

body + soul

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THEY'RE NOT JUST
ENTERTAINMENT

In YOUR dreams

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GET FIT

IT MIGHT SEEM LIKE IT'S JUST A SPORT FOR KIDS, BUT SKATEBOARDING HAS SOMETHING TO OFFER ALL OF US. BY KELLY BAKER.

BOARD GAMES

All aboard: Skateboarding is fun and it's also great exercise.

8 reasons to go skateboarding today

- 1 It boosts your cardiovascular fitness, which lowers your chances of developing heart disease, Type 2 diabetes and cancer.
- 2 It improves your balance, making you less likely to fall and injure yourself.
- 3 Due to its unstable nature, skateboarding requires the muscles of your mid-section to work overtime to keep you upright. The result: a trim waist and a super-taut belly.
- 4 Just 30 minutes of skateboarding burns roughly 750 kilojoules. Do that three to five times a week and you stand to lose about two kilograms each month.
- 5 Skateboarding works your quadriceps (front of thighs), hamstrings (rear of thighs) and gluteus maximus (bottom).
- 6 You'll have something to talk to your kids about.
- 7 It's a proven stress buster and when you lower your stress levels you boost your immunity.
- 8 It's really, really cool!

Arielle Nakache-Moulay didn't consider herself the daredevil type, but when her husband suggested she give skateboarding a go she didn't hesitate.

The then-31-year-old wasn't exactly what you'd call a natural and she experienced her fair share of spills, but in her heart Nakache-Moulay knew that skateboarding was for her.

"I loved it immediately," she says. "You feel like you're actually floating or flying. You're weightless. You've got the wind in your hair and it feels great. Plus it's creative... you have to use your imagination. You have to focus and think about what you're doing and when you make it happen it's incredibly satisfying."

Now 33, Nakache-Moulay considers herself a serious skater and she's reaping the benefits.

"Skateboarding has really toned my stomach and my legs and on the whole I'm much fitter," she says. "I can power walk and swim for much longer than I used to."

She's also made plenty of like-minded skater friends. "Skateboarding opens you up to a global community," explains Nakache-Moulay. "You can meet people through

skateboarding anywhere you go and the best thing is they're usually cool, creative and fun-loving."

GET ON BOARD

Skateboarding has a lot to offer, but the thing that really stands out is that it's a true full-body workout. That means it works all of the major muscle groups in both the lower and upper body. Skateboarding also blasts fat, burns serious kilojoules (about 1500 kilojoules an hour – almost as much as a jog) and increases fitness. It even improves your balance, agility and coordination. But that's not all. It may come as a bit of a surprise, but it seems skateboarding is the ultimate stress buster.

"Skateboarding is the perfect escape," says Kendra Osbourne, personal training supervisor at Sydney Olympic Park. "When you're in the gym you can still think about your kids, your work, your finances, or even what you're going to have for dinner, but when you're skateboarding you have to be 100 per cent focused both physically and mentally. There's absolutely no room for anything else. You have no choice... all you can afford to think about is whether you're going to make it round the corner or down the ramp without falling. That kind of focus gives you a real break from reality for a while."

Osbourne also believes that skateboarding can provide some beneficial life lessons – the main one being that to get anywhere in life you must keep on trying, no matter how many hits you take.

"It's the same for all of us," she explains. "If we fall down then we have to get back up and keep trying. If you do that, whether you're skateboarding or just getting through day-to-day life, you will eventually get somewhere and then, you'll feel on top of the world. The rewards really are massive."

GETTING STARTED

If you're an adult it's highly likely that, despite all the benefits, it hasn't occurred to you to give skateboarding a go, and there's no doubt that it can be a little daunting. After all, skateboards have wheels, they're unstable and those who use them

frequently come a cropper. But it doesn't have to be that way, says Osbourne.

"Back when I was a kid, people used to just grab a skateboard, hit the streets and basically kill themselves, but I wouldn't recommend doing that," she says with a laugh.

"I would suggest going to a skate park instead. That way you can learn some proper technique in a supervised environment. You'll be able to acquire some basic skills without getting hurt."

Whether you hit the skate park for some formal lessons or try skateboarding alone, there are several items you will need, the most important being a skateboard. You'll also need a helmet, plus knee, wrist and elbow guards. A long-sleeved T-shirt and pants made of a heavy material will offer you further protection.

Most skate parks will have these items for hire. Some skate shops provide rentals and if not, they may be able to do you a package deal. Don't forget to trawl through the Trading Post or eBay. Skateboards and accessories frequently pop up for sale.

And whatever you do, don't feel the slightest bit embarrassed. Skateboarding is a great sport for kids, but it's also brilliant for adults, particularly those who are uninspired by more traditional activities.

"Everyone can skateboard... age doesn't matter," says Osbourne.

"It's just a great sport that is different and challenging, but most importantly, fun."

KEEN TO GIVE SKATEBOARDING A WHIRL BUT NOT SURE WHERE TO START?

Or try Kman Skate School on (02) 9300 9174 or 0400 589 559. The school offers group and private lessons for kids and adults. www.kman.com.au

THE BENEFITS FOR KIDS

You may have told your kids there's no way they can have a skateboard, but you might want to have a rethink. Skateboards might seem dangerous, but they get kids outdoors and working up a sweat and, with an estimated 20 to 25 per cent of Australian kids classified as overweight or obese, that's a great thing.

Kendra Osbourne, personal training supervisor at Sydney Olympic Park, says

skateboarding is a particularly good choice for kids due to its high level of excitement and the fact that it doesn't seem like exercise.

"Kids skateboard because it's so much fun," says Osbourne. "They're not thinking about kilojoules burned or muscle gained. Also, kids today are under pressure to conform. Skating is a great opportunity to break away from the rules that most kids have to follow in their daily lives."