

Smart Ways to Get Fit for Successful Hunting

Hunting is a mentally and physically demanding activity - where strength, stamina, focus, and concentration are as important as having the proper equipment and the right location. Being out of shape can ruin a long anticipated hunting trip - and lead to serious injuries, heart attacks, and even deaths. Getting fit beforehand will improve your physical endurance, your mental concentration, and your enjoyment. **Bottom line:** Don't put yourself - or your companions - at risk during hunting season. Think ahead and put the necessary time and energy into improving your physical fitness level. That way, you can be successful and feel great during your entire hunting trip.

Allow six weeks (minimum) to get into better shape.

If you are significantly overweight or have any health concerns (high blood pressure, elevated blood sugar, shortness of breath, etc.), talk to your health provider before beginning any new exercise or fitness regimen. This is especially important if you are over 40 years old and/or use tobacco products. **If you are currently in poor physical condition, it will take concentrated effort for a minimum of six weeks to reach a reasonable level of physical fitness.**

Start slowly, increase gradually, and be consistent.

Although you may be tempted to rush out, pump hard, and try to recreate the physical exploits of your youth, that is exactly the wrong way to approach getting fit. Slow and steady is definitely the way to get in shape most effectively - especially if you are currently a confirmed couch potato. Gradually add moderately intense activity (where you sweat but are able to carry on a conversation) until **you are active for 30 to 60 minutes on most days of the week.**

Focus on flexibility, endurance, and strength.

Successful hunting requires all types of fitness: flexibility to climb tree stands or kneel in the field; endurance to hike long distances over rough terrain; and strength to carry equipment and dressed meat. You'll need a workout program that emphasize all aspects of fitness: **Aerobic activity (walking, biking, etc.) to build endurance and cardiovascular fitness, weight lifting for strength (3 days per week), and carefully stretching to improve flexibility and balance.**

Find a workout buddy.

Fitness experts know that being accountable to another person can be one of the most important keys to success. If you know that someone else is counting on you for an early morning walk or trip to the gym, you are much more likely to stick with the plan. **A workout partner can be anyone who has the same basic fitness goals as you - your spouse, a child or grandchild, a friend from work, or one of your usual hunting companions.**

Looking for a simple program designed with the physical needs of hunters in mind?

The South Dakota Department of Health has developed a six-week, step-by-step conditioning program specifically for hunters. *Training for the Hunt* has weekly instructions on both physical and nutrition conditioning and is available at www.healthysd.gov/HealthyHunter/conditioning.pdf