



WALK KANSAS

K-STATE
Research and Extension

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2025 Week Four



Nature-Based Physical Activity

Staying active is essential for your health, but is there a difference between indoor and outdoor exercise? Studies show that physical activity in natural settings, green and blue spaces, is more beneficial than exercising indoors.

There is even a fancy name for outdoor workouts – Physical Activity in Natural Settings (PANS). This includes any activity in natural environments, like parks, trails, forests, lakes, beaches, oceans – these wonderful green and blue spaces. Think about kayaking on a lake, jogging through a park, hiking a forest trail, cycling along a scenic path, or practicing yoga in your backyard or even on a beach. Being active in these settings offers specific benefits you can't get from walking on a treadmill in your basement.

Exercising in nature can help lower your heart rate and blood pressure. People spend about 90% of their time indoors, and most of that time is spent sitting. In addition to a sedentary lifestyle, the air indoors can be two to five times more polluted than air outside.

Indoor workouts certainly have their place, and sometimes you just don't have another option. Weather, allergies, and accessibility or safety concerns can force people indoors.

This week, challenge yourself to explore the options you have and identify green and blue spaces in your community where you can enjoy outdoor activity. Find safe, accessible natural settings and then check weather and air quality conditions. Plan ahead for at least one day per week where you can transition to the outdoors. Be prepared and bring a water bottle, skin protection, your phone, and wear proper clothing. Be aware of potential hazards like ticks, insects, and wildlife so you can have a safe and enjoyable outdoor experience.

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Take an Awe Walk

While awe exists in many places, you can cultivate awe through an “awe walk” – walking within a place of meaning and beauty, where your sole task is to encounter something that amazes and transcends. You can find awe in a new or familiar place. Once you start to think about awe and try to practice it in your life, you will experience moments that bring you wonder and maybe even goosebumps.

Here are steps to help you practice a guided awe walk. While you can experience awe indoors, it is meant to be taken outside, to a space that either feels familiar and brings you peace or a new and inspiring place.

1. Once you are in the space for your awe walk, start with the breath. Breathe in, deeply, and count to six (slowly) as you inhale and six as you exhale. Feel the air move through your nasal passage. Notice the sound of your breath. Breathe out through pursed lips.
2. As you are walking, feel your feet on the ground and listen to the sounds around you. Return to your breath, count to six as you inhale and six as you exhale.
3. Now, shift your awareness and notice what is around you. Be open to things that are vast, unexpected, that delight and surprise you. Notice colors, scent, and sounds. Count to six as you inhale and six as you exhale.
4. Be open to exploration and awe. You may be in awe of vast spaces and the sounds within them. Or, you may shift to the details, noticing veins on leaves, clusters of tiny mushrooms, birds or insects around you, a tiny bubbling stream.
5. Now, bring your attention back to the breath. Count to six as you inhale and six as you exhale. Wonder happens when we are delighted by things that surprise us, and you will often feel a sense of wonder after an awe walk experience.

An awe walk can help you connect with something larger than yourself, and encourages you to be present in the moment and appreciate the beauty of your surroundings. It can help you slow down and gain a greater sense of perspective. Awe walks can help combat malaise and worry and can foster a sense of community and connectedness, even when experienced alone. Enjoy an awe walk this week.



Breath Fresh, Train Smart, Stay Safe!

Did you know a pedestrian always has the right of way at a crosswalk? Just be sure to use one. (Pedestrians

always have the right of way, regardless of the situation.) Here are tips to safely use a crosswalk. Never enter a crosswalk without looking to see if there are cars turning or nearby. Even though pedestrians have the right of way, drivers don't always pay attention. Check to make sure every lane of traffic you'll be crossing is clear. Try to make eye contact with drivers before you cross, so they recognize you are there. While it could be faster and easier to cross in the middle of a block, national data from NHTSA in 2021 showed that 75% of pedestrian fatalities happened at locations that were not intersections. Drivers should be aware of pedestrians at an intersection. Crosswalks are there for you, so use them!

Courtney Nowland,
Kansas Traffic Safety Resource Office

Walk Kansas Webinars

April 16: Your Heart and Diabetes: A Close Connection

April 23: Resistance Exercise – Getting Started

May 7: Foot Care

May 14: Blue Zones: Keys to Living Longer and Better

Time: 12:10 p.m.



Link to join or scan the QR code below:

<https://ksu.zoom.us/j/97410290196>

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Kansas State University Walk Kansas

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Vary Your Protein

Americans generally eat enough protein, but struggle to get the variety recommended through the dietary guidelines and the Mediterranean eating style. Mixing up protein sources helps increase dietary fiber, reduce saturated fat and sodium, and increase intake of vitamins and minerals.

Strive to change and vary your protein by choosing beans, nuts and seeds, fish and seafood, white meat poultry, eggs, and fat-free dairy and lean meats. Limit higher-fat dairy and meat, dark meat poultry, and highly processed meat like bacon and deli meats. This Protein Choice Continuum is a great visual (<https://medinsteadofmeds.com/tips-and-tools/change-your-protein/>).

Most healthy adults should consume 0.8 grams per kilogram of body weight, which translates to around 56 grams for men and 46 grams for women. This recipe packs protein from fish and quinoa, a seed that is commonly used like a grain in cooking. Quinoa is a complete protein, it's high in fiber, and packed with vitamins and minerals. It can be a beneficial part of a diet for managing blood sugar levels, because of a relatively low glycemic index, meaning it doesn't cause a rapid spike in blood sugar like refined grains.

Tilapia/Quinoa Bowl with Roasted Veggies

Makes 2 servings

Ingredients:

1 medium zucchini, sliced
½ bell pepper, sliced
1 carrot, peeled and sliced
½ onion, sliced
6 asparagus spears, remove tough/thick bottom
3 whole cloves garlic, peeled and minced
3½ tablespoons olive oil
½ tablespoon fresh thyme or ½ teaspoon dried
Salt and pepper to taste
1/3 cup quinoa
2/3 cup low sodium vegetable or chicken stock
2 4- to 5-ounce tilapia fillets
1 teaspoon lemon pepper or seafood seasoning
1 tablespoon balsamic vinegar
½ teaspoon Dijon mustard

Directions:

1. Wash hands with soap and water.
2. Preheat oven to 425°F
3. Prepare produce and rinse under cold running water. Slice zucchini, pepper, carrot, and onion into ¼-inch to ½-inch slices and place in a large bowl. Add minced garlic and 1 tablespoon olive oil. Stir and place veggies on a roasting pan. Sprinkle with thyme and season with a pinch of salt and pepper.

4. Roast in the oven until vegetables are softened and caramelized, about 30 to 35 minutes. Add asparagus to the pan after 20 minutes.
5. While vegetables are roasting, make the quinoa and tilapia. Place the quinoa and vegetable/chicken broth in a small saucepan and bring to a boil over high heat. Cover the pot and reduce heat to low and simmer 12 to 15 minutes.
6. Heat a medium-sized skillet on medium heat. Add 1 tablespoon olive oil and swirl to coat bottom of skillet. Add tilapia fillets and sprinkle with lemon pepper or seafood seasoning. Cook for 4 minutes and then carefully turn the fish over and finish cooking for another 3 to 4 minutes. Remove from heat when the internal temperature is 140°F.
7. Whisk remaining 1½ tablespoons of olive oil with the balsamic vinegar and Dijon mustard in a small bowl.
8. Divide the quinoa and roasted vegetables between two bowls and drizzle on the dressing. Top with a tilapia fillet and serve.

Nutrition Information per serving: 510 calories; 27 g total fat (4 g saturated fat, 0 g trans fat); 35 g carbohydrates; 9 g total sugars; 35 g protein; 5 g fiber; 460 mg sodium.

