



Staying Fit During The Winter Months

Snowshoeing

Snowshoeing has also become very popular. Summer walkers and hikers snowshoe to take advantage of their favorite hikes in the winter. Snowshoeing is another sport nearly everyone, regardless of age, fitness level or expertise, can participate in. In fact, many pregnant women snowshoe because of the low risk of injury, low-impact and the sheer pleasure of being outside.



A great form of cardiovascular exercise, snowshoeing combines the working of major muscle groups for an extended period of time, weight of the snowshoes and resistance of moving through snow--which burns up to 45 percent more calories than walking or running at the same speed. Snowshoeing, like cross-country skiing, will warm you quickly, so dress in thin layers.

Winter Running



Winter running is one of the least expensive and most convenient means of exercising. The only necessary piece of equipment is a pair of running shoes. Even during the winter, runners can take their normal routes, provided the sidewalks and pathways have been shoveled. Also, a few extra pieces of clothing should be worn for safety and comfort.

A capilene top with a zip neck will absorb sweat and trap it away from your body. In addition, a fleece keeps you warm, but is easy to take off and tie around your waist if you get too heated. Running tights or leggings have the same effect on your legs as a fleece and, since most of your body heat escapes through your head, a hat is a must. Finally, ice joggers (rubbery shoe slip-overs with small nobs on the bottom) give you traction on ice to keep you from slipping.

Four months of severe winter weather can make outdoor exercise difficult--imagine a winter of six months or longer. Some places, often experience sub-freezing temperatures from mid-October well into March or April. Winter activities can be enjoyed by people across the United States--all you need is the right equipment...and sometimes a little snow.

Skiing and Snowboarding

Not only do you get the feeling of soaring downhill with the wind in your face, but skiing and snowboarding also offer fitness benefits. Both sports require lower body strength to control the movement of your skis or snowboard. Furthermore, it's a calorie burning exercise you hardly feel. According to a Montana State University study, when skiing downhill a 130-pound person can burn approximately 504 calories an hour. Much of the United States, with the exception of the deep South, is close enough to a mountain range to make a week-end of skiing and snowboarding.

Cross-Country Skiing

You don't need a mountain for cross-country skiing, just a snow covered area. Simply bundle up in layered clothing, similar to what you may wear for winter jogging, and you are set to ski.

If you've tried cross-country ski machines, you've already had a lesson. While these machines emulate the opposite leg/arm motion, only through actual skiing can you understand the balance element, forward motion and snow resistance. Sometimes called the "world's best aerobic workout," cross-country skiing burns calories (e.g., nearly 1,000 an hour for a 130-pound person). It also has a quick learning curve and low injury rate, making it a great sport for all ages and abilities. The gliding feel, low-impact force and distance covered in a short period of time make this sport popular.



Source: www.americanfitness.com



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