

# Benefits of running in the cold outweigh warm weather running, says expert

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Some year-round runners dread plunging temperatures, but according to recent research, the benefits of running in the cold weather outweigh warm weather running—and could help you burn bad fat, lose more weight, and make you feel better overall.

"Cold weather doesn't have to force [runners](#) indoors and I encourage my patients to continue safely running outdoors," explains Dr. Joshua Blomgren, Midwest Orthopaedics at RUSH, and Aid Station Medical Captain for the Chicago Marathon. "Exercise is medicine, even in the winter."

## Benefits of chilly weather running

- Produces less heat stress. Recent research explains why running in the heat is more difficult. Higher body temps are associated with increased exertion, cardiovascular, and metabolic strain.
- Boosts metabolism. Our bodies are programmed to preserve fat, slowing down our metabolisms in response to decreased exercise. Running in the cold "tricks" the body, altering metabolism slowdown, and helping to maintain a healthy weight.
- Elevates your mood. Seasonal Affective Disorder occurs when days are shorter and there's less sunlight. It's estimated that 6% of Americans are affected by SAD, and 14% may suffer from a milder form of winter blues. Exercise releases feel-good chemicals like serotonin and endorphins.
- Helps burn more calories. Running burns significant calories and helps us maintain and lose weight in winter. It can help us live longer too. Runners have a 25–40% reduced risk of premature mortality and live an estimated three years longer than non-runners, according to Progress in Cardiovascular Diseases.
- Can turn bad fat into good fat. There are different types of body fat: white, brown, and shades in between. White fat is "unwanted" body fat. Brown fat is metabolic tissue that burns calories. Scientific literature suggests that exercising and exposing your body in cold temps can convert white fat to brown fat.

## Run safely

Dr. Blomgren cautions winter runners to take certain [safety measures](#) to fully enjoy winter running. He recommends they dress in appropriate layers and wear wicking fabrics instead of cotton or wool, wear a head covering, drink plenty of water before and after a run, and watch paths for hidden ice. A nose and mouth covering can warm the cool, crisp air making it less harsh to breathe. A good rule of thumb is to avoid running in [sub-zero temperatures](#) and be alert to any signs of frostbite.

Provided by Midwest Orthopaedics at RUSH

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