

YEARLONG CHALLENGE: 1,000 Hours Outside

Spending more time outdoors is healthy for all ages

A new kind of New Year's resolution is gaining traction in recent years: to spend 1,000 hours outside in one year.

The challenge to spend 1,000 hours outside in a year was originally aimed at giving parents a solid goal to spend time with their children outside and to minimize screen time. But, spending more time outside can benefit kids and adults alike.

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), spending time outdoors can improve overall health and wellness by promoting mental health and stress improvement and by providing opportunities for physical activity. Having little to no sun exposure may put a person at risk for low levels of vitamin D.

Studies have also shown that time in nature is relaxing, which reduces stress, cortisol levels, muscle tension, and heart rates.

Whether your goal is to improve your mental health, physical health, or to reduce your screen time, taking the 1,000 Hours Challenge can be a great way to facilitate meeting your health goals in a new way this year.

Evenly spaced throughout the year, spending 1,000 hours outside would require 2.7 hours outside every day, no matter the weather. Some challenge participants decrease their outside time on foul weather days and increase the time when the weather is better. Don't let the cooler temperatures of winter discourage you from spending time outside - a good coat, gloves, and footwear can go a long way, especially if your body is moving and keeping you warm.

A good routine can go a long way, too. During milder weather, remote workers can enjoy lunch or conference calls on their deck or patio. Families with dogs already have a great excuse to spend time outside, no matter the weather. Committing to an hourlong walk every day gets you more than one third of the way there. Perhaps commit to a picnic dinner once a week from April through October.

There's also natural extensions of the everyday which provide more opportunities. Many parents can get hours outside just by attending sports games and practices throughout the year. Instead of eating inside a restaurant, eat outside. Intentionally pick social gatherings and family fun activities that get you outside, like live music at a winery or taking the kids to a local festival on the weekend instead of a movie.

And, as always, make sure you protect yourself from ultraviolet rays from the sun with appropriate clothing and applying and re-applying a broad-spectrum sunscreen even in the winter.



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WAYS To Get Outside In the Winter and Beyond



- 1 Take a winter hike at Calvert Cliffs State Park in Lusby or at American Chestnut Land Trust in Port Republic
- 2 Bundle up on a sunny winter day for walk with a travel mug of hot tea
- 3 Go sledding
- 4 Borrow a birdwatching guide from the library and go outside to discover what feathered friends you find
- 5 Visit a local park, which are still open in the winter - bring your own children to the playground or offer to help out a parent for an hour or two
- 6 Enjoy walking the trails or playing in the Fairy Lolly at Annmarie Gardens in Solomons
- 7 Attend one of many outdoor local events throughout the year, like the Calvert County Fair, various farmers markets, or enjoy the fireworks on the 4th of July
- 8 Be a fantastic cheerleader at the soccer game of a niece or nephew, or at a high school football, soccer, or baseball game
- 9 Spend a day splashing at Cove Point Pool, Kings Landing Pool, or Chesapeake Beach Water Park
- 10 Dine outdoors at one of the many locally owned restaurants
- 11 Pick a local landmark to visit in all four seasons and document it with a photo
- 12 Rent a kayak or canoe
- 13 Go fishing at a local pier or with a charter boat (*or a friend's boat if you're lucky!*)
- 14 Organize a backyard game of kickball
- 15 Mix up your neighborhood walks by offering to walk a friend's dog, inviting a neighbor along, or listening to an audiobook or podcast while you walk
- 16 Use technology to explore local plant life while you explore outdoors. Some smartphones have a built-in capability to identify plants. *There are several plant identification apps available as well.*
- 17 Join in on the fun with your children and purchase a bike or scooter for yourself to use for some outdoor fun that reminds you of childhood
- 18 Spend some time at a winery with an outdoor space
- 19 Take your lunch break or conference call outside
- 20 Pack a snack plate (*or pick up a pizza*) for dinner and head to a local beach or park for a picnic
- 21 Have a backyard campout
- 22 Walk around one of Southern Maryland's small towns - North Beach, Chesapeake Beach, Solomons or Leonardtown (*follow local events in the area*)
- 23 Hunt for fossils, shark teeth or sea glass at a local beach
- 24 Host an outdoor gathering
- 25 Start a garden

Join the CalvertHealth 1000 Hours
CHALLENGE!

Scan the QR Code
and sign up today.

