



Stay Physically Active in Colder Weather!

Exercise can help you stay healthy. There are benefits of physical activity that are particularly important in the winter:

- Exercise helps the immune system. Regular moderate exercise (brisk walking, aerobics, swimming, and other similar activities) can lessen your chances of catching the bugs going around during the winter.
- Exercise improves balance and strengthens muscles, which help reduce the risk of falling, especially important with ice and snow.
- Exercise also increases your energy level, helps you sleep better and can lift your mood.

What if you have a cold or other illness? If you have a mild cold, you may feel better after light exercise. It is best not to exercise if you are ill, especially if you have a fever or pain from the flu. Let your body recover by eating healthy foods, drinking water, and resting. If you have a fever, wait at least 48 hours after it is gone to exercise. Start slowly, and listen to your body.

Have fun outside! Exercise increases your rate of metabolism, which may help you feel more comfortable in the cold. Enjoy the brisk cool air while ice skating, sledding, downhill skiing, cross-country skiing, snowboarding or snowshoeing. Rental equipment is often available through sporting goods or outdoor stores, if you want to try something new. Check your town or city recreation department or the Y for classes, moonlight skating or skiing trips, and more. Here are some things to remember if you plan to exercise outdoors:

1. Cold weather can make some health problems worse. If you have medical problems, check with your doctor before you spend a long time outside or exert yourself in the cold.
2. Equip yourself for safety. Wear reflective clothing in the dark or in poor light. If it is icy or slippery, be sure your shoes or boots have a good tread, or add strap-on treads. For skiing or snowboarding wear a helmet.
3. Dress for the weather.
 - Layer your clothes to stay warm and comfortable.
 - Wear a “wicking” synthetic fabric (usually polyester or microfiber) next to your skin that will pull moisture away as you sweat. Cotton long johns or tights next to your skin will get wet and stay wet. Over the wicking layer put something warm for insulation, like fleece or wool. On top, choose a layer that is windproof, waterproof and breathable.
 - Warm the air you breathe with a facemask or a scarf over your mouth.
 - Remember your hat and gloves!
4. When on foot, skis or snowshoes, plan your route so that the wind will be at your back when you finish up. This will help keep you from getting chilled when you’re sweating.
5. Drink plenty of fluids before, during and after your workout.
6. Be aware of wind chill. If wind penetrates your clothes it will remove warm air from next to your body. Also, fast motion like running, cycling or skating can create wind chill by increasing the movement of air around you. Stay indoors if the temperature is below 0 degrees F, or if the wind chill is below -20 degrees F.
7. Watch for frostbite, which shows up as a patch of hard, pale cold skin. Get out of the cold and slowly warm up the part of your body that is affected. If it stays numb, get emergency care.
8. Know the signs of hypothermia, often called “exposure”: intense shivering, slurred speech, loss of coordination, and fatigue. Seek emergency care immediately if you suspect hypothermia.