



## 5 Badminton

**What it is** What's a social, fun, inexpensive activity that can be played indoors or out? Badminton! On sweltering days, you can play at an indoor court (ahh, air conditioning) or, when the weather is good, play outside in your yard, at the park or on the beach. "I love badminton because it's a competitive, challenging sport, but players of all levels can still have a good game together," says Tracy Smith, 40, of Burlington, Ont. She's been playing for nearly 30 years and regularly takes in a game with her husband, dad or friends at a local indoor court. "Last summer when we went camping, I played outside with my friend, her son and my oldest son, who's seven. It was fun to see him get into it."

**Fitness benefits** "Badminton is such a great way to get in cardiovascular [exercise] because you're getting your heart rate up in short bursts of activity, then a bit of a rest, then activity again," says Susan Agrios, a fitness trainer who plays and coaches badminton in Edmonton. You also improve your agility, reflexes and balance, and sculpt your leg and butt muscles.

**What you'll need** Outdoor badminton is less competitive because a stray breeze can catch your birdie and completely alter your perfect

shot! An outdoor set, which has a net, two to four racquets and a few birdies, will set you back about \$40 at a sporting goods or big-box store. If you're playing indoors, a more suitable, higher performance racquet starts at about \$40. Racquet clubs often supply the birdies (also known as shuttles) or you can buy a canister of them for under \$15. Add cross-training shoes and you're all set.

**Keep in mind** Whether you're outside or in, warm up and cool down with a short, brisk walk.

**Get more info** To find a local court, check with your rec centre, or enter your province or city plus "badminton association" into a search engine. *hm*

### Gear up

For all these activities, you'll need to remember your summer safety items: water-resistant sunblock of at least SPF 30, a refreshing bottle of water and, where needed, insect repellent, a hat and other sun-protective clothing.