

Urban Fitness Tips

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Staying fit while living in urban areas can be a challenge with the heat, smog, traffic and people. But if you enjoy getting outside and staying in shape, there are lots of ways to use your neighborhood to your advantage. All it takes is a little creativity to be in the best shape of your life.

Varied Terrain

Whether you're a runner, walker, cyclist or in-line skater, you can take advantage of the varied terrain in your neighborhood. Start by taking a leisurely drive around the neighborhood and make notes about where the flat stretches are, the hills, parks and other unique terrains. Try to find routes that let you avoid stop signs and red lights. Vary your workouts so that you [travel](#) over flat terrain three days a week and attack hills one or two days a week. Time how long it takes to cover the distance on each route and challenge yourself to improve your time. If there's a park nearby, use the softer dirt or grass trails to take stress off your joints. Parks are also good places to find water fountains. Look for steps or bleachers near high [school](#) stadiums and throw in a few high quality repetitions up and down the stairs. Whenever possible, [exercise](#) early in the morning or late in the afternoon when the heat and smog levels are at their lowest.

Par Courses

Many municipalities have jumped on the fitness bandwagon and built par courses for their local residents. Par courses are like playgrounds for adults. Interspersed around jogging and walking tracks at public parks are fitness stations that challenge you to include sit-ups, pull-ups, push-ups and dozens of other agility and strength exercises. In between your run, you might have to high-step through a dozen tires laid on the ground or swing through a series of monkey bars using your hands and arms. Further down the course, you could be challenged by a dozen 3-count burpees and several sets of sit-ups. The goal of par courses is to challenge every part of your body, not just your lungs.

Safety

If you're exercising near traffic or in areas where a lot of people congregate, it's a good idea to wear bright-colored clothing, a headlamp or a bicycle reflector. Try wearing a running vest with neon reflective tape for extra visibility. If you must run near traffic, always run against oncoming traffic on the sidewalk or in a bicycle lane. By running against the flow of traffic, vehicle headlights will illuminate you and make you easier to see. Bring identification with you. Make a copy of your driver's license, medical insurance card and emergency contacts in case you get hurt and need emergency treatment. It's also a good idea to carry your cell phone with you in case you need a ride home.

Resources

- [Runners Vests](#)