

Spring Cleaning Could Benefit Your Body

Everyone knows the importance of exercise; it's difficult to pass by a magazine stand in the grocery store without seeing some kind of new fitness program or diet fad. Most people, however, don't have the time to go to the gym for an hour or two to exercise.

Fortunately, it's not about exercise so much as it is about physical activity. This can include just about anything, such as playing with the kids, walking the dog, or even spring cleaning. No matter what you're doing, the key is to do something. By doing so you'll improve circulation, reduce stress, and keep your heart and body strong.

In this article you will see how the annual ritual of spring cleaning can be a legitimate form of "exercise". Just wait until you see how many calories you can burn! You'll never look at that old broom the same way again.

Shaking Out the Cobwebs

The birds are chirping; the snow is melting. That can only mean it's time for, yes, you guessed it ... spring cleaning! So as you begin your trek out of hibernation, no doubt many of you have put on a few pounds from the festive holidays.

Not to fear, this spring you have access to the most accessible workout program in town, and you won't find it at your local health club. The spring cleaning you're doing or planning on doing can be an excellent outlet for physical activity. For example, while you are out in the garden raking the piles of leaves, you're giving your back and arms a little workout. Now, it might not become the newest Hollywood fad, but you can do some serious calorie burning and get moving on that New Year's Resolution you made again this year.

Not convinced? Keep in mind that when someone is working out at the gym or to an exercise video, all that is basically happening is that individual's heart rate is becoming elevated and his or her muscles are making contractions in order to move the weights. On many levels, the spring-cleaning routine is even better than a traditional workout.

Why? Most people when they work out do so in a very fixed, linear pattern. Meaning, if they are training their biceps, they might stand in front of a mirror and proceed to curl the weight up and down. When was the last time in your daily life that everything was that balanced, stable, and stationary?

So when you're raking, digging, or trimming the bushes, your whole body is moving in addition to your biceps contracting. You're actually challenging your body more and usually burning more calories. Never thought of it like that before, have you?

The key with this, as in any fitness program, is the duration, intensity, and consistency.

Duration: You can burn a good amount of calories digging, but if you only do it for five minutes, the impact will still be minimal. Use a variety of chores to increase the time that you are active.

Intensity: You can make other activities more effective as a workout by picking up the pace a little. Hustle a bit more when you're washing the car; you'll not only make it a more effective workout, but you'll get more work done. Move from one chore to the next and take some breaks in between.

Consistency: If you are going to plan on cleaning as part of your physical activity program, you'll need to work out more than every spring. Get a routine down, such as every Saturday you'll wash the car, on Wednesday you'll pull the weeds, etc. You'll start to see a real difference not only in your body and energy levels, but also in your home.

Don't Forget to Hydrate

As you're cleaning/working out, keep yourself hydrated. It becomes easy to get so caught up with your activities that you don't drink enough fluids until you've become dehydrated. Stick with water or sports drinks if you're working for an extended period of time at a moderate pace. Avoid sodas and other drinks containing caffeine that can act as diuretics.

Drink consistently throughout the day; don't just guzzle as much as you can in quick binges when you run back into the house. If water usually isn't your first choice of beverage, spruce it up with a couple of slices of lemon or orange. Or for something off the beaten path, try cucumbers or mint. Most spas use this and it's quite refreshing.

Even though you're not basking in the sun on your beach blanket, you will be exposed to the sun, and it doesn't take much to do damage. Use a sunscreen with enough SPF for your skin type.

Follow the advice here and this year's spring cleaning will do more than make your home sparkle: it will start a lifetime of fitness that can improve every area of your life.

Cleaning Out the Kitchen

Toss the cookies, chips, sodas—the usual suspects—and replace them with prepared fruits and vegetables. If they are in the store bag at the very back of the fridge, no one will eat them. Have them prepared and sitting in front so they're the first things seen when the door is opened. Buy lean meats, chicken, and fish. An easy way to cook these is with aluminum foil bags; you can throw the pouches on the grill or in the oven with some veggies inside.

If you have a sweet tooth, look for healthier alternatives, those that are low in calories, fat, and particularly sugar. The trade off in fat-free foods is typically a high sugar

content, so watch both as well as the serving size. It doesn't do much good if a serving is one tiny cookie and you eat 15 at one sitting. Keep things simple and consistent.

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