

Here's to Your Health! The Benefits of Hiking

For so many years I led Boy Scouts on hikes and had wonderful experiences. As the years went on and I got older, I did less but this year I returned to my old Boy Scout Troop after 16 years and offered to help with their hikes. Did this bring back wonderful memories! Not only did this bring back memories but nice views, fresh air and the sounds and smells of nature. I encourage all of you – young and old – to follow my lead.



Hiking is a powerful cardio workout that can:

- Lower your risk of heart disease
- Improve your blood pressure and blood sugar levels
- Boost bone density, since walking is a weight-bearing exercise
- Build strength in your glutes, quadriceps, hamstrings, and the muscles in your hips and lower legs
- Strengthen your core
- Improve balance
- Help control your weight
- Boost your mood

Here are some tips:

If you have not done hiking, **start slowly**. A short, local hike is best for beginners. Gradually work up to trails with hills or uneven terrain.

Use poles. Digging into the ground and propelling yourself forward pushes your upper body muscles to work harder and gives you a stronger cardio workout.

Bring a buddy. It's best not to hike alone at first, especially on unfamiliar or remote trails. A partner or group can help you navigate and assist if you get hurt.

Know before you go. Familiarize yourself with the trail map. Check the weather, and dress and pack accordingly.

For a comprehensive list, check out this article [Hiking Tips](#) that I wrote after reading about a hiker that got lost. I believe that all hikers would benefit from these tips.

Also, for you scouters, here's a helpful one pager on [Those First Hikes](#). It is focused on planning hikes to keep the boys coming back.