

Wake up! Yes, you, dozing off on the stationary bike. It's time to shake off those winter cobwebs and head into the great outdoors for an invigorating workout that will revitalise your body and mind. Before you say, "I can't do that!", heed our expert advice to get you started and build up your confidence in your new winter activity.

1 Trail running

Spiderwebs and loose rocks and low-hanging branches, oh my! You might think of trail running as an activity reserved for elite athletes, but exercise physiologist Neil Russell guarantees even novice runners can do it.

"It's just like going for a bushwalk, only a little faster," he says. "Find a wide, flat fire trail or bushwalk trail and take it slow. You shouldn't worry about your pace when you're starting off."

Not only will focusing on your footfall provide a distraction from your aches and niggles, but you'll enjoy a break from technology and the outside world.

"Trail running is a great exercise in mindfulness," says advanced sports dietitian and exercise physiologist Sally Garrard. "And that's just the beginning. A study published in the *Journal of Psychophysiology* found those who ran outdoors felt less anxious, depressed, hostile and fatigued and more invigorated than when they started. On the other hand, people who ran on indoor treadmills felt more tense, depressed, angry, hostile and fatigued than when they started out." >

Don't skip your warm-up! It's even more important in colder weather to prevent injury.

2

Outdoor gym workout

You've seen the fitness equipment at the park, but what are you supposed to do with those bars, benches and blocks?

"There are usually signs beside each piece of equipment explaining how to use them," says Russell. "Or search online under 'outdoor gym workouts'."

Outdoor gyms are a great way to add some strength work to your daily walk or jog. "But if you're just starting out, beware of exercises that require you to lift your whole body weight, such as chin-ups and hanging leg raises on a pull-up bar, which could lead to injury," says Russell.

Beginners could try push-ups using a bar and assisted squats instead.

3

Scrambling

Combining hiking with easy rock climbing, scrambling requires you to help yourself along with your hands as you trek over rocks and varying terrain.

"You can do a low-key version of scrambling at your local beach," says Russell. "Walking over rocks at low tide can give you the same kind of workout without requiring you to go far or buy any special equipment."

For an extra boost, enlist a friend to scramble with you. The social interaction will put a smile on your dial and exposing yourself to moderate amounts of sunshine will help your body produce vitamin D, which may lift your mood.



5 tips for surviving the great outdoors



✦ Stay hydrated It's easy to forget to drink enough water when the weather is cooler. "Start your workout well hydrated," says Garrard. "And if you're going out for a long session, take a hydration pack with you."

4 Mountain biking

Does your inner adrenaline junkie dream of flying down a mountain with the wind in your hair? Mountain biking could be just the activity for you. But before you invest in a pricey mountain bike and shiny new gear, Garrard suggests hiring one and going on a social ride with your local mountain bike club to test the waters.

"Mountain biking can seem daunting at first," she says. "But if you go out with like-minded people and start on easy trails, you'll get used to the uneven terrain and you can work your way up to more challenging trails. You'll get a great workout without even realising it because you're so focused on your environment."

5 Stair sprints

"Don't let the word 'sprints' turn you off," says Russell. "You can start by walking up and down a set of stairs and gradually increase your pace as your fitness improves. Stair repeats will give you a short, sharp workout. You can absolutely see benefits in just 10 or 15 minutes. You don't need to work out for an hour."

Stair sprints will also help strengthen your bones. "This is true of any weight-bearing activity - whether it's high-impact stair sprints or low-impact weightlifting," says Garrard. "And when you do them outside, the sun promotes the production of bone-strengthening vitamin D, so this is a great exercise overall for your bone health." ■



JUST DO IT!

Lisa Mulcahy
AGE 48
HEIGHT 158cm
START WEIGHT 58kg
WEIGHT NOW 50kg
WEIGHT LOST 8kg
TIME TAKEN 8 months
TIME AT GOAL 9 years
HOW Group Coaching with Lee Everett in Coorparoo, Qld

Lisa Mulcahy never imagined she'd be able to run to her street corner, let alone 42km. "I joined Parkrun, which gave me the confidence. When I ran a trail race for the first time, I was so scared. But when I crossed the finish line, I couldn't wipe the smile off my face. If you're scared to try something new, just do it! You'll never look back. Overcoming a fear is so empowering."

In outdoor activities, your body has to adapt to changing conditions so it works lots of different muscles.



❖ **Eat a small snack beforehand** "Have a banana or some crackers to give your muscles enough fuel to get through your workout," says Garrard. "If you're learning a new activity, your brain will need that fuel as well."



❖ **Protect yourself from the sun** "Sunscreen prevents vitamin D production, but not wearing it can cause skin cancer, so you have to balance the risks," says Garrard. "Go out in the early morning or late afternoon, but wear sunscreen and a hat if you're out at other times."



❖ **Get the right gear (but don't go overboard)** Layers of moisture-wicking gear help keep you warm and dry and good shoes help prevent injury. "You don't need specific trail-running or rock-climbing shoes," says Russell. "You can wear regular running shoes as long as they're supportive."



❖ **Buddy up** Asking a friend to tag along can provide motivation and safety in numbers. "If you do head out on your own, make sure to tell someone where you'll be," says Russell.



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