

# BACKPACKER

HOME / SKILLS ▾ / BACKPACKING FITNESS

## The Four-Week Backpacking Fitness Plan

Before you hit the trail, try these exercises to build leg strength and stamina.

Mike Giometti · Feb 26, 2008

Whether you're getting back in shape after a layoff or tuning up for your first big hike, it's wise to ease into a program a month or two in advance. Conditioning your body to return to a sport reduces the odds of injury, says San Francisco-based trainer Mike Giometti. "Plus, you'll have more fun on the trail if you're not huffing and puffing." Giometti, who's prepared dozens of people for backpacking adventures, designed this 40- to 60-minute, no-fuss workout to target primary hiking muscles—the heart, quads, and core. Incorporate it into your regimen two or three times a week 4 to 6 weeks before your first hike.

### Four-Pass Cardio

Interval training is the best way to avoid burning lungs during the first climbs of the season. Get on a stair climber; select manual mode and a comfortable level. After a 10-minute warmup, bump it up a level every minute for 5 minutes. Then drop to your starting level and repeat for a total of four sets. Easy? Knock it up two levels every minute.

### Plank Superman

"A strong core will help minimize backaches after a long day on the trail," says Giometti. From a prone position, pop up onto your elbows into plank, pull in your abdominal muscles, and hold for 15 breaths. Then lower to your stomach, extend your arms overhead like Superman, and lift your chest, arms, and legs; hold for 15 breaths to complete your first set. Build to three sets. To stretch your lower back between sets, sit briefly in child's pose. Why breaths? "People tend to hold their breath during exercises," says Giometti. "Counting them helps you avoid that mistake."

### Wall Hold

"This endurance builder strengthens leg muscles, helping to prevent injury," says Giometti. With your back against a wall and feet shoulder-width apart, slide down until you're in a squat position: thighs parallel to the floor, knees directly over ankles. Press your palms together in front of your chest and push your shoulder blades into the wall. Hold until you can take it no longer, then hang on for another 5 breaths. To ratchet up the intensity, balance on your toes.

Return to the Backpacking 101 home page.