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Maximizing Your "Game"

As a population, we need to move our bodies more and, ideally, engage as many muscle groups as we can! Maintaining and building strength and flexibility is particularly important as we age.

However, exercising at the gym is certainly not for everyone. Many of us are more apt to exercise if we are playing. Therefore, to maximize our exercise time and efficiencies, let's look at those activities and sports that – according to a sample of many different sources online – showed up most frequently as those that provide the best all-around exercise.

Swimming: You likely knew this would be on the list! Swimming is the perfect full-body workout that builds both strength and endurance for upper and lower body muscles, and for your heart! It is also easy on our aging joints.

[Click here](#) for some tips on how to get started in the pool, no matter your current fitness level.

Cross-Country Skiing: While widely accepted in the field of exercise physiology as "the best cardiovascular exercise known", cross-country skiing also uses a large percentage of your muscle mass and works out upper and lower body at the same time. It is a low-impact, joint-saving activity that gets you out into the healing power of nature!

Boxing: In the sample, boxing regularly appeared as a great cardio sport that tones the entire body. This doesn't mean you need to get into the ring and actually hit anyone, but there are many different boxing workouts and classes that can add interest and fun. It is also a great way to let go of stress and tension.

Racquet Sports: Squash, racquetball, and tennis target your back muscles, shoulders, arms, chest, quads, glutes, and hamstrings, while also working your core. Your heart will get a great workout too!

On the Water: Rowing, kayaking, canoeing, and paddleboarding offer a fun way to exercise as they all increase your heart rate, and boost both your strength, and endurance.

Martial Arts: Martial arts, like Karate, Judo, Kickboxing, or Tae-kwon-do, combine everything in sports that is good for the body: flexibility, movement, strength, speed, power, and endurance.

Biking: Biking, and especially mountain biking, increases cardiovascular fitness, boosts muscle strength, improves flexibility, and develops balance and coordination. This is another enjoyable sport that gets you out into nature.

Team Sports: Team sports can be a great way to get a total body workout, as well as improve your mental well-being due to the connection with others and the boost to your self-esteem! Sports such as basketball, and particularly hockey and soccer, provide an intense cardio workout as well as enhanced strength, flexibility, and endurance.

Sources

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A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'R. Morandini', with a stylized flourish at the end.

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If you would like to contribute or have ideas about what you would like to see in the ReFresh series, we would love to hear from you: contact rochelle@bcpvpa.bc.ca.