

Why Morning Walks Are Good For You

By Liesl Hall

Photo Credit: Liesl Hall

Who doesn't love going on a morning walk when the sky is just starting to be lighted and the air is cool and smells like pine trees? In the White Mountains, residents have no problem going outside and enjoying the crisp mountain air. In the city, there are too many people, too many stoplights and too much smog but in the mountains? We are lucky to be able to walk outside our door and know that the air is clean and that the woods are ours to explore.

Other than pure enjoyment, there are a few other reasons why morning walks are actually great for you.

- 1 They boost your mental energy.** When you first wake up, sometimes you're groggy and it's hard to clear your head and think properly. Studies show that taking walks in the mornings can actually help you think better for the rest of the day. When your blood gets pumping early in the morning, your brain is more likely to be active throughout the day.
- 2 Exercising in the morning works your muscles harder than if you exercise in the afternoon.** There's a study that shows that if you work out in the morning, your muscles have to work twice as hard for the rest of the day just to keep up with your normal activities which ends up burning way more calories than if you wait and work out at night. Basically, you'll get double the calorie burn if you take a morning walk versus if you walk later in the afternoon. (But walking in the afternoon is WAY better than not walking at all so, if you can only walk in the afternoons, by all means do it!)
- 3 Fresh air is vital to a healthy system.** As it turns out, outdoor pollution is bad for your health but indoor pollutants are far worse. The [EPA New England](#) states that indoor pollutants are normally two to five (and up to 100) times higher than outdoor pollutants. And according to the California Air Resources Board, "indoor air-pollutants are 25-62% greater than outside levels and this difference poses a serious risk to health." Such health risks include heart disease, lung cancer, chronic bronchitis and asthmatic attacks. Go on those morning walks to give your lungs a break.
- 4 It improves mental health.** Spending time in nature has been linked to [improved attention spans](#) (short and long term), [boosts in serotonin](#) (the feel good neurotransmitter) and [shows increased activity](#) in the parts of the brain responsible for empathy, emotional stability and love (whereas urban environments do the same for fear and anxiety).
- 5 It will improve your sleep.** Our sleep patterns are regulated by an internal body clock called the circadian rhythm which is naturally tied to the sun's schedule. Spending too much time inside – away from natural light and with increased exposure to artificial light -- can mess up our circadian rhythms thus disrupting our sleep patterns. Early morning exposure to sunlight has been shown to help rejuvenate these sleep cycles.
- 6 It's beautiful outside. Enjoy nature!** Especially in the White Mountains, morning walks mean you get to see the beautiful sunrise! The photos in this article were captured during

a morning walk while the sun was rising. Those clouds look dangerously close to spilling out their contents!

So, go out in the mornings; go for a walk and know that while you are enjoying nature, you're giving your body some much needed TLC. Your body and your brain will thank you in more ways than one. And if you're lucky, you might get to see some of our wild critter friends doing the same!