

January 2016



Keep the Winter Blues Away Get Outdoors and Play!

Snow!

Remember when you were 6 years old and a foot of snow was the best thing ever? You couldn't get your snow pants and mittens on fast enough to get outside and play. Snowmen, snow angels, snow forts, sledding, snow balls... hours of outdoor fun. And to make it a perfect day, there was a mug of hot chocolate waiting for you when you came back inside.

This winter, why not get out and play like you did when you were a kid? Winter can last a long time – embrace it and rediscover how much fun playing in the snow can be. Try one of the outdoor winter activities described below – they are fun and provide a great workout too, and most of them are family friendly if you have children at home.



Walking

Walking is a great exercise any time of year. While snow or ice can make it a bit more treacherous, they don't need to stop you from going outside for a walk.

Get a pair of warm, comfortable boots that you can wear over a thick pair of wool socks. Put a pair of ice and snow grips, such as Yaktrax or Stabilicers, over the sole of your shoe. They give you traction for walking on packed snow or ice. If there are more than 6 inches of snow on the ground, consider wearing snowshoes.



Winter Hiking

The woods in the winter are magical. Take time to appreciate how different everything looks with a blanket of snow and no leaves on the trees.

If you are going to be hiking for more than an hour, bring a backpack with water (in an insulated container so it does not freeze), a snack, a spare warm layer, and a cell phone and flashlight in case of emergency.

Snowshoeing

Snowshoeing is probably one of the easiest winter activities to get into – if you can walk, you can snowshoe. All you need is a pair of warm boots, snowshoes and poles (poles are optional, but the deeper the snow, the more helpful they are).

The beauty of snowshoeing is you don't need trails – all you need is snow. The deeper the snow, the better the workout! Any field, park, or unplowed sidewalk works for snowshoeing. Trails also work, of course, and you can snowshoe on trails that don't work for cross country skiing. If you are snowshoeing in areas that cross country skiers do use, do not walk on groomed trails, and give skiers right of way if you encounter any.

Your body heats up quickly while snowshoeing, so read the clothing tips below for help dressing appropriately. For more information about getting started snowshoeing, please visit:

www.rei.com/learn/expert-advice/snowshoeing-first-steps.html.



Cross Country Skiing

Cross country skiing has been around for centuries – it is the original form of skiing. Cross country skiing is easier and much less expensive than downhill skiing, and there are no lift tickets needed. And fun fact: cross country skiing burns more calories per hour than any other sport!

Anyone can cross country ski – all you need are snow, skis, poles, and boots (the bindings on the skis and boots must match). You can rent gear from a cross country ski area, and some ski shops or bike shops.

If you have never skied before, a lesson will help you get started. For more information, please visit: http://www.xcski.org/new_skier.php?SubPage=10

Fat Biking

You may have noticed these bikes – bikes with ridiculously fat tires. They look like a cross between a mountain bike and a dirt bike. Fat bikes actually are a type of mountain bike, but because of the fat tires, they ride really well in the snow (and sand).

They also climb well and roll over almost anything, so you can ride them almost anywhere. They do tend to be more expensive than a traditional mountain bike, but if riding in the winter appeals to you, it may be a good investment.



For more information on fat biking, please visit: www.singletracks.com/blog/uncategorized/fat-biking-101-10-things-you-need-to-know-before-biking-in-the-snow/

Clothing

The two most important tips for clothing are:

1. don't wear cotton
2. dress in layers

Dressing appropriately for the weather makes the difference between a great experience or a miserable one.

When **cotton** gets wet, either from the snow or rain or from you sweating, it holds onto the moisture, which actually makes you colder. Wool or synthetic materials will keep you warmer when wet.

Layers are really important for outdoor winter activities – they keep you warmer and they allow you to make adjustments when you get hot. Generally, you want three layers: a **base layer** (against your skin), an **insulating layer**, and a **shell**.

Your **base layer** helps control moisture (from sweating) and should be wool, synthetic (polyesters), or silk (for less vigorous activities). Depending on the outside temperature and your activity, you may need a base layer on your legs as well (e.g. long johns). Base layers can be light weight, medium weight, or heavy weight.

Your **insulating layer** helps retain your body heat by trapping air. This layer can be wool, down, fleece, or synthetic material, and also can be light weight, medium weight or heavy weight.

The outside layer, your **shell**, protects you from the wind, rain, and snow. Your shell can be as light as a windbreaker or as heavy as an insulated winter jacket. Make sure your shell is roomy enough to accommodate your other layers without constricting your movement.

For your legs, you may want both a base layer and a shell, or a lined pair of pants. A pair of wind or rain pants over a pair of long johns works well for cold or wet days. Winter running pants work great for walking, snowshoeing, and cross country skiing.



Don't forget about your extremities. A hat provides a lot of warmth and is also an easy layer to remove when you warm up. Gloves or mittens are critical to protecting your fingers from frostbite. Mittens are warmer than gloves.

On really cold days, wear a pair of liners (or lightweight gloves) under your mittens or gloves for extra warmth. On your feet, wear thick wool socks. You can also wear a sock liner for extra warmth, or use toe warmers.

Taking a small backpack to hold the extra layers you remove when you warm up can be helpful. Be careful not to overdress – vigorous activity will warm you up quickly, even if it is cold out. If you are overdressed, you will sweat more and then become uncomfortable.

Safe Snow Shoveling

Looking for ways to halt winter weight gain? Ditch the snow blower and grab your shovel! Shoveling snow is a full body work out that uses muscles in your legs, core, back, shoulders and arms. Thirty minutes of shoveling burns over 220 calories for a 155 pound person. As with all vigorous activities, it is important to be prepared. Below are some tips to keep in mind.

1. People who are out of shape or have back, heart or other health issues should avoid shoveling heavy snow, as it could be dangerous. Consider using a snow blower or hiring someone to remove the snow.
2. Dress in light layers that allow you to remove clothes as you warm up. Wear gloves that will keep your hands warm and prevent blisters. Wear a hat to retain body heat and keep warm.
3. Appropriate footwear is important. Wear boots that will keep your feet warm and provide traction on snow and ice.
4. Warm up and stretch before you begin shoveling. Do some jumping jacks or jog in place for a few minutes, then do a few stretching exercises for your legs and back. Hold each stretch for 15-20 seconds and do not bounce.
5. Use an ergonomically correct shovel to protect your back.
6. Take breaks when you need them and take some time to enjoy the beauty that winter has to offer.

Preventive Care

Everyone needs an ounce of prevention.

Preventive health care can help you stay healthier throughout your life.

Click [HERE](#) to learn more about recommendations for preventive care.



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Zesty Tomato Soup

The perfect healthy dish for a cold winter day!

[Read or print the full recipe with instructions. \(PDF\)](#)



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