

## Top 10 health reasons to take a hike!

**10. Feel more alert and refreshed.** thanks to the increased circulation from exercise.

**9. Let the sun shine in.** Sunshine triggers Vitamin D, which reduces muscle and bone pain; colon, breast, pancreatic, and prostate cancer; osteoporosis; rheumatoid arthritis; MS; heart disease and strokes; diabetes; and gum disease.

**8. Relieve pain naturally.** Exercise increases endorphins, which have all-natural, pain-killing ability similar to morphine.

**7. Control your weight.** A regular walking program, mile for mile, packs the same calorie punch as running. Walking briskly for ½ hour burns 75-100 calories; add some hills to your walk, and burn 200-250 calories in ½ hour. Moderate-intensity walking is 100 steps per minute on level ground, according to the May 2009 issue of *American Journal of Preventive Medicine*. Surveys further show that 4 out of 5 women who start a walking program continue, while half of those who attempt other types of aerobic exercise drop out during the first few months.

**6. Build your bones.** Weight-bearing activity, such as hiking, builds bones. In addition, Vitamin D, provided by the sun, allows your body to absorb all-important calcium needed to build strong bones.

**5. Immediately decrease anxiety, tension, and blood pressure** with a 40-minute walk, regardless of how fast you walk, according to *Physician and Sports Medicine*.

**4. Sleep better.** Hiking and other moderate-intensity exercises raise serotonin levels, which in turn raise modest levels of dopamine ... and a little extra dopamine contributes to a good night's sleep.

**3. Improve your memory.** The brain's hippocampus plays a key role in long-term memory. But stress produces cortisol, which decreases the amount of glucose and oxygen going to the hippocampus ... which reduces our ability to remember. There are 11 steps to restore the hippocampus – and hiking provides 6 of them:

- \* Playing (increases serotonin)
- \* Exercise (increases your body temp)
- \* Quiet time
- \* Art and nature (increases endorphins and serotonin)
- \* One hour of sunlight per day
- \* Positive attitude, which determines brain chemistry

**2. Relieve depression.** According to a recent study by Duke University, exercise may relieve depression as much as the antidepressant Zoloft. Another study shows that exercise activates the VGF gene, which changes the actual structure and link *between* brain cells (not just the chemicals *surrounding* cells) that is needed for depression to lift. AND, studies show that Vitamin D, which comes from the sun, drastically helps mood.

**1. Build your immune system.** Exercise increases the disease-fighting activities of your body's immune cells, and it builds healthy bones, muscles and joints. Exercise also cuts heart disease, colon cancer, diabetes, arthritis pain, high blood pressure, and cholesterol.