

Treadmill or the Outdoors: The Great Debate



You like to run on your gym's treadmill, with the air-conditioning blowing and the television on. Your friend swears that the outdoors is the only place to *really* run. So who's reaping more benefits?

On a physiological level, treadmill running (or walking) can be **easier on your bones and muscles**—which can be a good thing if you have joint problems. But your body expends less energy—which can be a bad thing because you are getting **less of a workout**. As the belt of a treadmill moves, it pulls your feet behind your body, making running easier on your leg muscles.

There's also no wind resistance in an indoor, climate-controlled environment. Some people feel that running against the wind makes them work even harder, which may in fact be true. However, studies have shown that, if you run at the average speed of five to nine miles per hour (mph), the wind resistance factor is practically nonexistent. Even if you are a nine-mph runner, setting the treadmill at a **1 percent incline** makes up for the level of exertion you may lose by running without wind resistance.

Besides having the benefits of a shock-absorbent surface and climate control, treadmill runners have far **fewer safety concerns** than their outdoor colleagues. Listening to music can be distracting and dangerous when dealing with passing cars and other outdoor factors. But some experts worry that treadmill runners get bored easily—some people prefer the changing scenery outdoors to a television or the static feel of a gym.

It all comes down to **preference**—you are more likely to run if you choose whichever method is more enjoyable for you. So if you prefer walking or running on a treadmill, you'll do it consistently, improving your health and stamina. If indoor gyms bore you, keep up the outdoor regimen—just take proper precautions, like wearing shock-resistant shoes and being aware of your surroundings and traffic at all times. If the weather is bad, use the treadmill—but try varying your workout to minimize the boredom.