

View this article online at: patient.in/news-and-features/new-sports-for-the-new-year-why-its-important-to-switch-up-your-exercise

New activities for the new year: why switch up your exercise?

Most of us have our favourite physical activities. But trying something new, or varying the exercise we do, can make a real difference to many areas of our overall health and fitness. We look at why you should switch up your exercise routine and try something different this new year.

Working smarter, and harder

If we're often jogging the same route, or mainly getting our exercise from a trusted [yoga](#) DVD, it's likely that our bodies have become used to a certain pattern of movement. Changing the form of exercise we do may wake up our muscles and encourage them to work harder.

Personal trainer [Mollie Millington](#) says: "Our bodies get used to certain exercises, so when we challenge them in different ways we should get to see more [muscle growth](#) or better cardiovascular performance. If our muscles don't know what's coming next they're always confused and always working hard. Switching the form of exercise we do regularly introduces new levels of challenge."

Plus, chances are if we're [jogging](#) the same old route, or performing the same movements, we may not be pushing ourselves as hard as we could. "When certain exercises become too familiar we don't push ourselves as hard," explains Millington. "Switching to a different form of exercise encourages us to work a little differently and push ourselves harder as a result."

Improved performance

When we're keen to do our best in a particular sport, it can be tempting to focus on our favourite. But it's worth investigating whether there are alternative forms of exercise that may enhance our performance in our preferred activity. "For example, [strength training](#) can help to improve endurance for runners. Or footballers could benefit from ballet, which may help to improve their agility."

This way, not only are we giving our muscles and minds a wake-up call, we can also continue to make progress in our preferred discipline through ringing in the changes.

Whole body health

As well as improving our performance, introducing new forms of exercise will help to ensure our whole body gets the workout it needs. To truly enhance fitness, we need to address three core areas when working out: cardiovascular activity, [strength training](#) and exercises to improve [flexibility](#).

"Cardiovascular activity is important as it helps to keep the heart and lungs strong," agrees Mollie. "As well as building muscle, strength training is an important way of improving bone density. And flexibility and stretching can help us to stay supple and minimise the risk of injury."

Sticking to the same exercise may mean we're concentrating wholly on one area, and neglecting other forms of fitness.

Mental health benefits

As well as being essential for physical health, regular workouts also benefit the mind, lowering our [stress](#) levels and helping us to release more endorphins - happy hormones. Switching exercises regularly will also benefit our mental health as new surroundings and activities will work to stimulate the brain. Taking in new scenery, or working out in a different environment forces us to engage with our surroundings, and can also help to lift our spirits.

Also, if we tend to favour indoor workouts, getting outside for some of our activity can also really help to improve our overall [mental health](#).

Having fun

The most determined of us can sometimes experience an exercise slump. We all know we need to do it, but it can be hard sometimes to stay motivated. If we tend to groan a little when it's time to stream our latest workout, perhaps it's not lack of energy but lack of enthusiasm that we have to address.

Trying different activities could mean finding a whole new workout that we look forward to doing. "It's great to try new forms of exercise because we may find there's something better out there that we want to do more, without feeling it's a chore," agrees Millington.

Social benefits

These days, many of us work long hours or move frequently for work, making it hard to get to know new people. Group activities can be a perfect way to get to know a group of like-minded people.

Taking up a new sport, whether a team sport, class-based activity or individual exercise, can open up our social life. Whether we've joined a walking group and get to chat to new people or have taken up yoga online, having a new interest will often lead to new connections.

But even if our chosen workout is solitary, we can still engage with a community through online groups and forums that focus on a particular sport or on fitness in general.

For example, while we may not be motivated to join a local running club, we can reach out to those with similar interests online to swap tips and talk about our new activity.

Widening our social circle – both real and virtual – can do wonders for our overall wellbeing and mental health.

New horizons

Finally, stepping out of our comfort zone when it comes to exercise, will help us to be more open. Trying something new and enjoying it also helps to remind us what it's like to experience something different – encouraging us to explore more avenues in all areas of life. Meeting new people can also open up our world to new opportunities. "Growth happens when we're outside of our comfort zone. That's why I think it's so important to step outside and embrace new opportunities," explains Millington.

So whether we simply change terrain when running, decide to incorporate a bike ride into our weekly routine, or stream a [Pilates](#) class, it seems switching up our exercise comes with a wealth of benefits.

Disclaimer: This article is for information only and should not be used for the diagnosis or treatment of medical conditions. Egton Medical Information Systems Limited has used all reasonable care in compiling the information but makes no warranty as to its accuracy. Consult a doctor or other healthcare professional for diagnosis and treatment of medical conditions. For details see our [conditions](#).

Authored by:	Peer Reviewed by: Dr Sarah Jarvis MBE, FRCGP	
Originally Published: 24/02/2024	Next review date: 15/12/2023	Document ID: doc_31472

View this article online at: patient.in/news-and-features/new-sports-for-the-new-year-why-its-important-to-switch-up-your-exercise

Discuss New activities for the new year: why switch up your exercise? and find more trusted resources at [Patient](#).



To find out more visit www.patientaccess.com
or download the app



Follow us

