

Take a Hike!

By Shelby Worts, BSc, ND

Growing up on the Niagara Escarpment I have had many adventures on our local trails; Bruce Trail, Kolapore, Three-Stage, local ski hills and more! Hiking around here is an invigorating experience... and being mindful of some basic essentials can make it all the more enjoyable for you.

Of course, one of the most essential issues is **hydration**. Staying well hydrated is not only vital for you on a survival level... but you may be surprised by how it can influence your energy too. Don't wait until you feel fatigued to drink though, once you feel thirsty you are already well on your way to being dehydrated. I recommend investing in a good hydration system (such as CamelBak) which holds a bladder of water in a backpack that you sip, virtually hands-free, through a tube that loops over your shoulder. No stopping to pull a bottle out of your pack or fumbling with lids when you have a great system like this!

If you are going to be gone for more than an hour be sure to take some trail-friendly **snacks** with you. Fruit (fresh or dried, but fresh will also provide extra hydration) and raw nuts work well. If you take a snack bar be sure to carry the wrapper out with you to dispose of appropriately!

When you find your **energy** beginning to wane there are a few things you can try. Firstly, take a few sips of water. Snowshoeing a couple of years ago I thought I was incredibly out of shape before reaching the top of the first incline... until I stopped for a mouthful of water and was suddenly fully reinvigorated! You can also stop for a few minutes to 'catch your breath' and take in the views... or this may be the perfect time to try one of your packed snacks. Of course, always be sure to fuel-up with nourishing food prior to commencing your hike; no point trying to enjoy your hike on an empty tank! If shortness of breath is a problem for you, which none of the above suggestions alleviate, be sure to consult your healthcare provider.

Pace yourself. Two things that 3 weeks of Outward Bound in the BC mountains taught me were to shorten my pace (especially on the inclines) and to take the hills in a zig-zag pattern; to prevent injury as well as aid endurance. I still adhere to these guidelines today, touring our local Niagara Escarpment, and notice a great improvement in the stamina of my joints and muscles.

When injury does happen, **Traumeel** ointment is a great remedy to keep in your pack. Applying this to unbroken skin helps reduce inflammation, swelling and bruising. When you get home be sure to **ice** any bothersome joints that may be warmer than the rest of your body. A post-hike hot-tub can feel wonderful to tired muscles... but be sure to ice those joints again when you get out.

Try your hike in **silence**. Trust me, just try it!

If you are looking for a more full-body workout, consider hiking with ski **poles**; these are particularly helpful on the steep inclines. And on the steep declines be sure to mind your **knees** as this part of the hike is especially hard on these joints. So often it is tempting to sit down and relax after a long hike but this is when it is especially important to **stretch**; I am guilty of this too! Pay particular attention to your quads, calves, hamstrings and hip flexors; you will appreciate these 5 minutes when you wake the next morning!

Lastly, always be sure to let somebody know where you are going **especially if you are hiking alone**. And carry a mobile phone, because even the most experienced explorer can turn an ankle when their eyes are taking in the beauty of their surroundings rather than the trail beneath their feet.

If your joints, mobility or energy level are preventing you from truly enjoying your outdoor adventures consider consulting a licensed naturopathic doctor to explore ways you can feel better.

The trails await you... now get out there and have fun this season!

Make your own sports drink!

2 cups coconut water*

2 Lg Medjool dates, pitted and soaked in hot water ~5minutes

1 tsp raw coconut oil*

Juice from ½ lemon and ¼ lime

Celtic sea salt* to taste

Combine all ingredients in blender and enjoy before your hike.

*these products are available at most health food stores

Source: Thrive Fitness, by Brendan Brazier