

The Medical Minute: Staying active all year round

January 26 2011, By Danielle Sunday

It's fun to be outside on a beautiful spring, summer, or fall day, riding bikes, playing on a playground, tossing a Frisbee, or just going for a walk with your family. Unfortunately, research has found that the winter months often result in a decrease in adolescents' physical activity levels due to the weather.

Looking for ways to keep your kids active all year round, even when the temperature dips and the snow begins to fall? Keep these ideas in mind the next time you and your family are at a loss for ways to be active during the winter months.

Outdoor Play

Don't let the magic of winter's first snowfall pass you by. Bundle up and head outdoors. Have a friendly competition by seeing who in your family can build the tallest snow pile. Build a family of snowmen. If you live near a hill, enjoy some sledding action. If not, take turns pulling one another around the neighborhood or yard on a sled. With all the energy you expend trying to stay warm and playing in the snow, everyone can enjoy a nice hot mug of cocoa.

Outdoor Winter Sports

Did you know that January is National Learn a Snow Sport Month? You don't have to be an Olympic athlete to ski down a mountainside, glide

across the snow on cross-country skis, play ice hockey, or ice skate. Visit the Pennsylvania Ski Area Association, skipa.com, for a complete list of the state's 23 ski areas as well as to learn more about the fourth- and fifth-grade ski pass program.

According to winterfeelsgood.com, there are five easy steps to snow sports:

- Use a local snow sports specialty shop near you as a resource to get started.
- Take lessons at a snow sports resort near where you live, instead of relying on friends as teachers.
- Investigate snow sport clubs in your area.
- Read up on snow sports through magazines and websites for tips on where to purchase low-cost gear and equipment including a ski helmet.
- Use the winterfeelsgood.com website to help steer you in the right direction.
- Still not convinced snow sports are worth a try? Consider the calorie burn. The average 90-pound child burns a total of 189 calories during alpine skiing (light effort), while a 190-pound adult burn 431.

Indoor Activity

Being active indoors is another key way to keep your children moving during the winter months. Staying active doesn't have to mean expensive gym or club memberships. Contact your local school to see if they have a formal sharing agreement with the township/municipality that allows community members to use school facilities after school hours.

Visit your local mall or shopping center and challenge your family members to see who can complete the most laps in 30 minutes. If you want to mix things up, have a relay race.

If the weather turns treacherous, don't discount the amount of fun you can have in your own home. All you need is a space to move in. Turn on the radio or put in a CD and dance to your favorite tunes. Build an indoor fort and "camp out" for the evening in the living or family room. Have a garage or basement? Pull the car outside and you can practice jumping rope or dribbling a basketball. Take turns creating scavenger hunts throughout your home.

If you know inclement weather is on the way, make a quick visit to your local library and stock up on fitness videos, workout DVDs, or dance tapes that you and your family can enjoy.

The [Physical Activity](#) Guidelines for Americans recommend children between ages 6 and 17 should get at least 60 minutes of physical activity each day, while adults should get at least 30 minutes. By being active as a family, you'll not only help your children meet these recommendations, but also help them develop a lifelong love of physical activity.

Provided by Pennsylvania State University

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