

## Exercise and cold weather: Stay motivated, fit and safe

Cold weather might make you feel like hibernating, but you don't have to give up your exercise and fitness goals. You can exercise indoors. And by dressing properly and heeding cold-weather safety tips, you can exercise outdoors, too.

### Maintain your motivation

Focus on how you'll benefit if you keep up your exercise routine throughout the cold-weather season. Exercise can help shake those winter blues. It improves your mood, increases your energy level and helps you sleep better. And you'll be in better shape when the weather warms up.

Try to set aside 30 minutes or more on most days of the week for physical activity. It doesn't have to be all in one stretch. You can work it in a little here or there. And it doesn't have to be strenuous. Make a workout of household cleaning. Take the stairs. Go sledding. For extra motivation, work out with your spouse or a friend.

### Exercise indoors — Choose activities that won't leave you in the cold

Don't let cold weather sidetrack your exercise routine. Get creative!

- **Walk at the mall.** The hardest part about mall or indoor track walking is getting there. Once you get started, you may be amazed at how quickly you finish your workout.
- **Join a health club.** Choose one that's convenient and geared toward your fitness level. Ask the staff to show you how to use the equipment.
- **Make a splash at an indoor pool.** Working out in water is easy on your joints. Try lap swimming or a water aerobics class.
- **Invest in home exercise equipment.** Choose something that's practical, enjoyable and easy to use. To stretch your exercise dollars, consider buying used equipment.

### Exercise outdoors — Dress right and play it safe

Want to take it outside? Stay safe as you brave the elements.

- **Get your doctor's OK.** For some people, cold air can trigger chest pain or asthma attacks. If you have any medical conditions or concerns about exercising outdoors, check with your doctor first.
- **Dress in layers.** Start with a thin layer of synthetic material such as polypropylene, which draws sweat away from your body. Next try fleece for insulation. Top this with a waterproof outer layer. To warm the air you breathe, wear a face mask or a scarf over your mouth. Remember to wear a hat and gloves, too.
- **Remember sunscreen.** Snow reflects the sun's rays — so sunburn is possible even if you're cold. You may want to wear lip balm, too.
- **Make sure you're visible.** If you'll be outdoors when natural light is poor, wear reflective clothing.
- **Wear a helmet for downhill sports.** Helmets are especially important for children and adults learning to ski or snowboard.
- **Start slowly.** Don't forget to stretch and warm up. It's OK to feel a little chilly at first. You'll warm up quickly.
- **Head into the wind.** You'll be less likely to get chilled on the way back if you end your workout — when you may be sweaty — with the wind at your back.
- **Drink plenty of fluids.** Drink water or sports drinks before, during and after your workout — even if you're not thirsty. Cold air has a drying effect, which can increase the risk of dehydration. In turn, dehydration increases the risk of frostbite.
- **Beware of slippery surfaces.** To stay steady on your feet, choose footwear with enough traction to prevent falls.
- **Pay attention to wind chill.** The wind can penetrate your clothes and remove the insulating layer of warm air that surrounds your body. Fast motion — such as skiing, running, cycling or skating — also creates wind chill because it increases air movement past your body. When the temperature is 10 F and the air is calm, skiing at 20 miles an hour creates a wind chill of minus 9 F.

If the temperature dips well below zero or the wind chill is below minus 20 F, choose an indoor activity instead.

- **Watch out for frostbite.** Frostbite appears as a patch of hard, pale, cold skin. If you think you may have frostbite, get out of the cold and warm the affected area. If numbness continues, seek emergency care.
- **Seek emergency care for hypothermia.** If your body temperature drops too much, you may experience intense shivering, slurred speech, loss of

coordination and fatigue. If you suspect hypothermia, get out of the cold and seek emergency care.

When it's cold outdoors, there's no need to give up and hit the couch. With a little planning and creativity, you can step up to the challenges of winter exercise.

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