



Don't neglect exercise during the winter

Has the winter weather left you wondering what to do about exercise and outdoor activities? Do you find that your motivational level is low



at this time of year and you feel like hibernating just like the bears? Because the holiday time is fast approaching, do you feel too busy to exercise?

Changing your exercise schedule with the seasons may be a good solution. When the temperature drops, exercising outside becomes less practical and the risk for injury increases.

It is never simple but it is very important to adjust your exercise routine to make sure that you will continue to exercise throughout the year.

Stretching

Stretching improves flexibility and should be done daily. Benefits include: improved muscle balance, joint mobility, and injury prevention. Stretching increases blood and nutrient supply to your working muscles.

Improving stomach muscle strength through activities like sit-ups will help to improve balance as well.

Walking

Inside: Adding regular physical activity to your daily routine is important for your mind and body. Moderate physical activity of 30 minutes or more at least 3 days of the week is recommended to maintain health. Many local indoor malls are available to casual walkers before the stores open and busy shoppers arrive. Window shop or walk with your friends.

To exercise with a group or a partner makes each person accountable to someone and increases the likelihood of staying with the program.

If leaving your house is not an option, put on the radio and walk around your house. Music is a good way to help increase your

motivation to move.

Be careful of rugs, electrical cords, and other things that may be a hindrance to falling. Clear the way!

Outside: If you are the kind of person that needs fresh air and likes to walk outside, there are several things to keep in mind.

First of all pay attention to the wind chill factor. In most conditions the wind chill is more important than the air temperature. For example, if the air temperature is 40 degrees with a 15 mph wind, the "wind chill" is 32 degrees.

According to the National Weather Service there are set guidelines for how long you should be exposed to each wind chill level. Daily reports and more information can be obtained from your local weather service stations.

In addition to the temperature it is important to know the weather forecast. Dress in layers. Layering keeps your body heat in and reduces heat loss. Don't forget the gloves, hat, and scarf. Slip prevention can also be an important issue in the winter. Equip your feet with proper foot wear. Avoid shoes with slick surfaces on the bottom and use a walking stick or cane to increase balance on ice.

Swimming

The YMCA and some public schools open their pools to group aquatic classes. A swimming pool could be just what the doctor ordered for those achy joints.

Water aerobics are ideal for those suffering from arthritis or joint problems. It is a safe and fun way to increase your overall fitness, muscular strength/endurance, and flexibility.

Nintendo Wii

A less traditional form of exercise has developed in recent years through the use of technology and popular video gaming systems. The Nintendo Wii gaming system and dance dance revolution (DDR) are two games that are getting people on their feet.

As described in a recent AARP article, Wii is being used as a rehabilitation tool in hospitals and nursing facilities by playing tennis, bowling, baseball, and golf right on the TV.

DDR is a dancing game played by dancing to music on a touch pad and burning calories on the way. The young and young at heart can benefit from the fun and exercise these games have to offer.

General Tips

On cold days, exercise outside during the warmest part of the day. Know when to stop. Frostbite is a big concern. Keep outside exercise time to a minimum in the cold weather.

Use sun screen, particularly when sunny.

Drink plenty of fluids and eat nutritious meals.

Avoid excessive sweating. Dress in layers. Stay dry. Wear a hat.

Exercise with a buddy. Communicate with your friend if you are having motivational difficulties.

Hang a calendar in your bathroom and document your exercise each day.

Whether you are inside or outside, it is important to remain active during the winter months. Regular physical activity will help you feel good and fight off those winter blues.

Remember to check with your Doctor before you begin an exercise program. Exercising all year round can lead you to a "Healthier Tomorrow."

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