



into the wilderness

get outside

Pre-Adventure Training & Diet for reNEW & reCALL

Few experiences convey a sense of well-being better than a walk through an old-growth forest or up to and along a breathtaking ridgeline. To reap those intangible rewards, it's best if you first prepare yourself with some basic, tangible benefits of sensible physical conditioning.

Getting in Shape for ITW

The amount of conditioning you need depends on your current fitness level and the kinds of trips you have planned.

If you exercise regularly, you may be ready for short trips and easy terrain right now. But if you don't get as much exercise as you'd like, set up a basic training regimen prior to your first trip to wake up sleeping muscles and get your lungs working more efficiently.

The best way to train for trekking with a backpack is to mimic the activity as closely as possible.

Start Moving

- Begin with shorter, less strenuous treks and a light backpack. Nothing gets muscles ready for the trail better than the trail itself. Start with shorter treks and minimal elevation gain carrying a light daypack.
- Gradually increase the length and elevation of your treks and increase your backpack load. As you begin to strengthen your lower body and improve your endurance, switch to longer, more challenging treks. If you have access to a backpack, you can load your backpack with the gear and weight you are most likely to carry and it will help you become familiar with conditions you will face deep in . If you don't have a chance to hike the great outdoors as much as you'd like, find the next-best option.

Hit the Gym

If you've not done any weight training previously, a good, all-round [beginner's workout program](#) is the place to start. I recommend training 3 times a week with weights, CrossFit or Stability Ball training (see below).

- You need strong trapezius muscles, the muscles radiating out from the base of the neck. This is where the shoulder harness sits. Robust "traps" helps prevent soreness. (Theoretically most of the weight should be taken on the hips, but it doesn't always work that way, depending on pack design and body shape.)
- The abdominal muscles work hard trying to stabilize that pack when you twist and turn; you need to have good strong abs.
- The muscles of the upper and mid back continually contract trying to stabilize the pack from slipping one way or another, especially with very heavy packs. Novice hikers and backpackers often get a dull pain right in the middle of the shoulder blades.

- The lower back takes a hammering from lifting the load and the twisting of the posterior chain of muscles when loading the pack onto the back.
- The shoulder of the arm that you use to load and unload the pack is most important indeed because it does a lot of work at unusual angles of load. The rotator cuff of the shoulder is particularly vulnerable to these angular loads.
- And last but not least, you support all this weight on two legs and often you're required to squat and stand with that pack on your back. Strong legs, especially the thighs, make a difference to the efficiency and enjoyment of trekking with a backpack.

This is a summary of the muscle and strength analysis of carrying a heavy backpack. Follow up the beginner's program with a more advanced [strength workout program](#) if you really want to get strong for hiking and trekking with a backpack.

I strongly recommend *crossfit training* and *stability ball training* as invaluable methods of strength and muscle training for outdoor adventure training. They cost little to nothing, can be done in shorter periods of time and target your CORE muscles which are some of the most important muscles in training.

CrossFit Training

[CrossFit](#) is a core strength and conditioning program. It was designed to elicit as broad an adaptational response as possible. CrossFit is not a specialized fitness program but a deliberate attempt to optimize physical competence in each of ten recognized fitness domains. They are Cardiovascular and Respiratory endurance, Stamina, Strength, Flexibility, Power, Speed, Coordination, Agility, Balance, and Accuracy.

Exercise resources

http://running.competitor.com/2011/05/training/brian-mackenzies-12-week-crossfit-endurance-advanced-training-program_28400

<http://www.crossfit.com/cf-download/Foundations.pdf>

Stability Ball Training

The [stability ball](#) (also called an exercise ball, Swiss ball, or physioball) is a simple yet versatile piece of training equipment that you can use to train your entire body with fun and innovative moves. Stability ball training is effective in building balance, stability, and pillar strength. You can find stability balls at most gyms, and they can be purchased at sporting goods stores or [online](#).

Exercise resources and further reading

<http://www.ball-exercises.com/>

<http://www.coreperformance.com/knowledge/training/stability-ball-training-101.html>

Aerobic Fitness

Now that you've got the body to support that pack you need the fitness to be able to haul it long distances. Weight training will give you some of that but it won't provide the really strong endurance over several hours that a good cardio aerobic program will provide. You need to get on the treadmill or bike or out on the road and get the heart rate up to your

target heart rate ($220 - \text{age} \times .75 = \text{target heart rate}$) for up for 30 to 45 minutes at least 3 times each week.

Use the Resources Around You

- Climb the stairs in your apartment, office or around the neighborhood. Take the stairs whenever possible. Walking or running up and down them on a regular basis is terrific pre-trail training. You can even mimic step aerobics by just running up 1 step and then back down, repeating the motion.
- Walk instead of driving. If you can perform certain routine chores by leaving your car keys in your pocket, do it. Walk to the library, the park or the store. Toss a weighted daypack on your back for a little extra benefit.
- If you've got a bike, start pedaling. Cycling is an excellent way to condition your legs and increase endurance.

NOTE: Jogging is a popular training option for people trying to get in shape for trekking with a backpack. But use caution if you're not already a runner, since jogging can also lead to muscle strains that trekking with a backpack may aggravate.

Time Frame

How long will it take to get into condition for trekking with a backpack? That depends on you. The better shape you're in now, the quicker you can cultivate the conditioning needed for a long-haul trip. The more diligence you show in your conditioning efforts, and the more lead time you allow yourself, the happier you'll be on the trail.

Be patient and listen to your body. Try to do some form of exercise at least 3 times a week for a minimum of 30 minutes and get out on the trails for shorter treks as soon as possible with your backpack.

It is also valuable to keep track of your training. You can download our "Training Schedule" and keep a log of your weekly training and diet.

Before starting any exercise program, it is wise to consult a physician.

Diet

A lot can be said regarding what you should and shouldn't eat for training. These are some guidelines that can be helpful and should be done in moderation. We prefer to eat smaller meals and more frequently while training. Simply put we recommend eating 5-6 meals a day (about every 2 to 3 hours). A meal is a fist-full of carbohydrates (like whole grain pasta and rice) and a fist-full of proteins (like a chicken-breast or lean meat or nuts) 4 times a day. Then, you would add a fist-full of vegetables (vary this to get the full range of vitamins and minerals) to the carbohydrate and protein 2 times a day.

In addition, here are some additional guidelines for a training diet:

- Protein should be lean and varied and account for about 30% of your total caloric load.
- Carbohydrates should be predominantly low-glycemic and account for about 40% of your total caloric load.

- 👤 Fat should be predominantly monounsaturated and account for about 30% of your total caloric load.

Calories should be set at between .7 and 1.0 grams of protein per pound of lean body mass depending on your activity level. The .7 figure is for moderate daily workout loads and the 1.0 figure is for the hardcore athlete.

What should I eat?

In plain language, base your diet on garden vegetables, especially greens, lean meats, nuts and seeds, little starch, and no sugar. That's about as simple as we can get. Many have observed that keeping your grocery cart to the perimeter of the grocery store while avoiding the aisles is a great way to protect your health. Food is perishable. The stuff with long shelf life is all circumspect. If you follow these simple guidelines you will benefit from nearly all that can be achieved through nutrition.

What Foods should I avoid?

Excessive consumption of high-glycemic carbohydrates is the primary culprit in nutritionally caused health problems. High glycemic carbohydrates are those that raise blood sugar too rapidly. They include white rice, white bread, candy, potato, sweets, sodas, and most processed carbohydrates. Processing can include bleaching, baking, grinding, and refining. Processing of carbohydrates greatly increases their glycemic index, a measure of their propensity to elevate blood sugar.