

5 Smart Ways to Make Your Fitness Habits Greener

Some exercise routines can have a major environmental impact, like driving to the gym, walking on an electric treadmill, using electric weight machines, and driving home or to work. Here are five smart ways to easily green up your fitness routine.

1. Walk or bike more, drive less.

Can you walk, bike, share a ride, or take the bus to the gym a couple days a week? How about substituting a long walk for one or two of your gym workouts? Walking outside is just as good for your body as walking on an indoor treadmill. Research also suggests outdoor activity may have actually have more psychological benefits.

2. Pick up some recyclables along the way.

Want to pitch in to clean up the environment? Bring a bag on your next walk to the gym. That way, you can pick up the inevitable bottles and cans and recycle them when you get back home. Want to be a really good environmental steward? Adopt unofficially a block or mile near work or home. Make it a habit to pick up the recyclables and/or trash.

3. Rethink your sports drink.

Drinking plenty of water is a healthy habit and especially important when you are active in hot or humid weather. However, throwing away empty water and drink bottles is not at all healthy for the environment, since billions of plastic bottles end up in landfills. Get into the habit of reusing your own BPA-free plastic, metal, or glass bottle.

4. Get your gym to start thinking green.

Many fitness centers are going green with recycling bins, water coolers to refill bottles, energy audits, and other eco-practices. As a dues-paying member, you can push your gym into greener habits by making suggestions to the management. If your center is a non-profit or community effort, like a YMCA or YWCA, discuss your eco-concerns with the board.

5. Check out eco-friendly options in fitness gear.

Equipment and apparel companies are also jumping on the green track. There are products, like yoga mats, made from recycled materials and clothing from renewable resources such as wool and bamboo. Your greenest option is often the one that saves you green too: Buy good quality gear, take good care of it, and use it for as long as you possibly can.