

TOPS suggests spring activities for healthier living

Written by

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It's been a long and stormy winter and snow has found its way to almost all of the 50 states. But, finally, spring is on its way. Daylight lasts longer, temperatures are getting warmer, and there's more energy in the air. The start of a new season is a great time to renew weight-loss and fitness resolutions. TOPS Club, Inc. (Take Off Pounds Sensibly), the nonprofit weight-loss support organization, shares the following tips for springing into a healthier, active, better-for-you lifestyle.

Springtime chores and activities are great ways to burn calories and jumpstart activity. Housework, especially if done to fast music, gets the body moving and the home ship-shape, too. Undertake an old-fashioned spring cleaning from top to bottom, and do it with intensity. Stretch high and bend low, extend your arms, and move as much and as fast as possible. Wash the windows, scour the grout, clean the oven, declutter the closets, sweep out the garage, and more. You'll not only feel a sense of accomplishment, but you'll have burned some calories, stretched and toned muscles, as well as brightened up your indoor environment.

From the inside, move outside. Springtime is a great time to get fit through a walking program. Even gym regulars find that engaging in a walk through the neighborhood or park in fresh air is invigorating. For those who have been sedentary, start slow and walk only as far as it feels comfortable. Build up walking time gradually. Don't forget to warm up before and cool down after to reduce stress on muscles. Wear walking shoes and dress in loose-fitting, comfortable clothing, appropriate for the weather. When walking after dark, wear bright colors or use reflective tape for motorists to see.

As winter winds down, plan for a home-grown vegetable garden. Order seed catalogs and visit the local garden center to get inspired. Nothing tastes as good, or is better for you, as when it is fresh from the garden. Large parcels of land aren't needed. Utilize small containers to grow almost any vegetable or herb on a balcony or patio. Even a windowsill can accommodate a vegetable that is frequently harvested, such as herbs and lettuce, and tomatoes can be grown from the bottom of a hanging planter. If natural sunlight is at a minimum, use grow lights, available from a garden center, which also is a great place to get advice on starting a garden.

If flowers are your thing, plan out new beds or recultivate old ones. You'll be getting exercise and enhancing the aesthetics of your yard at the same time.

Here are common springtime activities and the amount of calories each burns if done for 30 minutes:

- Watering lawn or garden – 63 calories
- Fertilizing yard – 104 calories
- Mopping – 146 calories
- Scrubbing floors – 159 calories
- Sweeping – 167 calories
- Weeding – 167 calories
- Planting seedlings – 188 calories
- Trimming shrubs by hand – 188 calories
- Laying sod – 209 calories

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- Cleaning gutters – 209 calories
- Painting – 209 calories
- Mowing lawn (walk behind power mower) – 230 calories
- Gardening – 134 calories

Getting a fresh start with these springtime activities, coupled with a healthy eating plan, is a positive way to move weight-loss goals forward in 2010.

TOPS Club Inc. (Take Off Pounds Sensibly), the original, nonprofit weight-loss education and support organization, was established more than 62 years ago to champion weight-loss support and success. Founded and headquartered in Milwaukee, Wis., TOPS promotes successful weight management with a philosophy that combines healthy eating, regular exercise, wellness education, and support from others at weekly chapter meetings. TOPS has about 170,000 members in nearly 10,000 chapters throughout the United States and Canada, and several chapters in Europe.

Visitors are welcome to attend their first TOPS meeting free of charge. To find a local chapter, view www.tops.org or call (800) 932-8677.