

# Weather

You can walk 12 months of the year if you wear the proper clothing and choose the most appropriate times of the day in which to walk. In the summer, walk in the coolest part of the day (early morning or evening). In the winter, walk in the warmest part of the day. In really cold temperatures, you should cover your mouth as this helps to minimize the feeling of shortness of breath.

## Walking in Cold Weather<sup>6</sup>

Cold weather might make you feel like hibernating, but you don't have to give up your walking, exercise or fitness goals. You can exercise indoors. By dressing properly and heeding cold-weather safety tips, you can walk outdoors, too.

### MAINTAIN YOUR MOTIVATION

Focus on how you'll benefit if you keep up your walking routine throughout the cold-weather season. Exercise can help shake those winter blues. It improves your mood, increases your energy level and helps you sleep better. And you'll be in better shape when the weather warms up.

Try to set aside 30 minutes or more on most days of the week for walking or another type of physical activity. It doesn't have to be all in one stretch. You can work it in a little here or there. And it doesn't have to be strenuous. Make a workout of household cleaning. Take the stairs. Go sledding. For extra motivation, work out with a family member, partner or a friend.

### EXERCISE INDOORS— Choose activities that won't leave you in the cold

**Don't let cold weather sidetrack your exercise routine. Get creative!**

- **Walk at the mall.**  
The hardest part about mall or indoor-track walking is getting there. Once you get started, you may be amazed at how quickly you finish your workout.
- **Join a health club.**  
Choose one that's convenient and geared toward your fitness level. Ask the staff to show you how to use the equipment. A treadmill may be the choice for you if you want to walk indoors during the winter months.
- **Make a splash at an indoor pool.**  
Working out in water is easy on your joints. Try lap swimming or a water aerobics class.
- **Invest in home exercise equipment.**  
Choose something that's practical, enjoyable and easy to use. To stretch your exercise dollars, consider buying used equipment. Just make sure it is in safe working order.

<sup>6</sup>Adapted from:

Exercise and cold weather: Stay motivated, fit and safe <http://www.mayoclinic.com/health/fitness/HQ01681> (accessed July 12, 2007)

## WALKING OR EXERCISING OUTDOORS? Dress right and play it safe!

Want to take it outside? Stay safe as you brave the elements.

- **Get your doctor's OK.**  
For some people, cold air can trigger chest pain or asthma attacks. If you have any medical conditions or concerns about exercising outdoors, check with your doctor first.
- **Dress in layers.**  
Start with a thin layer of synthetic material such as polypropylene, which draws sweat away from your body. Next try fleece for insulation. Top this with a waterproof, breathable outer layer. To warm the air you breathe, wear a face mask or a scarf over your mouth. Remember to wear a hat and gloves, too.
- **Choose appropriate gear.**  
If you'll be outdoors when natural light is poor, wear reflective clothing. To stay steady on your feet, choose footwear with enough traction to prevent falls.
- **Remember sunscreen.**  
Snow reflects the sun's rays, so sunburn is possible even if you're cold. You might want to wear lip balm, too.
- **Head into the wind.**  
You'll be less likely to get chilled on the way back if you end your workout — when you may be sweaty — with the wind at your back.
- **Drink plenty of fluids.**  
Drink water before, during and after your workout — even if you're not thirsty. Cold air has a drying effect, which can increase the risk of dehydration. In turn, dehydration increases the risk of frostbite.
- **Pay attention to wind chill.**  
The wind can penetrate your clothes and remove the insulating layer of warm air that surrounds your body. Fast motion — such as skiing, running, cycling or skating — also creates wind chill because it increases air movement past your body. For example, when the temperature is -12 C (10 F) and the air is calm, skiing at 32 kilometers per hour (20 miles per hour) creates a wind chill of -23 C (-9 F).  
If the temperature dips below -18 C (0 F) or the wind chill is below -29 C (-20 F), choose an indoor activity.
- **Know when to call it quits.**  
If you notice a patch of hard, pale, cold skin, you may have frostbite. Get out of the cold and slowly warm the affected area. If numbness continues, seek emergency care. If you suspect hypothermia — characterized by intense shivering, slurred speech, loss of coordination and fatigue — seek emergency care.

*When it's cold outdoors, there's no need to give up and hit the couch.*

*With a little planning and creativity,*

*you can step up to the challenges of winter exercise.*

# Walking in Hot Weather<sup>7</sup>

In the excitement of a fast paced walk, a pickup basketball game or the relaxation of a friendly round of golf, you might not notice the temperature rising — but your body will. If you exercise outdoors in the heat, use caution and common sense to prevent heat-related illnesses.

## HOW HOT WEATHER AFFECTS YOUR BODY

Exercising in hot weather puts extra stress on your heart and lungs. Both the exercise itself and the air temperature increases your body temperature. To dissipate heat, more blood circulates through your skin. This leaves less blood for your muscles, which increases your heart rate. If the humidity is high, your body faces added stress because sweat doesn't readily evaporate from your skin — which only pushes your body temperature higher.

Under normal conditions, your skin, blood vessels and perspiration level adjust to the heat. But these natural cooling systems may fail if you're exposed to high temperatures and humidity for too long. The result may be a heat-related illness, such as heat cramps, heat exhaustion or heatstroke.

## KEEP IT COOL

To avoid heat-related illnesses, keep these basic precautions in mind:

- **Take it slow.**  
If you're used to exercising indoors or in cooler weather, take it easy at first. As your body adapts to the heat, gradually increase the length and intensity of your workouts. If you have a chronic medical condition or take medication, ask your doctor if you need to take additional precautions.
- **Drink plenty of fluids.**  
Your body's ability to sweat and cool down depends on adequate rehydration. Drink plenty of water while you're working out — even if you don't feel thirsty. If you're planning to exercise intensely or for longer than one hour, consider sports drinks instead. These drinks can replace the sodium, chloride and potassium you lose through sweating. Avoid drinks that contain caffeine or alcohol, which actually promote fluid loss.
- **Dress appropriately.**  
Lightweight, loose-fitting clothing promotes sweat evaporation and cooling by letting more air pass over your body. Avoid dark colors, which can absorb the heat. A light-colored, wide brimmed hat can limit your exposure to the sun.

- **Avoid midday sun.**

Exercise in the morning or evening — when it's likely to be cooler outdoors — rather than the middle of the day. If possible, walk or exercise in the shade or in a pool.

- **Wear sunscreen.**

Sunburn decreases your body's ability to cool itself. Use sunscreen with SPF 15 or higher on exposed parts of your body. Don't forget your ears and neck.

- **Have a backup plan.**

If you're concerned about the heat or humidity, stay indoors. Work out at the gym, walk laps inside the mall or climb stairs inside an air-conditioned building.

## PLAY IT SAFE

Stop exercising at the first hint of a heat-related illness.

Signs and symptoms may include:

- Weakness
- Dizziness
- Nausea or vomiting
- Headache
- Muscle cramps
- Rapid heartbeat

If you suspect a heat-related illness, get out of the heat. Drink water, and wet and fan your skin. If you don't feel better within 30 minutes, contact your doctor. If you develop a fever higher than 39 C (102 F) or become faint or confused, seek immediate medical help. Regular physical activity is important — but don't let your workouts put your health at risk.

<sup>7</sup>Summer exercise: How to keep cool in hot weather <http://www.mayoclinic.com/health/exercise/HQ00316> (accessed July 12, 2007)