

Outdoors health tips from the Posse

Sharpen your mind outdoors

If you are reading this column, you are probably an outdoors person. People, like myself, who spend the majority of their time outdoors, realize the many health benefits you gain from your time outside. In fact, I should find a way to write my column outdoors, but I would probably be too distracted to ever get anything written.

Taking a jog outside is far more enjoyable than pounding feet on a treadmill. Riding a bike or going for a hike amongst the trees is a much better morning than sitting at a desk in front of a computer. I believe there is always something better to do outside, rather than anything to be done indoors. My wife says this is why my chores never get done. I had a really good comment, but in the interest of marital harmony, I kept it to myself.

There are many good benefits to your brain that come from the time you spend outdoors. According to a study published in the "Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences," a 90-minute walk outside in a natural environment, participants showed far lower levels of anxiety and worry. A similar group who spent 90 minutes in an urban environment did not share the nature group's mood.

All types of "green" exercises and activities cause have shown to improve self-esteem and fight off negative moods, such as tension, anger and depression. The first five minutes of green exercise seem to have the largest effect on our mood, which suggests there is an immediate psychological health benefit.

Your hormones, like adrenaline and non-adrenaline, together with the stress hormone cortisol, all fall after spending time outdoors. This suggests that nature affects multiple stress systems in our bodies, in a positive way. Another physiological effect is a decrease in muscular tension. This could perhaps stop those tension headaches.

There have been numerous studies over the years that show that walking outdoors helps lower your blood pressure. These studies show that walking in a forest setting lowered systolic and diastolic blood pressures, compared to the opposite for someone walking in an urban setting. High blood pressure is no friend to your body or brain as it can lead to heart attacks, heart disease and strokes.

Sitting at home in front of a television can lead to overeating. Seems that chips and other unhealthy snacks just go hand-in-hand with the old boob tube. Another benefit of heading outside is a decreased likelihood of overeating junk food. Besides, doing an activity outdoors prevents you from becoming sedentary, which in itself has a wide range of



Just a short walk outdoors will help sharpen your mind and improve general health. (Submitted photo)

health benefits.

As a kid, I spent as much time outdoors as possible. I ditched school so I could take off for the woods. I hunted, fished, trapped and just about anything I could dream of. Surprisingly, teenagers of today are different. A recent study suggests that only 10 percent of teenagers take part in an outdoor activity on a daily basis.

The statistics for adults are not much better. Worldwide, 31 percent of adults are physically inactive. Much of this inactivity can be related to the technological advances made in recent years. Cell phones that do everything,

laptop computers, and tablets, along with jobs that require more office time and less physical work, have helped to create an inactive society.

There is also the problem of a sprawling urbanization of most cities where people live. Finding a place to recreate outdoors is more of a challenge than it ever used to be. Even the city parks can be over-crowded and stressful in these big city environments.

Fortunately, we live in Montrose, Colorado, where outdoors is what this state is all about. Within a few minutes of anywhere in town, there are beautiful mountains

full of trees, fresh air and lots of nature.

Do your brain a favor and head on out for some quality "outside time." In fact, make it a regular occurrence. Your body will thank you for it with good health. ●

Mark Rackay is a columnist for the Montrose Daily Press and an avid hunter who travels all across North America in search of adventure and serves as a Director and Public Information Officer for the Montrose County Sheriff's Posse. For information about the Posse call 970-252-4033 (leave a message) or email info@mcspi.org



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