

Can I Stay Fit Without Training in a Traditional Gym?

By Karen McCoy



OK. Summer's here or you're heading on vacation and you'll be away from a gym, and you're wondering if you can still get a good workout without a gym. Yes and no.

- 1) If your goal is to continue to *build* muscle, and *sculpt* your body, then you must keep lifting. Period. The body needs constant and continual weight training to progress and stay well toned.
- 2) If your goal is to just *maintain* what you've built, then bodyweight exercises without added weights can help you keep what you have, provided you do it 4-5 times a week, 2-40 minutes.
- 3) If your goal is to not train all summer, then you'll lose tone and likely gain weight. After a 2 month break, expect to take 3-6 months to get back to where you were before you stopped. Sad, but true.

If you want to continue to carve and reshape your body, then you need to continue lifting weights. Nothing tones and shapes like weights. So use those dumbbells and barbells!

But many people don't want to bring weights with them, especially if they're traveling or camping, so non-weighted programs can *maintain* your fitness levels to a certain degree, but you *are* limited.

Let's look at it this way: occasionally, I'll have my group classes do circuits – non-stop boot camp-style functional moves like skipping, jumping jacks, and burpees to mix things up. Yes, they're breaking a good sweat, but it's limited. Skipping is going to make you sweat, but it isn't going to tighten your arms, shape your chest, and strengthen your back or glutes!



So what's a girl to do in the summer or while on vacation?

If you just don't want to be inside a gym on sunny days, then you have several options:

- 1) **The 2 Dumbbell Program:** Take 2 pairs of dumbbells outside and do some isolation exercises (shoulder presses, chest presses, squats, bicep curls) or do basic whole-body movements like push-ups, jump squats, lunges, jumping jacks. They will help you hang onto some of the shape you have. And if done non-stop, it will help to burn some fat also.

How do you choose the dumbbell weight? Grab a pair (try around 8-12 pounds) and do 15 shoulder presses in a row...if you can do more than 15, then you have to grab a heavier weight and try again...when you find a weight that you can't perform more than 15 reps with, that's your lower dumbbell weight and will be used on the tougher exercises like flys, kickbacks and presses.

Now take that weight and add on 5 pounds...this is what the second set of dumbbells should weigh. This is your upper dumbbell weight. This weight will be done on the exercises that need more weight, like chest presses, bicep curls and squats.

- 2) **Do MET (Metabolic Enhancement Training...our version of plyometrics):** Try a whole body MET routine, but remember, this kind of routine can actually be tougher than traditional weight training in many ways! MET and plyometrics will help with fat-burning, but will not carve and shape you like weights can, but they can certainly keep things tight, keep the weight off and keep you going until you can get back to the gym.

Choose 5-10 whole body moves in that MET program (we have LOTS in our www.warriorwomanfitness.com program under *At-Home / MET Workouts* tab.

You can also sprinkle these moves into your current weights workout, 10 minutes before or after, or in between bouts of traditional cardio. One of my favourites is 10 minutes on a cardio machine, 1-2 rounds of 10 plyometrics and back to the cardio machine for another 10. Bang, 30 minutes has passed, just like that!

A note about whole body MET / plyometric training: A lot of women love this type of training, as they love to get their heart rate up, sweat, and really feel a whole body pump. That's good But just remember, we need to also get back to the weights to carve and shape our bodies into something more than they are...if that's your goal. And repeated plyometrics can be tough on some people's joints – just look at the very high incidence of people getting hurt in **Crossfit**, a great workout philosophy but they clearly state you need to be at a certain level of fitness to do it. So don't be fooled, plyometric training is tough!

You need to build a program around your summertime travel goals. Make a commitment to *something*, otherwise you'll walk away with *nothing*, and feel discouraged come September. In the area of fitness, if you're not moving forward, then you're definitely moving backward.

Most people come back from summer with a few extra pounds, loss of tone and all their good eating habits went by the wayside...and it does take more time to get back to where you were, as aging women!

Remember the mantra: your metabolism is in your muscles, so when you lose muscle (which will happen in summer if you stop training), then you risk lowering your metabolism. So whatever you do, always try to up the ante (particularly true of plyometrics...add in more weight from an outside source, if you can, like a medicine ball or dumbbells...the progressive load principal applies here too!)

Have a happy, healthy summer and a great vacation! And keep moving....you'll feel better and be glad that you did!

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be the initials 'Ka' followed by a long horizontal stroke.