

Plogging

You can't escape the impact of humans even in the most remote of locations. Discarded trash, left intentionally or unintentionally, paints an unattractive picture of human occupation; whether it was dropped on the ground, drifted on the breeze, or floated on the water.

Do you stop and pick up the litter that you see? If you do (and thank you for doing that), you have been participating in a movement called plogging. Plogging as a fitness trend traces its roots to Sweden in 2016, but many nature lovers have been participating for decades.

Need incentives to go plogging?

- 1) Plogging, with its bending over to pick things up, works more muscle groups than running or walking alone. Want to really go for it? Instead of bending over, try squatting or lunging to get that trash!
- 2) Exposure to nature is good for our physical, mental and emotional health. Warning: exposure to nature has led to side-effects such as lowered blood pressure, better mood, increased memory and attention span, strengthened immune system function, and reduced stress hormone levels.
- 3) Make it a habit. Sadly, the garbage is likely to keep returning. However, it is also necessary for you to spend two hours a week outside to get the benefits of exposure to nature. In a study of 20 000 people, the benefits of exposure, whether all at once, or spread out over the week, only happened once a threshold of 120 minutes per week was met.
- 4) Tiny steps make a big difference. An NBC News report named cigarette butts as the single greatest source of ocean pollution (and litter in Canada has the potential to end up in the Atlantic, Arctic, or Pacific oceans!). Cigarettes contain over 7,000 toxic chemicals, including known human carcinogens, which leach into and accumulate in the environment. An estimated 680 million kilograms of tobacco waste litters the world each year.

Now you Try:

Plogging is so simple, we really have no excuse not to participate. While out on a walk, jog, or hike, simply add an empty bag and some gloves to your kit. When you see some trash, pick it up! Once back home, the next step is to sort out the recyclables from the trash. On your next nature walk, you, other outdoor enthusiasts, and mother nature will be thankful for your efforts.

References:

- <https://www.ontarioparks.com/parksblog/plogging/>
- <https://e360.yale.edu/features/ecopsychology-how-immersion-in-nature-benefits-your-health>
- <https://globalnews.ca/news/4418956/cigarette-butts-ocean-pollution-ban/>