



Ask the Expert

Find Answers to Your Sport Medicine Questions

Not a Big Fan of Winter?

Q: *I am physically very active 8 months of the year but when winter arrives I hibernate and don't come out until all the snow has melted. I got away with this fitness approach for years but as I get older it's harder to get back into shape after 4 months of doing nothing. I'm not a big fan of winter and hope you have some advice to help me get more active during that time of the year? John Fairweather*

A: Dear John – being physically active year round is a very smart move for your health and your fitness. Exercising during the winter months can be challenging and here are some tips that might help you enjoy working out during this special time of the year:

1. Instead of focusing on the negatives, think of winter as an opportunity to do some unique, physically challenging and fun things such as cross country skiing, snow shoeing, tobogganing, and downhill skiing. With good clothing and the right equipment there will be very few days when bad weather stops you from participating.
2. If being outside is out of the question, make use of the excellent indoor fitness facilities you have in your local community. A wide variety of fitness equipment and classes are available, and most facilities employ trained staff to assist you.
3. Consider participating in a team sport. Playing sports such as hockey, indoor soccer, volleyball or basketball can be a lot of fun and you may even get the opportunity to do some travelling and make some new friends.
4. Challenge yourself! This could be something as simple as learning to be a better swimmer, seeing if curling is any fun or preparing to run a 10k race in the spring. This strategy can serve as a great motivator to get you out the door and exercising.
5. If all else fails save up your vacation time, and head down south where the weather is always nice!

The bottom line is that winter offers you many opportunities to do physical activities that are simply not available any other time of the year. This winter, give the above strategies a try and I am sure you will never want to hibernate again.

Dr. Darrell Menard MD Dip Sport Med

Dr. Darrell Menard is the Surgeon General's specialist advisor in sport medicine. He has worked extensively with athletes from multiple sports and has covered Canadian teams competing at multiple games including the 2012 Olympics and the 2016 Paralympic games. These articles were originally published in the Canadian Forces Journal, the Maple Leaf.

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