

RAIN OUR GARMENTS ARE OUR water supply, but it wreaks havoc on an outdoor training program. So what do you do when it's bucketing down outside? Sit at home and scowl?

Nope. Rain need not ruin your workout schedule. If you don't want to be a fair-weather fitness fan, you can find plenty of ways to stay active.

If light showers are falling you can still walk or run, but it's important to choose the right gear. Your jacket should be in a bright colour so motorists can spot you easily, and it should be hooded, lightweight and waterproof to keep your upper body dry. If it doesn't have a hood, wear a baseball cap and make sure the jacket zips up closely enough to keep the rain out of your collar. It pays to wear pure cotton next to your skin. Sweat isn't going to evaporate if your waterproof jacket doesn't breathe, and you may end up wet anyway.

For feet, choose all-terrain running shoes with vents to let water drain out. That will reduce the squish factor.

If it is really pouring, take your workout

gymnast can get a stationary bike on wheel trainers. These are inverted V-shaped devices that you set on the floor and clamp on to your bicycle. They're noisy, but they allow you to pedal away in the comfort of your own home.

They also provide a range of resistance levels. Place the bike in front of the VCR, pop in a tape and you're off. A fan can provide the air blast you'd get outside.

Cyclists who can tolerate health clubs can try group indoor cycling classes. If you're unfamiliar with the club's classes and instructors, ask the exercise director for help in finding the right format and music for you. Some instructors prefer long periods of super-fast routines off the saddle using low or no resistance. A cyclist might find this strange and difficult at first because the routine has no true equivalent in cycling outdoors.

Other instructors like using medium to high-resistance routines on and off the saddle to simulate cycling experiences such as hill climbing and sprinting.

Runners and walkers can do the same with the treadmill either at home or at a fitness centre. Or try an indoor running track. To keep from getting bored, bring

your own workout music. Having a running or walking partner to keep you company. Use the workout menu on the machine for variety.

If you prefer running in the pack, try treadmill-based trekking classes. Set to music, the classes use interval training for cardiovascular conditioning. Via headphones, an instructor tells the class when to change resistance and speed. This might do the trick for you if you like coaching, camaraderie and a little bit of healthy competition from the treadmill runner next to you.

Stormy days are also a good time to cross-train. Try a different activity, such as indoor rock climbing, boot camp, yoga or swimming. Don't overdo it, though. Your muscles won't be used to the movements and the workload of a new sport. Take it slowly!

While it is true that one of the keys to maintaining fitness is a workout schedule that is within your ability and that you can incorporate in your lifestyle, it is also important to build flexibility in with other options when Mother Nature forces you to diverge from your usual exercise routine.

inspiring ways to shape-up

Personal trainer Timo Topp says a lack of motivation doesn't justify a weekend spent on the lounge. It simply means you have to make your workout more creative.

the Five Tibetans

Pick up a copy from your video store of the Five Tibetan exercises – five relatively easy exercises with an eastern essence designed to stimulate your body's energy points, also known as chakras. The exercises are great for relaxation, and are proven by devoted practitioners to maintain youth, longevity and give you more energy.

book a massage

If you feel stressed, have been working long hours or have already been training all week, then it's important to let your body unwind. There's no better way to relax the muscles so that they release all those toxins that have accumulated all week than with a massage. There are all sorts of massages available, from Swedish to sports, depending on what you prefer.

go for a run anyway

So what if it's raining. Yes, you get wet, but it's invigorating once you get over the initial annoyance, and the rain keeps you cool.

take up a water sport

If the rain makes getting outdoors too unbearable, get wet anyway and take up a water sport. Try surfing, wind surfing, sailing or even go for a swim. Of course, there's always the indoor pool.

make love

Okay, so you don't need an excuse for this one. But sex is also known to be great cardio-vascular exercise, depending on your stamina and strength. The good news is that the stronger and fitter you are, the better and longer sex you will have. Good inspiration to get in training.