

Stay Healthy — All Year Round

No need to hibernate when autumn comes — there are plenty of ways to stay in shape, says Sarah Russell

Don't slip out of the exercise habit as the seasons change. Staying active through autumn and winter is one of the best things you can do for your long-term health. All you need are some simple exercise swaps and a positive mindset.



5 Seasonal Fitness Swaps

SWAP Tennis for Badminton

Badminton is great fun — especially a game of doubles — and great for mobility. You should be able to book a court at your local leisure centre and hire all the equipment you need. Your improved co-ordination and agility may well benefit your tennis game, too.

Cycling in winter isn't much fun, especially when it's wet and icy, so try something completely different like a dancing class such as ceroc, Zumba or salsa. Moving your body in a totally different way can be really refreshing and great for agility and balance.

SWAP
Cycling for
A Dance
Class

SWAP Running for Pilates

Swapping a run for a Pilates class might not seem an obvious choice, but it's actually one of the best ways for runners to avoid injury. The focus on

movement control and breathing, as well as strength and core stability, will all prove very beneficial and are sure to improve your running. Try a local class or find a local Body Pilates teacher by visiting www.bodycontrolpilates.com — or try the *Stott Pilates Basic Pilates* DVD, £12.50, from www.physicalcompany.co.uk

SWAP Swimming for Indoor Rowing

There's no reason to stop swimming during the winter, but it can become less enticing as the temperature drops. Using an indoor rowing machine will give a great workout, combining strength and cardiovascular fitness, similar to swimming. Try 10 minutes to start with and build up from there. Use one in the gym or you can hire one to use at home from Concept 2 for £39 per month (visit www.concept2.co.uk).

SWAP Walking for Yoga

There's nothing like an autumn stroll, when it's dry. If it's pouring, try out a yoga class instead. The meditative benefits are similar to that of a relaxing walk, your posture, flexibility and breathing all stand to improve.

Embrace The Cold

There's nothing like a brisk walk on a stunning autumn day to lift the spirits. Stride out, breathe in the fresh air and revel in the beautiful, changing colours for the ultimate mood booster. Find a local walking club or Nordic walking class for company and regular group sessions. Many leisure centres offer Health Walks, led by a group leader, which are not only great for your fitness, but a good way to make new friends. To check on local health walks, visit www.walkingforhealth.org.uk Or, to find a local group and top tips on walking, visit The Ramblers' website at www.getwalking.org



Keeping On Track



If motivation is a problem for you, here are five great ways to keep your exercise regime going:

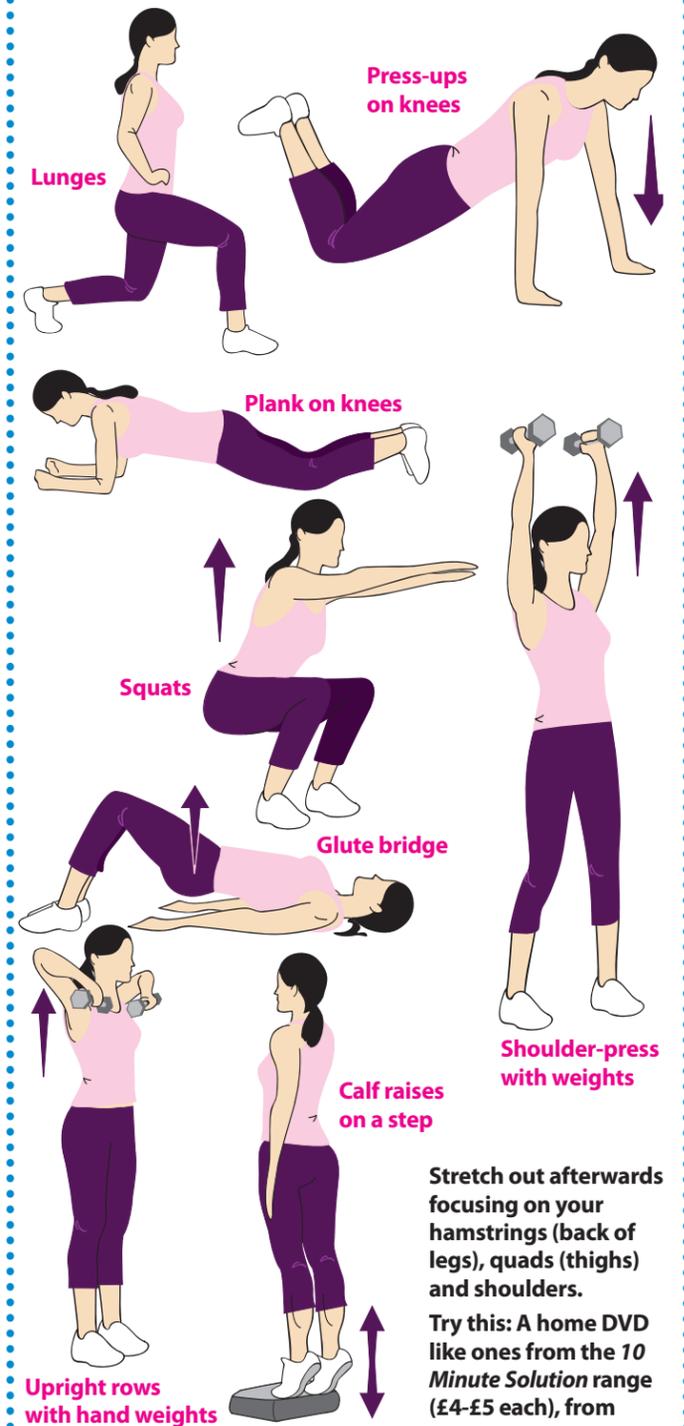
- ★ Commit to exercise sessions with a friend — you'll both be more motivated and won't want to let each other down.
- ★ Find a group or club in your area. Perhaps you could get out of your comfort zone with an activity you've never tried before, such as bowls or badminton.
- ★ Sign up for a weekly class with a friend.
- ★ Try booking some appointments with a good personal trainer.
- ★ Focus on using the colder months to work on your base fitness, or strength for your summer sport

Your Home Gym

It's simple and convenient to exercise at home. All you need is some floor space, a mat and some small hand weights (1.5-2kg to start with). A 15-20 minute workout three times a week will help keep you toned and fit. Try mixing up your own combination of Pilates-style moves with some stretching and strengthening exercises.

15-MINUTE MINI CIRCUIT

Do each exercise for 30 seconds, without resting between, then move on to the next exercise. Then repeat two or three times.



Stretch out afterwards focusing on your hamstrings (back of legs), quads (thighs) and shoulders. Try this: A home DVD like ones from the *10 Minute Solution* range (£4-£5 each), from www.amazon.co.uk

Photos: Alamy, Getty, Jump. Illustrations: Martyn Matthews

Make Darker Days Work For You

Instead of thinking, 'It's too cold, too dark, I don't like this time of year', adopt a "can-do" mental approach to exercising — like this:

- ★ 'It might be dark/cold/raining (or all three), but I can still use the treadmill indoors.'
- ★ 'I could go to that Zumba class I've been meaning to try out for ages.'
- ★ 'I'll make the most of being indoors and work on my stretching and mobility with a yoga class.'
- ★ 'I'll sign up for challenge in the spring, such as the Swimathon or a bike ride, which will keep me focused on my training.'
- ★ 'This is just the time to join a new club or group — I'll see what's out there.'

Dark mornings can make getting out of bed a real struggle. Try using a "wake-up" light, such as the Lumie Bodyclock ACTIVE (£99.95, from www.lumie.com). It wakes you gently with a gradual, brightening light and can help reset your body rhythms. The light stimulates the production of hormones that help with your get up and go, making you feel more awake and refreshed, so more likely to embrace your fitness plan.