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Trimming that winter belly fat? Time to get outside

Celia Milne
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Beige may be the new black, but the plank is the new sit-up.

Need to get rid of winter belly fat? Eating well is key, but so is exercise.

The best prescription, according to two fitness experts, is to get outside and walk, run, or play. After you've done some cardio, focus on your tummy. Crunches (sit-ups) are out, says Shawna Kaminski, a certified boot camp instructor in Calgary. The plank is in.

The plank, which is done in a position similar to a push-up, except the elbows and lower arms are on the floor, targets the abdominal area and is much safer and easier to learn than crunches.

“Hold the position for as long as you can. As you get stronger, hold it for longer periods,” says Kaminski. “You’ll have a stronger, flatter tummy.” The bonus: Having a strong core will reduce back aches and improve posture.

Another amazing exercise, which can be done anywhere, anytime, is the good, old-fashioned push-up.

“There is nothing new or glamorous about doing push-ups, but they work!” says Kaminski, who has been a physical education teacher for 20 years, as well as a national competitor in swimming and freestyle skiing, a bodybuilder, and a certified adventure boot camp instructor (<http://www.calgaryNWBootCamp.com>).

Push-ups work muscles of the upper body such as your chest, shoulders and triceps — as well as your core muscles. If done regularly, they’ll also do wonders for those “Hello Ednas,” the pesky flab flaps behind your arms.

If you can't do full push-ups, do them with your knees on the ground.



Outdoor boot camps — which provide the incomparable value of exercising with a group, getting fresh air and having fun all at the same time — are exploding across the country.

“My clients tell me they prefer to exercise outdoors because they find gyms stuffy and sweaty and they worry about germs. Plus, you can’t beat the amazing scenery,” says Sandra Banks, a certified personal trainer in Vancouver (<http://www.vancouveroutdoorfitness.ca>).

You don’t need a lot of fancy equipment to exercise outdoors, says Kaminski. Curbs can be used as steps. Benches can be used for push-ups. Light poles can be used with tubing.

“You are only limited by your imagination. How long has it been since you tried the monkey bars? You’ll have new respect for children once you try this challenging upper body exercise,” she says. Aim for losing weight slowly: One or two pounds a week.

“If you have a lot of weight to lose, plan on attending boot camp or some other exercise regime long term,” advises Kaminski.

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