

## ***Hill Workouts Add New Life to Outdoor Cardio Exercise***

*By Blue Chip Fit Staff  
Dan Healy and Robert Steffeck*

If you are looking to add some new life to your cardiovascular training program, try hill workouts. Even in Chicago we have several hills which are perfect spots to reap the benefits of hill running, jogging or walking.

Some of the benefits of hill workouts are:

- Improves overall fitness levels of all types; weekend warriors and beginners, advanced runners, and marathon trainees.
- Acts as a huge caloric burner with great cardiovascular benefits that help control weight.
- Builds leg muscles and increases strength without weight training, especially in the glutes, hamstrings, thighs, hip flexors and calves.
- Also works the upper body in the areas of the lower back, lats, and obliques.
- Results in less heel strike and lower body impact – hill workouts targets the balls of the feet.
- May be used as ankle, knee and hip rehabilitation to strengthen these joints.
- May lessen aggravation of shin splints.
- Hill workouts may be short and intense – 30 minutes or less.
- May be modified to fit within overall fitness program of most individuals.

Sled and ski hills are perfect for safe, intense workouts for beginning or experienced athletes. Hill workouts are easily adjusted for aerobic or anaerobic training and can be done in short bursts as a natural interval training program. The workout can be adjusted to the size and steepness of the hill. Long, smooth hills are good for aerobic conditioning, while steep hills are good for intense, anaerobic or interval training. Hill workouts are great as stand-alone workouts or can be inserted into a long distance run.

Here is an example of a hill workout for someone at a moderate to advanced fitness level on a small sled hill. This workout is much harder than it looks! Be careful!

Warm up by walking up and down 2 times.  
Jog up and walk down 2 times.  
Run up and jog down 2 times (beginners walk down, tightening up can occur).  
Jog up and walk down 2 times.  
Walk up and down 2 times.  
Cool down with a slow jog on a flat surface.

Hill workouts are generally safe, but safety precautions are needed. A few points to remember:

- If you are new to hill running start slowly. Walk down.
- Hill running is intense! Don't run hills every day.
- Jogging downhill can be hard on the knees and tighten the back and hamstrings. Walk down if you feel pain or tightness in these areas.
- Wear comfortable shoes with strong support and extra grip to prevent slipping.
- Drink plenty of water.
- Do a full-body stretch afterward.

Some of Blue Chip Fit's favorite hills are Cricket Hill at Montrose Harbor in Lincoln Park; the steep hill south of Lincoln Park Zoo; the sled hill in Warren Park on Western Avenue; and the steep sled hill in James Park on Oakton Avenue in Evanston.

Hill workouts are an easy way to add variety to your exercise program. Hill workouts are intense exercise for the whole body as stand-alone workouts or inserted into the middle of a distance run. Try it and take the flat out of fitness!

For questions about this article or Personal Training with Blue Chip Fit please contact:

Dan Healy  
[danhealy@bluechipfit.com](mailto:danhealy@bluechipfit.com)  
773-251-6897

*Please consult your physician before starting any new exercise program.*