



Central Office: 505 Silas Deane Highway, Wethersfield, CT 06109 Phone (860) 721-2822 Fax (860) 721-2823
Berlin: 240 Kensington Road, Berlin, CT 06037 Phone (860) 828-7017 Fax (860) 828-9248
Newington: 131 Cedar Street, Newington, CT 06111 Phone (860) 665-8586 Fax (860) 665-8533
Rocky Hill: 761 Old Main Street, Rocky Hill, CT 06067 Phone (860) 258-2770 Fax (860) 258-2767
www.ccthd.org

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To: Local Media
From: Linda Bantell, Health Educator

Please publish the attached article in the next editions of your publication. If you have any questions you may call me at (860) 721-2824. Thank you.

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

Don't Hibernate This Winter, Get Active

Despite all the New Year's resolutions to get fit, the short days and cold weather of winter make most of us want to snuggle under a blanket with a good book or watch television. The early darkness and less than comfortable temperatures do not seem to be particularly conducive to continuing an exercise regime, or even staying active in general. But cold weather does not have to signal couch potato days and a gain of 10 pounds. If you stay motivated, there are a number of cold weather options to work out.

Staying motivated may be the toughest task when working out in the winter. By being creative in your fitness routine and maintaining your focus on the physical and emotional benefits, remaining active can be easy and fun.

Exercising in cold weather can be done either indoors or outdoors. If you do not enjoy being in the cold, consider going to the mall to walk. Joining a gym is another option; be sure to choose one that is convenient to your home or place of employment. Find an indoor pool nearby and swim and do resistance exercises in the water. Many pools offer water aerobics classes. Or consider buying home exercise equipment that is practical, easy to use, and enjoyable. Purchase an exercise video, and set aside about 30 minutes most days to engage in active behavior.

For those who enjoy cold weather, winter offers a number of opportunities to enjoy nature. Snowshoeing is a great way to hike your favorite summertime trails. Both downhill and cross-country skiing provide substantial workouts. Skating (which can also be done at an inside rink), tobogganing, and sledding are both fun and physically demanding. Running and jogging routines can continue throughout the seasons as well.

When exercising outdoors in the cold weather, however, it is important to take some precautions. First, dressing in layers is essential. If you have respiratory problems, always wear a scarf over the nose and mouth in the cold. Try to exercise in areas that are sheltered from the wind, but if you are walking or running, it helps to begin the route facing the wind so the end of the walk or run is completed with the wind at your back. Be aware of the outdoor temperature and the wind chill factor. If the temperature is below zero or the wind chill is below minus 20⁰ F, move your workout indoors. Other tips for cold weather workouts include

- Get your doctor's approval, and start slowly.
- Be sure to stretch and warm up first.
- Drink plenty of fluids.
- When outside, wear footwear with traction and watch out for slippery surfaces.

- Wear sunscreen. Snow and ice reflect the sun's rays.
- Make yourself visible. Wear bright and reflective clothing
- If you suspect you have frostbite or hypothermia, get out of the cold and get medical assistance.

Staying motivated to exercise can be more difficult during the winter, but these suggestions may help:

- Vary your workout routine. Try incorporating different activities from time to time, or try a new type of equipment or video.
- Try something new. Indoor sports like tennis, racquetball, volleyball, squash, badminton, and basketball not only provide great workouts, but are fun and offer an opportunity to be social. Yoga and Tai Chi classes provide the same benefits.
- Exercise with a friend or relative so the workout will be more enjoyable and both of you can encourage each other.
- Set goals, and reward yourself each time you achieve a goal.
- If possible, plan a vacation so you will have something to look forward to at the end of the cold season.
- Keep up your summer routine. If you normally get up early to workout, or you exercise after work, stick to the same schedule (even if you are getting up in the dark.) One thought is to sleep in your workout clothes so you'll be ready when the alarm goes off.
- Don't hide your body in large, bulky winter clothes. Instead, wear the same workout clothes you wear in warm weather so that it is harder to hide that extra 10 pounds of winter weight.

Regular exercise and an active lifestyle are known to have multiple benefits. If you would like to raise your spirits, improve your self-esteem, have more energy, sleep better, reduce stress, and look and feel better in general, do not let the urge to hibernate overtake you this winter. Keep working out!

For more information about cold weather exercise, visit the Mayo Clinic's website at www.mayoclinic.com/health/exercise or Duke University's site at www.dukemednew.edu. Additional information about exercise or other public health concerns is available at the Central Connecticut Health District at www.ccthd.org (860-721-2824).