



Alternative Fitness Options

Movement is a big part of being a fit person! There are many ways to move aside from “working out,” and they all count toward being healthy. While some of them are better for certain goals (flexibility, weight loss, getting stronger) it is important to ‘mix it up’ sometimes and keep things fresh and fun. Below are some ideas for active things to do that are outside the traditional idea of lifting weights or running.

Yoga – Yoga is an ancient system of movement much like a martial art. It has become very popular in the United States, though it began in Asia. Typically, Yoga moves flow from one into another, and form a type of activity that is fantastic for strengthening the body and helping create great posture, better movement, and overall high levels of health. Yoga can be done as a group, with a partner, or even by yourself. There are many types of Yoga, so one is sure to fit your personality! You can find Yoga videos on youtube.com as well as in DVD form. If working with a group is something you enjoy, most fitness facilities have classes, or find your neighborhood Yoga studio!

Hiking – Hiking is taking a walk in a wilderness area, usually with a destination in mind. People often hike to something like a water fall, hill top, cave, or some other natural or historical feature in the wilderness. Some hikes can be fast – even a couple minutes over short distances, whereas other hikes can last a very long time. A long hike is usually called backpacking and can last anywhere from a couple days to several months! Hiking is a great way to enjoy the outdoors on a beautiful day, learn about the area, and burn calories while strengthening the legs. Make sure you are wearing good shoes to go hiking – oftentimes boots are safer due to increased ankle support and soles that grip the ground better than tennis shoes.

Rock Climbing – not for the faint of heart! Rock climbing is becoming more and more popular in recent years. There are a few types of rock climbing. The easiest type is called ‘bouldering,’ and can be done without special gear, though a helmet is always recommended. Bouldering is climbing on terrain that is not high above the ground – usually just a few feet, so if you fall off you simply jump down to the ground! The next level is rock climbing with a rope and harness. This requires more people to be involved to help make sure you don’t fall. You tie onto a rope and climb up a taller cliff while someone holds the rope. This is the most popular type of rock climbing, and there are many different places to do it, even some that are indoors!

Canoeing/Kayaking – In the great state of Minnesota we have no lack of opportunities to be on the water. In other areas of the country this one could be more difficult, but in the state of 10,000 lakes (we actually have over 15,000) there are many places to rent a canoe or kayak if you don’t have one yourself. Make sure if you choose to use this form of exercise that you go with someone who is experienced and you use all the safety precautions. These include knowing the water you’ll be on and where to enter/exit the water,



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Special Olympics Minnesota | 100 Washington Avenue South, Suite 550, Minneapolis, MN 55401

so.fit@somn.org | T 800.783.7732 | F 612.333.8782 | somn.org

checking the weather before you go, having some knowledge of how to paddle, and always wearing a life jacket. Life jackets are important even if you are a good swimmer in case you get hurt and cannot swim as well as usual. This kind of activity can be very intense or slower paced, go with what you want!

Biking – Biking is a fantastic sport. Similar to canoeing, it is very accessible to most people, but safety precautions have to be taken seriously. Biking is the most dangerous activity you can do, because oftentimes bikes use the same area as vehicles. If you can bike on a path, it is much safer! Always wear a helmet when biking, and watch out for other people and vehicles. Biking is a great way to get cardiovascular activity, and also strengthen the legs!

Swimming – Swimming is a full body workout that also includes cardiovascular endurance. Swimming can vary from simply playing in the water to swimming a long ways at once. It is ideal for people who have trouble walking or running, or have trouble with their joints. Swimming can help strengthen all the muscles in the body, and is considered one of the best exercises to rehabilitate from an injury, illness, or chronic weakness. One barrier to swimming is to find a place to do so – in the summer in Minnesota it can be done for free at many of the lakes, but in the winter it has to be done indoors, and sometimes there may be a small fee associated with it. It is always a good idea to swim with a partner for safety and fun!

Yard/House Work – While many consider yard work/house work not as much fun as other activities, these things still have to be done, so why not make the best of it! Yard work can be very physically demanding, whether you are digging a garden, raking leaves, mowing the grass, or painting a fence! Housework can also be good exercise, from stretching to dust the top of a book case to pushing and pulling a vacuum around, to carrying laundry up or down stairs. Count these activities when you're considering how much activity you get in a day! A fun way to break things up is to do an activity, then do some pushups/sit-ups/squats, then another activity, and continue until all your housework/yardwork is complete. You've done your chores and gotten in a good workout!

These are just a few ideas about alternative options to what most people consider traditional fitness, i.e. lifting weights or going for a jog. Feel free to brain storm up some of your own! Anything movement related that you enjoy can be part of your fitness regiment, and is a great way to keep active without things becoming stagnant or boring. Go out, move, and enjoy life!

Ben Swarts

