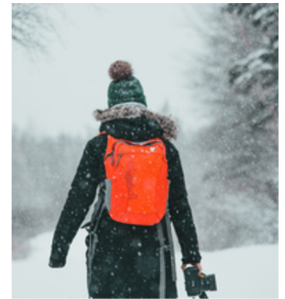


Warm Up to Winter: Easy Ways to Stay Active & Energized

The Midwest is known for its four seasons throughout the year, three of which can bring bitter cold. This brisk weather can make it harder to be motivated to get active and exercise during this time of year. There are pros and cons to exercising in this weather, but being active year-round is important for your overall health. Finding ways to remain motivated and active over the winter can be hard, but it is possible!

There are positives to dedicating time to exercise in the winter!

- There is no heat and humidity to deal with! Working out in the hot weather can take a lot more energy out of you than cold weather does. The chill in the air may even wake you up and make you feel more invigorated.
- You may be able to work out a little longer in chillier temperatures. Again, warmer weather requires a lot more energy to withstand the heat. Colder weather puts less stress on the body.
- It is a great way to get sunlight! Even if the sun is not completely out in the winter, being outside can improve your mood as well as get your body some vitamin D, which our body normally lacks during the winter months.
- Exercise boosts the immune system during cold and flu season. Wintertime is known for being prime cold and flu season, and just a few minutes of exercise a day can help fight off bacterial and viral infections.



Try these indoor activities during chillier months:

- Dancing
- Active housework (i.e., vacuuming or sweeping)
- Bowling
- Roller skating
- Walking or running on a treadmill
- Yoga
- Home workout circuit
- Group fitness classes at a gym or at home via a video
- Stair climbing



Try these outdoor activities during chillier months:

- Walking or hiking
- Running
- Raking leaves
- Shoveling snow
- Ice skating
- Sledding
- Cross-country skiing
- Snowshoeing
- Snowboarding

Friendly Reminder: Wear layers when you are outdoors!

When engaging in physical activities outdoors in the winter, it is important to dress appropriately for the weather. There is an increased chance of hypothermia and frostbite when spending too much time outside with improper attire. Wear layers when going outside in the cold, but avoid starting with a cotton layer. Once cotton becomes wet from sweat, rain, or snow, it traps the moisture and makes it feel heavier and colder. The first layer should be some sort of dry-fit material that repels moisture. Then add layers of fleece and a water-resistant layer on top for when it is snowing or raining.

Source: American Heart Association

Purdue University prohibits discrimination against any member of the University community on the basis of race, religion, color, sex, age, national origin or ancestry, genetic information, marital status, parental status, sexual orientation, gender identity and expression, disability, or status as a veteran.

Is it always safe to engage in outdoor activities in the cold?

While getting some exercise outside in the winter can be beneficial, sometimes the weather does not allow for that to be a safe option. Snowstorms, ice storms, and negative temperatures can all deter outdoor activity. Indoor activity is still possible during this weather; sometimes you just have to get creative!



Activity Recommendations at Home:

- Try an at-home workout circuit, either on DVD or from a video found online. The internet offers so many options for us to stay active while at home. Look up what type of workout you want to do, and there will most certainly be many options for you to choose from that will get your heart rate up! You can even make up your own workout if you know what exercises you like or that work for you!
- You may have weights or items to engage in strength training within your home. Even if you do not have a set of weights, there is always some sort of household item you can use as a weight instead for certain exercises. You can also find strength training videos for weight lifting online to help you start.
- A lot of us do housework and chores! This is another option for staying active, and most people do not think of this as movement. Vacuuming, sweeping, and mopping are all ways to remain active inside. These activities can increase your heart rate, and while no one usually likes chores, knowing that it is a form of staying active can make you feel more accomplished in the end!

Activity Recommendations Outside the Home:

- Walking through a grocery store or the mall. These options offer a great opportunity to remain active indoors. You can get some shopping done (or not) and exercise all in one trip!
- Going to your local gym. If you have a gym membership, this is the perfect way to stay active during the winter. A gym provides lots of options for exercise, whether it is with a group fitness class, walking on the treadmill/track, riding the stationary bike, or strength training. Gyms may also have racquetball courts, basketball courts, and tennis/pickleball courts, all useful for remaining active and playing a game with a friend. Not only are you exercising, but you are also getting social time in!
- Swimming in an indoor pool. Swimming is a great way to stay active, and indoor pools are perfect for this in the winter. Some pools even offer group fitness classes, such as water aerobics, which increases your heart rate and is good for your bones, joints, and muscles.



Winter can be a hard time to feel motivated to work out, but knowing there are many options available can help! Being active is not only good for your body, but also your mind. During the winter months, depression can creep in due to the lack of daylight, vitamin D, and exercise, so it's important to get outside when you can and stay active. And remember, new habits take time to build—according to a 2024 systematic review, it can take around two months (about 60 days) to form a new habit, though this varies from person to person and depends on the habit's complexity (Lally, Gardner, & Rebar, 2024).

Source: Lally, P., Gardner, B., & Rebar, A. L. (2024). How are habits formed: A systematic review of the evidence. *Health Psychology Review*, 18(2), 239–261.

Purdue University prohibits discrimination against any member of the University community on the basis of race, religion, color, sex, age, national origin or ancestry, genetic information, marital status, parental status, sexual orientation, gender identity and expression, disability, or status as a veteran.