tree to cross water," says Lovitt. "Hiking takes the boredom out of exercise because you really have to pay attention to your surroundings, where sometimes with walking you can just turn your brain off."

*This article is not intended to substitute for informed medical advice. You should not use this information to diagnose or treat a health problem or condition. Always check with your doctor before changing your diet, altering your sleep habits, taking supplements, or starting a new fitness routine.*

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