

getting physical by Marci McNaghten

Fitness Clubs Go Wild

A growing number of health clubs are heeding the call of the wild by offering outdoor activities. "In 1992, twenty-four percent of clubs were offering some kind of off-site recreation—a fourteen percent increase from 1991," says Cathy McNeil, program director of IRSA, The

Association of Quality Clubs.

Walking is the most common outdoor activity available at clubs. Members of the Courthouse Athletic Club in Salem, Oregon, get to traverse the trails of a local game refuge, and the APEX fitness club in New York City sponsors The Reebok Body Walk (a brisk walk interspersed with conditioning exercises) through Central Park. In Chicago, the Lakeshore Athletic Club goes one step further (and faster): its outdoor offerings range from white-water rafting to race-car driving.

Says Liz Oliver, founder and owner of APEX, "Outdoor exercise adds variety to people's workout routines, and variety can help them feel more motivated to exercise."

If your health club doesn't provide outdoor workout options, McNeil suggests letting the club's staff know you're interested in such programs. You might also try generating interest among other members before approaching the club management.



Slide to a Slimmer You

Now you can slide into shape with the latest craze to hit the fitness world. Improve your agility, balance, and aerobic fitness by gliding from side to side on a slide board—a long, slippery plastic sheet originally used as a training tool by speed skaters.

When done correctly, this low-impact activity can also help strengthen a variety of muscles, including those in the buttocks, hips, and front, back, inside, and outside of the thighs.

According to the *Penn State Sports Medicine Newsletter*, the basic sliding position mimics the athletic "ready" stance: head up, knees bent, back arched forward slightly, and arms bent 90 degrees at the elbow. Exercisers typically wear special shoe covers (or slide socks) that make it easier to slide and push off from bumpers that are attached to each side of the board.

Slide boards are currently making their way into homes and gyms across the nation. Companies like the STEP Company ([800] SAY-STEP), Body Solutions ([800] 437-1846), and Fitness Innovations ([800] 234-7543) have produced slides, plus shoe covers and instructional videos, for home use. And the latter company is teaching fitness instructors nationwide about the new device, meaning a slide board class may soon be available at a gym near you. □

Stressbuster: Get It off Your Chest

To calm your nerves and feel more connected with your body, try this move from Donna Davidge, a yoga trainer based in New York City. With eyes closed and spine straight, sit cross-legged on the floor. Bring your palms together in front of your chest between your breasts. Rest your thumbs against your chest, and focus your mind on this area (in yoga, this is the heart center, which restores emotional harmony). Maintain the pose for up to two minutes, breathing deeply through the nose.

Exercise Caution to Stay Fit

Is your fitness routine putting your body in danger? You don't need to risk injury in order to get a good workout.

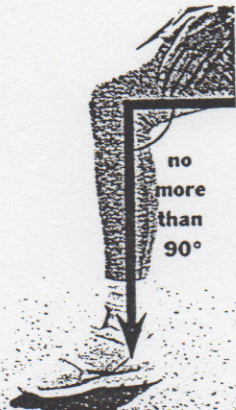
The definition of risk varies from person to person, depending primarily on your fitness and skill levels, says Daniel Kosich, Ph.D., chairperson of the IDEA (International Association of Fitness Professionals) Summit on High-Risk Exercises. "An exercise that works for one person may be inappropriate for someone else."

His advice: Work into new movements slowly. If you experience pain, especially in the joints, stop—even if everybody else in the room can do the exercise. Additionally, some moves fall into the "high risk" category for almost all exercisers and should be avoided:

■ Rapid, bouncy stretching (especially in the spinal area). Instead, you should generally stretch

muscles slowly and with control.

■ Deep knee bends. When working your thighs from a standing position, don't bend your knees beyond a 90-degree angle. Try a forward lunge instead: Step forward with your right foot. Let your body drop toward the floor by bending both knees, but don't let the back knee touch the floor. Keep your torso upright and your hands on hips or resting comfortably on front thigh. Be certain that your right knee is directly above the right foot and does not extend past the toes. Press up with the right quadriceps (the front of the thigh), and return to starting position. Repeat with the left foot.



■ Holding your breath—common when you strength train. Remember to exhale (not hold your breath) during exertion and inhale during recovery. Otherwise you may stress your heart muscle.

(TOP TO BOTTOM) GARY NOLTON/TONY STONE WORLDWIDE, KENNETH ZANE, (LEGGINGS) NIKE, (SHORTS) ESPRIT, (SOCKS) HOT SOX, (SNEAKERS) AVIA